



1ST REPORT OF THE

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON

SOCIAL SERVICES

AND

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ON AN

**INQUIRY INTO THE CURRENT LEVEL OF VIOLENCE
AMONG STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON
PHYSICAL AND CYBER BULLYING**

SECOND SESSION (2016/2017) 11TH PARLIAMENT

OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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and Notes of Evidence

FIRST REPORT

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**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION**

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**THE CURRENT LEVEL OF VIOLENCE AMONG STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS
WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON PHYSICAL AND CYBER BULLYING**

Date Laid: HoR: _____

Senate: _____

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The Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration

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THE COMMITTEE



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Mr. Esmond Forde, MP
VICE-CHAIRMAN



Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP
MEMBER



Brig. Gen. (Ret) Ancil Antoine, MP
MEMBER



Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP
MEMBER



Ms. Nadine Stewart
MEMBER



Mr. Rohan Sinanan
MEMBER



Ms. Khadijah Ameen
MEMBER

Committee Mandate and Establishment

1.1. Section 66 of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago declares, that not later than three months after the first meeting of the House of Representatives, the Parliament shall appoint Joint Select Committees to inquire into and report to both Houses in respect of Government Ministries, Municipal Corporations, Statutory Authorities, State Enterprises and Service Commissions, in relation to their administration, the manner of exercise of their powers, their methods of functioning and any criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions.

1.2. Motions related to this purpose were passed in the House of Representatives and Senate on November 13th, and 17th, 2015, respectively, and thereby established, inter alia, the ***Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration***.

1.3. Standing Order 91 of the Senate and 101 of the House of Representatives outline the general functions of a Committee of this nature. They are as follows:

- a. “To examine Bills and review all legislation relating to the relevant Ministries, departments or bodies or as may be referred to it by the House;
- b. To investigate, inquire into, and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management, activities, administration and operations of the assigned Ministries, departments or bodies;
- c. To study the programme and policy objectives of Ministries, departments or bodies and the effectiveness of the implementation of such programmes and policy objectives;
- d. To assess and monitor the performance of Ministries, Departments and bodies and the manner of the exercise of their powers;
- e. To investigate and inquire into all matters relating to the assigned Ministries, Departments and bodies as they may deem necessary, or as may be referred to them by the House or a Minister; and
- f. To make reports and recommendations to the House as often as possible, including recommendations for proposed legislation.”

1.4. The entities which fall under the purview of the Committee are listed at ***Appendix I***.

Powers of the Joint Select Committee

1.5. Standing Orders 101 of the Senate and 111 of the House of Representatives outline the core powers of the Committee which include *inter alia*:

- to send for persons, papers and records;
- to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the Senate;
- to adjourn from place to place;
- to report from time to time;
- to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not otherwise readily available, or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's or Sub-Committee's order of reference;
- to communicate with any Committee of Parliament on matters of common interest; and
- to meet concurrently with any other Committee for the purpose of deliberating, taking evidence or considering draft reports.

Membership

1.6. The Committee comprises the following members:

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir | Chairman |
| 2. | Mr. Esmond Forde, MP ¹ | Member |
| 3. | Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP ² | Member |
| 4. | Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP | Member |
| 5. | Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP | Member |
| 6. | Ms. Nadine Stewart | Member |
| 7. | Mr. Rohan Sinanan ³ | Member |
| 8. | Ms. Khadijah Ameen | Member |

Secretariat Support

1.7. The following officers were assigned to assist the Committee:

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Mr. Julien Ogilvie | - | Secretary |
| 2. | Ms. Kimberly Mitchell | - | Assistant Secretary |
| 3. | Ms. Katharina Gokool | - | Graduate Research Assistant |

¹ Mr. Esmond Forde replaced Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh w.e.f. 01.04.2016

² Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith replaced Mrs. Shamfa Cudjoe w.e.f. 13.05.2016

³ Mr. Rohan Sinanan replaced Mr. Hafeez Ali w.e.f. 21.06.2016

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABATT	Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago
CAC	Continuous Assessment Component
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CITY	Crime Intervention for Troubled Youths
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
GO	Guidance Officer
HFLE	Health and Family Life Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LEC	Learning Enhancement Centre
MIC	Metal Industries Company Institute of Technology
MOE	Ministry of Education
MTS	The National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPTA	National Council of Parent-Teachers Associations (NPTA)
PiE	Parenting-in-Education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PYC	Police Youth Club
RAPP	The Resistance and Prevention Programme
RBC	Royal Bank of Canada
SERVOL	Service Volunteered for All
SSS	Student Support Services
SW	Social Worker
THA	Tobago House of Assembly
TTDD	Teaching and Teacher Development Division
TTPS	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
TTUTA	Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association
USC	University of the Southern Caribbean
UWI	University of the West Indies

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its second meeting held on Wednesday January 20th, 2016, the Committee resolved to inquire into the current level of violence among students in schools with particular focus on physical and cyber bullying.

As such, the Committee agreed on the following inquiry objectives:

- 1. To determine the extent to which violence is pervasive among students in primary and secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago;**
- 2. To understand the line Ministry's plans and strategies for addressing school violence, in particular bullying in schools;**
- 3. To determine the effectiveness of multi-sectoral efforts and rehabilitation services targeted towards students who have displayed a tendency to be violent or engage in acts of violence.**

The Committee acquired both oral and written evidence based on the objectives listed above. Oral evidence was received during four (4) public hearings held with various stakeholders on February 26th, March 16th, April, 20th and 29th, 2016. Some of the significant issues highlighted during these hearings included:

- a. the various forms of bullying practiced in the nation's schools (physical, psychological, cyber);
- b. the disproportional level of violence among students in Government-controlled as opposed to denominational schools;
- c. the importance of parental involvement in a child's learning experience, particularly as it concerns disciplining the child;
- d. the types of rehabilitative assistance provided by the Ministry and the TTPS to students suspended from school;
- e. the effectiveness of suspension as a form of discipline;

- f. the relevance of the National School Code of Conduct to the current realities of the school environment;
- g. the potential benefits of schools collaborating with the Community Police/TTPS;
- h. mechanisms to treat with teacher absenteeism and punctuality;
- i. support services available to students with psychological disorders and special needs;
- j. the causal link between low educational attainment and violent behaviour among students;
- k. the role of extracurricular activities such as Girl Guides, Cadet Force and various sporting activities in combating violence;
- l. the process of collaborating with other agencies to treat with students displaying violent and deviant behaviour;
- m. the impact curriculum reform may have on the behavioural pattern of students;
- n. mechanisms/opportunities available to Principals to exchange information and ideas;
- o. the possible role PTAs can play in supporting efforts to alleviate school violence; and
- p. the adequacy of student support services.

Based on these findings and other matters which arose during the inquiry, the Committee has proffered recommendations which we believe will address these issues highlighted. A summary of these recommendations follows this Executive Summary.

The Committee looks forward to reviewing the Minister's response to this Report, which becomes due, sixty (60) days after it is presented to the Houses of Parliament.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations proffered by the Committee are summarized below:

Recommendations for implementation in the Short-Term

(To be implemented within 3 to 6 months of the presentation of this report)

- i. that the MoE institute the practice of recording information on repeat offenders so that these students can be easily identified for continuous follow-up and remedial action.
- ii. teachers who have exceeded 1000 minutes (16.6 hours) per annum in respect to late arrival should be issued warning notices, referred to the School Supervisor in the Education District, and face appropriate sanctions.
- iii. that the Ministry facilitate a registry of NGOs, CBOs, other organisations and individuals who are involved in extracurricular activities such as Girl Guides, the Cadet Force, St John's Ambulance, retired sportsmen, coaches, martial artists, musicians and others willing to do volunteer work. Once the Registry is properly vetted, schools can then draw upon this diverse pool of professional experience and talent when developing an extracurricular programme.
- iv. we recommend the introduction of a requirement for each student to provide the school with the contact information for two other relatives or references (in addition to the contact information for parents/guardian) who can be called upon to engage with school administrators and/or account for a student as the need arises.
- v. we recommend that the MoE launch a Roster of Volunteers who may be willing to mentor students or to be a "Big brother" to students who display indiscipline and delinquent tendencies. A stipend for these volunteers should also be considered.
- vi. the Ministry should undertake a feasibility assessment to determine which anti-bullying initiatives have the highest potential for success.
- vii. that the MoE make representation to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs regarding the need to ensure that Cyber Offences/Crime Legislation include provisions regarding the various forms of cyberbullying involving minors/children.
- viii. we also recommend that each school be mandated to develop a whistle-blower mechanism through which students with information on gang activities and other delinquent activities within their school can make anonymous reports to their teachers. This mechanism should impose a timeframe on the school's management to act on reports.
- ix. as far as possible, the parent(s) of a student who has been suspended or is the subject of remedial action, should be equally exposed to appropriate counselling.

Recommendations for implementation in the Medium-Term

- i. that the Ministry establish and document its intervention strategies for addressing violence in both primary and secondary schools. Specific interventions must be developed to curb violence in primary schools. Such a procedural manual would also provide all stakeholders within the education system with clear responsibilities when dealing with the issue.
- ii. that at least one LEC be established in each Education district.
- iii. that specific accommodation and resources be provided to assist primary school students referred to these centres.
- iv. that an annual Principals Conference be covered by the MoE aimed at the sharing of best practices among schools.
- v. that School supervisors in each district be mandated to conduct a review and evaluation of the mechanism used by each school under his/her purview for recording and reporting incidents of violence and infractions.
- vi. that the MoE engage in a series of stakeholder consultations to revise the National School Code of Conduct within one (1) year of the laying of this report.
- vii. that a comprehensive training regime for Principals and Deans at the Primary and Secondary levels be implemented. This training regime should be informed by a needs assessment of the skills gaps and developmental needs of those involved in managing schools.
- viii. that the MoE continue to work closely with tertiary level institutions that offer Degree and Certificate programmes for teachers and School Administrators to ensure that the curriculum of these programmes are relevant to the needs of the education system.
- ix. in order to encourage a higher standard of professional conduct by teachers as it concerns tardiness, we recommend that the Ministry of Education consult with the representative body for teachers with a view to negotiating a revised condition of employment that would allow the Ministry at the end of the year to deduct the monetary value of the cumulated time a Teacher arrives late. Alternatively, at Teacher's punctuality record should be taken into consideration when he/she is being considered for a promotion.
- x. that the MoE launch a Roster of Volunteers who may be willing to mentor students or to be a "Big brother" to students who display indiscipline and delinquent tendencies. Person must be properly vetted before they are entered on the Roster. A stipend for these volunteers should also be considered.

- xi. that the Ministry conduct an assessment of the primary and secondary school curriculum with a view to determining how conducive they are to the 'multiple intelligence' of the student body. The findings of this review exercise should inform further reforms in the existing curricula.
- xii. the urgent development of a properly structured programme for directing persons with special learning needs out of the mainstream classroom into specially customizing learning environments.
- xiii. that the MoE expose students who are more inclined with practical learning methods to technical/vocation certification E.g. CVQs early in their secondary school career.
- xiv. that the Ministry of Education hold discussions with the NPTA and a sample of schools with a view to developing new and innovate strategies that would encourage and facilitate greater parental interaction with the school's administration through the use of ICT. As a start, consideration should be given to facilitating live online viewing of meetings for the benefit of parents who cannot be physically present.
- xv. that the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development develop a policy of time-off for employees to attend PTA meetings.
- xvi. that the MoE consider the merits of implementing a programme that will allow students that are indiscipline or display violent tendencies to interface with role models from the various backgrounds. These role models can be recruited from the military and protective services, the medical, legal and other professional cohorts.
- xvii. we recommend that a Peer counselling and mediation programme be established in all Secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, consideration should be given to targeting candidates for Prefects and Head Girls/Boys who will act as exemplars to the wider school community.
- xviii. additional Guidance Officers and Social Workers must be recruited to boost the amount of student support services available.
- xix. in future, the selection process for these positions should include psychometric testing and or a suitable methodology for assessing whether the candidate's has a suitable personality.

INTRODUCTION

Background

2.1. For the purpose of this Report school violence is defined as violent acts/scenarios involving school students that occur on school property, on the way to or from school or at school-sponsored events.

Some examples of violent activities associated with the school environment include:

- Bullying;
- Fighting (e.g., punching, slapping, kicking);
- Weapon use;
- Electronic aggression;
- Gang violence.⁴

2.2. Although school violence has been in existence for many years, the media (inclusive of social media) has been highlighting violent exchanges between students more frequently thus, raising public awareness about the need to address this issue.

2.3. The management of the Primary and Secondary School system is the responsibility of the **Ministry of Education (MoE)**. This is subject to the responsibilities assigned to **Tobago House of Assembly (THA)** for education as it relates to Tobago. The primary legislation governing the educational system in Trinidad and Tobago is the **Education Act, Chapter 39:01**⁵.

2.4. The Committee is cognisant that over the years various government administrations have sought to implement activities geared at reducing such violence. However, despite resources being dedicated to combating the issue, the effectiveness of these initiatives is questionable given that the situation continues to persist. As such, the Committee decided that this issue needed urgent examination and agreed that it would be the Committee's first matter of inquiry for the 11th Parliament.

Objectives of the Inquiry

2.5. The Committee agreed that the following will comprise the objectives of the inquiry:

⁴ <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/index.html>

⁵ http://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/Laws2/Alphabetical_List/lawspdfs/39.01.pdf

- i. **To determine the extent to which violence is pervasive among students in primary and secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago;**
- ii. **To understand the line Ministry's plans and strategies for addressing school violence, in particular bullying in schools;**
- iii. **To determine the effectiveness of multi-sectoral efforts and rehabilitation services targeted towards students who have displayed a tendency to be violent or engaged in acts of violence.**

Conduct of the Inquiry

- 2.6. Prior to the commencement of the public hearings, the Committee issued invitations to the public and specific stakeholders to present written submissions based on the objectives of the inquiry. The Committee held an aggregate of four (4) public hearings with various stakeholders.
- 2.7. On February 26, 2016, the Committee held its first public hearing with representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS). The delegation of the MoE was led by the Permanent Secretary and the delegation of the TTPS was led by the Assistant Commissioner, Community Relations. Subsequent to the public hearing of February 26, 2016, additional information which was requested from the MoE was provided by letter dated March 6th, 2015.
- 2.8. The Committee held its second public hearing with officials of the National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA), the Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ABATT) and the Trinidad and Tobago's Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) on Wednesday March 16th, 2016. TTUTA and NPTA delegations were led by their respective Presidents and ABATT was led by its Director.
- 2.9. The Committee's third public hearing was held on April 20th, 2016 with Principals and Students of the Primary and Secondary Schools. During its fourth and final public hearing on the inquiry held on April 29th, 2016, the Committee met with Student Support Professionals, Psychologists and a University Professor who have conducted extensive research into youth violence.
- 2.10. The **Minutes of the Meeting** during which the public hearing was held are attached as **Appendix III** and the **Verbatim Notes** as **Appendix IV**.

3. KEY ISSUES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Inquiry Objective Topic 1

The extent to which violence is pervasive among students in primary and secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago

DATA ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE

3.1.1 The Committee was informed that there were five thousand, nine hundred and ten (5,910) incidents of violent acts in eighty-six (86) Government Secondary Schools in Trinidad compared to seven hundred and sixty-six (766) incidents in thirty-nine (39) Denominational Secondary Schools for the period 2012-2015. For the same period, there were two hundred and twelve (212) incidents of violent acts in one hundred and twenty-five (125) Government Primary Schools as compared to four hundred and ninety-four (494) incidents in three hundred and twenty (320) Denominational Primary Schools. The Committee was informed that a total of seven hundred and six (706) students were suspended at primary schools and six thousand six hundred and seventy-six (6,676) at secondary schools for violent encounters during the period 2012-2015.

3.1.17 The Committee examined information on the schools which recorded the highest number of violent incidents as well as those with the most number of suspensions over the period 2014-2015. These statistics were used to determine which schools should be the focus of further investigations. During the hearings, the Committee sought to determine whether there was any validity to the public perception that students in Government Schools were more violent than students who attend denominational schools. In this regard, of the 10 primary schools that recorded the most suspensions in 2015; Five (5) were Government schools and five (5) were denominational schools. At the Secondary level; nine (9) out of ten (10) schools with the highest amount of suspensions in 2015 were Government Secondary Schools.

3.1.3 With respect to statistics on the ten schools with the most reports of violent acts perpetrated by students in primary schools in 2015, the Ministry advised that three (3) of these schools were government schools and seven (7) were denominational schools. However, at the Secondary level, nine (9) were Government schools and only one (1) was a denominational school.

3.1.4 The Ministry also provided information on the number of assaults with a weapon, without weapons and extorting taxes at the Secondary School Level. The details are as follows:

- 2012 1,912 cases
- 2013 1,709 cases
- 2014 1,405 cases
- 2015 1,650 cases

MOST PREVALENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

3.1.5 The Ministry reported that there was a higher level of violence among male students than there was among female students. Tables 1 and 2 below provide a summary on the incidents of violence among Secondary Schools and Primary Schools for the years 2012 to 2015.

Table1: Frequency of Violence for 2012-2015 (Secondary Schools)

Year	Assault with weapons			Assault without weapons			Extortion			Taxing			Fighting with Weapons			Fighting without Weapon			TOTAL
	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	
2012	41	10	11	205	73	26	66	23	30	26	17	0	53	26	12	334	215	45	1213
2013	42	14	6	216	84	27	112	24	15	35	23	1	53	21	12	349	185	46	1265
2014	32	6	10	234	90	31	85	22	15	33	22	3	56	27	14	417	174	39	1310
2015	50	16	10	227	83	33	87	30	14	28	16	2	45	18	10	363	202	127	1361
Total	165	46	37	882	330	117	350	99	74	122	78	6	207	92	48	1463	776	257	5149

Table 2: Frequency of Violence for 2012-2015 (Primary Schools)

Year	Assault with weapons			Assault without weapons			Extortion			Taxing			Fighting with Weapons			Fighting without Weapon			TOTAL
	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	Male- Male	Female-Female	Male-Female	
2012	11	1	3	31	5	7	6	0	0	2	0	0	6	0	0	29	3	11	115
2013	15	1	1	17	2	7	12	0	0	2	0	0	8	0	0	18	4	11	98
2014	17	0	2	34	6	14	8	1	0	1	0	0	15	0	0	26	6	9	139
2015	17	1	1	44	4	11	12	8	3	2	0	0	4	2	1	38	11	13	172
Total	60	3	7	126	17	39	38	9	3	7	0	0	33	2	1	111	24	44	524

Incidents involving teachers

3.1.6 For the period 2012 to 2015 there were thirty-five (35) incidents of violence involving teachers with twenty-six (26) of these involving both teachers and students.

Criminal offences

3.1.7 A total of eleven (11) students at the primary school level and three hundred and thirty-four (334) students at the secondary school level were charged with criminal offences (offences against the person) as a consequence of violent acts on school compounds for the period 2010-2015. The Committee was also informed by the TTPS that there has been a consistent decrease in serious crimes, minor crimes and minor offences committed by students in schools. In terms of serious crimes, in 2015 there were forty-five (45) reports compared to fifty-seven (57) in 2014. In addition, there were nineteen (19) cases each in the area of larceny and sexual offences in 2015 and twenty-three (23) and twenty (20) respectively in 2014.

3.1.8 In terms of minor crimes, there were fifty-one (51) cases in 2015 and sixty-nine (69) in 2014. There was also a total of one hundred and forty-three (143) cases of minor offences in 2015 and one hundred and fifty-four (154) in 2014.

Information on Repeat offenders

3.1.9 Unfortunately, the Committee was informed that the MoE does not collate information on the incidence of repeat offenders. Instead, the MoE records data on student suspensions and the reasons for the suspension. Notwithstanding, the Committee was informed that the MoE recently completed a national consultation on education and the issue of revising the metrics for measuring the success of interventions such as counselling is being considered. It was indicated that both data from the consultation and a survey undertaken by the MoE prior to the consultation will provide further information on violence and indiscipline in the nation's schools.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1.10 Information received on this aspect of the inquiry confirmed some commonly helpful perceptions. Among them being the fact that male-on-male violence is more prevalent than female-on-female. The Committee noted that according to the statistics provided there has been a consistent increase in violent activity within Secondary schools over the period 2012-2015. There was also a steady increase in violence at the primary school level during the years 2014 and 2015.

3.1.11 Regarding the prevalence of violence in government schools in comparison with denominational schools, the evidence received suggest that at the primary level, both Government and denominational schools have challenges with school violence. However, at the Secondary level a dichotomy can be drawn since, based on statistical evidence received, there appears to be a higher level of violence in Government Secondary Schools compared with denominational Secondary Schools.

We recommend that the MoE institute the practice of recording information on repeat offenders so that these students can be easily identified for continuous follow-up and remedial action

Disciplinary Procedures- Student suspensions

3.1.12 Section 27 of the Education Act Chapter 39:01 provides that principals are responsible for the:

- “day to day management of
their school including—
(a) the supervision of the physical safety of pupils;...
(d) the discipline of the school;”*

3.1.13 The Committee was informed that the MoE provides guidance to principals on the infractions that warrant suspension. Some forms of violence for which a student may be suspended include:

- i. Assault with weapons;
- ii. Assault without weapons;
- iii. Bullying;
- iv. Extortion/ ‘Taxing’;
- v. Fighting with Weapons;
- vi. Fighting without Weapons.

3.1.14 The Committee was informed by the MoE that suspensions involve the removal of students from school for up to a maximum of seven (7) days. In severe cases, a Principal can request an extension of the suspension from the Minister of Education. The Student Support Services Divisions (SSSD) engages a suspended student along with his parents within seven (7) days, to provide counselling and the necessary support in term of introducing corrective action.

3.1.15 Evidence from other stakeholders confirmed that students can be suspended for a maximum of seven (7) days. However, the Committee took note that **suspensions can only be effected when a parent signs the suspension notice and is therefore based on the assumption that parents are willing to visit the school and sign the notice which in some instances does not occur.** To circumvent the lack of parental approval, Principals arrange to place students on **in-school suspensions** which involves the child visiting the principal’s office to discuss the incident for approximately forty –five (45) minutes and the denial of recreation time.

3.1.16 In addition, TTUTA advised the Committee that in extreme cases where a student poses a threat to the safety and security of other persons on the school compound, the student is removed from the school with the assistance of the Community Police who will assist in serving the parent of the suspended student with the requisite suspension notice. The police may also use their influence to encourage the parent to visit the school so that the suspension notice can take effect. The Committee noted that pending the enforcement of the suspension, the student under scrutiny may attend school/classes.

3.1.17 Students who appeared before the Committee agreed that suspension is not an effective form of discipline. This view coincided with evidence from a Guidance Officer (GO) who suggested that students look forward to suspensions as a “vacation” from school.

Out-of-school suspensions

3.1.18 The MoE introduced an **Out-of-School Suspension programme** to provide a facility for the purpose of providing students with the required remedial and rehabilitative assistance. The Committee heard further evidence from a Guidance Officer (GO), that the Out-of-School Suspension Programme was modified to **Learning Enhancement Centres (LEC)** to provide the necessary rehabilitation for students on suspension and extended suspension. The LECs provides group guidance sessions that focus on conflict and anger management, decision-making, and problem solving. However, provision is also made for individual work with the students and their parents. The evaluation entails an assessment of student’s performance, multiple intelligences, and functionality in the school environment. The evaluation assists GOs in recommending whether a student should return to his/her school or be placed in another programme such as SERVOL or MIC.

3.1.19 Furthermore, where parents fail to visit the LEC or the school, the Social Worker (SW) attached to the LEC would undertake a home visit and conducts an assessment to determine the factors that influence student’s behaviour. The Committee was also informed that where the parent continues to be unsupportive, a report is made to the nearest police station. A Social Worker (SW) advised that she has made approximately fifteen (15) such reports.

3.1.20 The Committee further noted that there are three (3) LECs that are located in the South-East District, Caroni and St. George East Districts which are managed by both GOs and SWs. We noted that the LECs success is measured by the number of students who repeat offences. In addition, students who repeat offences are subject to further interventions or the GOs in charge may seek alternative placement based on the assessment of a Special Education Teacher. Notwithstanding, the Committee noted the view of the Assistant Professor, (Gettysburg College) that there are not enough LEC and that the educational system in Trinidad and Tobago is quite burdened and under-resourced in many areas.

3.1.21 We also took note of the view of the Education and Child Psychologist who indicated that over the years, numerous interventions including the out-of-schools suspensions have been unsuccessful because no specific targets have been instituted in terms of strategic planning.

Expulsion

3.1.22 The Committee was informed that the Education Act Chapter 39:01 gives the Minister of Education the authority to expel. However, the MoE has not sanctioned an expulsion in over ten (10) years because of its philosophy that students can be rehabilitated.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. The Committee is of the view that a reduction in school violence should be treated as a major priority of the Ministry. As such, the Committee recommends that the Ministry establish and document its intervention strategies for addressing violence in both primary and secondary schools. Specific interventions must be developed to curb violence in primary schools. Such a procedural manual would also provide all stakeholders within the education system with clear responsibilities when dealing with the issue.**

- B. The Committee endorses the concept of LECs as it is clearly a more effective alternative to in-school and “stay home” suspension arrangements. The Committee recommends the following as it relates to the development of LECs:**

- i. That at least one LEC be established in each Education district;
 - ii. That specific accommodation and resources be provided to assist primary schools students referred to these centres;
 - iii. That a robust and holistic assessment procedure be utilized to ensure that students referred to LECs are properly evaluated to determine their developmental, academic and psychological position/needs;
 - iv. That a proper system for tracking the progress of students who attended a LEC be developed in order to gauge whether students require further interventions;
 - v. That the Ministry of Education collaborate with the police service to assist with encouraging students referred to an LEC to attend classes. This may be achieved by asking the Community Police to visit the LEC's on a weekly basis to determine which students are not in compliance with the attendance requirement.
- C. It should be compulsory for the parent(s) of a child to visit the school the child is to be served a Suspension Notice or in other circumstances where it is imperative that the child's parents meet with the management of the school. As such, the MoE must explore possible legislative amendments required for enforcing this proposal. The legislative amendment should also make it unlawful for an employer to hinder an employee from complying with a school's request for an audience without justifiable cause.

Disparity in the standard of conduct in Government and denominational schools

3.1.23 The committee attempted to determine the reasons why denominational schools appeared to experience less acts of violence among their students and consequently less suspensions compared with Government-controlled schools. The Committee was informed that the disparity between government schools and denominational schools may be attributed to several factors including:

- a. a selection process for students which places high performing students in denominational secondary schools;

- b. High percentage of students entering government schools with challenges in literacy and numeracy;
- c. Lower level of parental involvement in government secondary schools;
- d. Possible under-reporting of suspensions in denominational schools; and
- e. Inconsistencies in the application of guidelines for suspension provided in the School Code of Conduct.

3.1.24 With respect to (d) above, the Committee noted that the Ministry of Education has charged Principals with the task of recording/documenting each infractions committed by students. Therefore any failure to fully report any and all incidents involving students would be a breach of Ministry policy and is an indictment on the leadership and management of the school. In view of this, the MoE has been working with its Division of School Supervision in terms of monitoring and ensuring compliance with this policy.

3.1.25 The Committee noted the response of the Chairman of the Catholic Education Board of Management that suggested that under-reporting of incidents is not being practiced by catholic Schools. However, the Chairman of the Board did admit that there may be incidents that are not reported as a result of the absence of student supervision at the time the incidents occurred.

Measures taken by denominational schools to curb violence

3.1.26 It was indicated by a Denominational Board Representative that 75% of primary schools, 33% of secondary schools and most preschools are owned by Denominational Boards. Some information on the number of Denominational Board-Run Schools identified at the hearing are provided at Table 3 below:

**TABLE 3
DENOMINATIONAL BOARD-RUN SCHOOLS**

DENOMINATIONAL BOARD-RUN SCHOOL	TOTAL NO. OF SCHOOLS	NO. OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS	NO. OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS	NO. OF PRE-SCHOOLS
Anglican Education Board	63+			

Presbyterian Primary School Board of Education	72			
Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Board of Management	20	16	4	
Sanatan Dharma Maha Shabha (SDMS) Education Board Management	68	43	5	20
Catholic Education Board of Management	125	119	6	

3.1.27 As mentioned in the previous section, evidence received from Denomination Board Representatives indicated that violence and bullying is considerably less pervasive in Denominational Board-run schools. It was reported to the Committee that the success of the denominational Board-run schools in this regard is linked to the strategies and practices adhered to in their schools. Measures taken include:

- a. strong parental involvement and establishing programmes that encourage further parental involvement in the affairs of the school;
- b. Regular PTA meetings;
- c. counselling support;
- d. expanded their curriculum to include sport and cultural activities;
- e. exposing students regularly to spiritual teachings and values through “religious instructions” and activities.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1.28 Based on the statistics received by the Committee and the representations made by officials of denominational school boards, it would be fair to conclude that there appears to be less acts of violence among students who attend denominational schools in comparison with government-controlled schools. This distinction appears to be more obvious at the Secondary school level. However, some may argue that the comparison may be somewhat unfair since the provisions of the *Concordat* allow denominational boards greater flexibility to determine the students who enter their

schools, the amount of exposure students get to religious teachings; the type of programmes that maybe implemented in the interest of the school, among others.

3.1.29 A responsibility is placed on the principal and leadership of both categories of schools to truthfully and accurately report incidents of violence and other infractions against the Schools' Code of Conduct. Besides drawing comparisons, the Committee believes that there are lessons government schools can learn from their denominational counterparts and the reverse may be true for other areas in the management of the school environment.

- A. We recommend that the leadership of Denominational and Government Schools engage each other with a view to exchanging ideas and experiences in relation to effectively addressing violence and indiscipline. The Committee recommends an annual Principals Conference hosted by the MoE aimed at the sharing of best practices among schools.**
- B. We recommend that School Supervisors in each district be mandated to conduct a review and evaluation of the mechanism used by each school under his/her purview for recording and reporting incidents of violence and infractions.**
- C. We recommend that “the ability to effectively promote discipline in the school” be included as a criterion for assessing the performance of a Principal.**

Inquiry Objective Topic 2

MOE plans and Strategies for addressing school violence in particular bullying

3.2.1 The Committee was informed by the MoE that the issue of violence among students is complex and therefore the following should be taken into consideration:

- a. the culture of violence;
- b. the removal of corporal punishment;
- c. the low levels of literacy and numeracy which often is identified as early as Standard 1 at the Primary level and follows on to Form 1 in Secondary level;

- d. violence being copied from the television and the internet and is being portrayed in schools;
- e. inadequate parent and caregiver involvement;
- f. weak supervision and the quality of teaching;
- g. the high levels of unfilled vacancies.

3.2.2 The MoE has pursued the following solutions:

- a. creating risk profiles in terms of incidents in schools;
- b. improving supervision via collaboration among Deans, Senior Teachers Principals and Vice- Principals;
- c. instituting coaches for numeracy and literacy in schools;
- d. conducting parenting in education workshops;
- e. collaborating with the Teaching Service Commission to fill vacancies and instituting a special selection of staff for schools with challenging environments;
- f. collaborating with other agencies such as the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services;
- g. involvement in programmes such as the RAPP programme, peer mediation, the Police Youth Club; and
- h. implementing extracurricular activities in schools such as Girls Guides Scouts, RBC Young Leaders and debating competitions.

3.2.3 Further, it was submitted that the MoE uses a multi-disciplinary approach to address violence in schools and its strategies employed to effectively deal with violence in schools including bullying, are preventative/proactive and responsive in nature. The Committee informed that the MoE's preventative approaches are applied across the school system and also at the individual student level while its proactive approach involves directed counselling of behavioural problems and targeted programmes. **It was also indicated that the MoE's programmes and interventions aim to address both victim and perpetrator.**

3.2.4 We were also informed that in response to the increasing levels of school violence, the MoE began to review and revise its programmes for treating with violence in schools and is now focused on three key areas:

1. The Individual student;
2. The school level; and
3. The Inter-Ministerial Level.

Individual Student Level

3.2.5 The MoE implemented programmes such as **Conflict Resolution, Group Identity, Communication Skills, Universal Human Values, Emotional Intelligence and Problem Solving**, anger management at both the primary and secondary level to assist students to better understand themselves and others and how to respond to conflicts and solve problems in non-violent ways. The Ministry also advised that **Life Skills Programmes** which aim to assist students in dealing more effectively with the daily challenges of life will continue in 2016.

School Level

3.2.6 The Ministry directed schools to establish **School-Based Management Teams** or middle management to allow for more effective delegation and sharing of responsibilities for managing schools. The use of school-based management teams has allowed for a greater level of input by key stakeholders inclusive of students, parents, staff, Local School Boards and the community.

3.2.7 Further, the MoE indicated that it is in the process of involving TTUTA in the finalizing of a **school-based management model**. It was reported that the model took almost two (2) years to be developed and the MoE examined various international and local models and adopted the best elements to create a customised version. At the core of the model is the student. All schools are required to have a **school improvement/development plan** which identifies core areas for development. The Ministry assists Principals in formulating these plans.

3.2.8 Improved supervision of students is recognized as an effect strategy for minimizing the incidence of bullying. Therefore, proper systems of engagement were put in place involving key stakeholders such as **School Safety Officers, Principals, Deans, Teachers, Students and Parent**

Teacher Associations. In particular, School Safety Officers, Security Officers and Deans play a key role in ensuring the securing of the student population against internal and external threats. In recognising that safety starts at the school gate, hand-held scanners provided to secondary schools are used at all school entrances. In addition, random searches are conducted while Deans work collaboratively with School Safety Officers and Security Officers to identify and supervise “at risk” areas within the school’s compound.

3.2.9 The Ministry advised that it is challenging to change the physical structure of schools to make it safer. However, in lieu of infrastructural adjustments, it has embarked on identifying and targeting areas in schools where incidents are likely to occur, and is deploying safety officers and security officers from the National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited MTS (government-run schools) and hired officers by (denominational schools). Guidance Officers and School Social Workers also constitute the team to collect data on the incidents that are likely to occur, their frequency, location and time. This initiative has been implemented in some schools and is currently being rolled-out in others.

3.2.10 Evidence from the Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ABATT) suggested that the school body can be empowered to treat with behavioural infringements within the school environment by utilizing Prefects or by establishing effective PTAs. Further, ABATT indicated that there is need to clearly articulate the purpose of the student body, the number of schools with a functioning student body, the role of a Prefect, training for Prefects, and mentoring programmes within the school system by using model students.

Inter-Ministerial Level

3.2.11 The Committee was informed that the National Parenting-in-Education (PiE) Programme is an ongoing exercise that the MoE is planning to expand. It is a voluntary exercise, therefore, parents are not mandated to attend but they are encouraged to attend. In 2015, approximately twenty-six thousand (26,000) parents attended three hundred (300) programmes and approximately twenty-seven (27) workshops about parenting and education. Some of the topics discussed included **absenteeism, treating with children with special needs, discipline issues, and alternative strategies to corporal punishment.** Parents and caregivers of students that are deemed high-risk are targeted to participate in these programmes. We noted that this programme is somewhat

successful in that it empowers parents who attend the workshops, (some of whom have children who are repeat offenders) to suggest topics for discussion that would be of interest to them. In terms of measuring the impact of the PiE programme, the MoE intends to monitor the number of students who repeated offences after participating in the programme.

3.2.12 In addition, the Committee was informed that, the MoE intended to implement *Media, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programmes* in February 2016, as the media and substance abuse are major influences on the behaviour of students. In addition, the MoE has partnered with the Ministry of National Security to closely monitor high risk schools and assist in addressing school violence. The Resistance and Prevention Programme (RAPP) which addresses crime and violence among youths, including gang and organized crime prevention was expected to continue in all high risk schools in 2016.

Established targets to address school violence

3.2.13 The Committee was informed that the Ministry's long-term aim (24-48 months) is to reduce violence in all high-risk schools by 50% to 75%. As well, its short-term targets (6-24 months) are as follows:

1. Identify top five high-risk schools in each Education District;
2. Implement a revised approach to address the top five high-risk schools in each District including sensitization to violence and indiscipline risk factors, root causes, and protective factors;
3. Teacher Training and Development Division of the Ministry of Education will sensitize teachers to risks and protective factors of violence and indiscipline in the top five at-risk schools in each District;
4. Conduct targeted Parenting-in-Education workshops to sensitize parents/caregivers (from the top five at-risk schools in each District) to risk and protective factors of violence and indiscipline;
5. Increase inter-agency collaboration in all seven Education District;
6. Increase protective factors in top five at-risk schools in each Education District by 25-50%;
7. Reduce risk factors in top five at-risk schools in each District by 25-50%;
8. Reduce incidents of violence and indiscipline by 50%;
9. Ensure that all schools have a Discipline Matrix that is operational at the school level;

10. Ensure that there is a collaborative approach and synergy between Deans, School Safety Officers and Security Personnel (MTS or Private Security) towards addressing indiscipline, e.g., patrolling the compound;
11. Teacher Development Division to provide Professional Development training in Mediation and Conflict Resolution, Classroom Management to build on the skill set of teachers; and
12. A system for supervision of students and classes in all schools is developed and implemented.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.14 The Ministry highlighted a plethora of proposals and strategies for addressing school violence. The Committee was encouraged to learn that the strategies are relatively holistic in nature, in that they facilitate the participation of school leadership, teachers, parents, students and communities in the mission to reduce the level of violence among students. However, the Committee is concerned with the progress made in the implementing of these plans, the timeframe for same and the resources required, and the evaluation mechanism for determining success or failure.

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Education in its response to this report inform the Parliament of the following:

- i. **The status of the implementation of each programme named above;**
- ii. **The number of students/parents/teachers who have participated and or benefited from these programmes;**
- iii. **Whether the 5 most at-risk schools in each district have been identified and the status of the implementation of programmes aimed at assisting these schools.**

National school code of conduct

3.2.15 The Committee was informed that the National School Code of Conduct provides a guide for what behaviours are considered acceptable or unacceptable in schools and the consequences which ranges from counselling to being charged with an offence. All schools are required to either utilize the school code of conduct or develop their specific **discipline matrix** using the schools code of conduct. The matrix outlines specific guidelines on the range of consequences for undesirable student behaviour and a reward system in recognition of desirable

behaviour. The successful implementation of the discipline matrix and the overall management of student indiscipline is the responsibility of the Principal. The information on the school code of conduct is shared with students in several ways for instance, some schools have converted the code into specific rules and guidelines for students, some schools share this information during assembly time or during “a circle time” at homeroom periods.

3.2.16 Evidence taken from stakeholders indicated the following:

- i) school principals are required to make copies of the Codes of Conduct available to parents so that they are aware of what is expected of them and their child;
- ii) the consequences included in the codes are not sufficient for treating with offences;
- iii) where infractions are committed, parents are notified by letter to report to the school to discuss the problem and in most cases they do not show up. In this regard, there is a problem with enforcing the discipline matrix;
- iv) the code is based on the assumption that, parents understand what is contained therein;
- v) it was unreasonable to expect children who would normally behave in an undisciplined manner at home to behave differently when at school;
- vi) the code is inadequate because it does not provide specific skills, strategies that can be implemented in certain scenarios involving misconduct;
- vii) the code fails to address the role technology is now playing as an avenue for inflicting psychological harm on persons through cyber-bullying or cyber-misconduct.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.17 Based on submissions received concerning this matter, it is clear that the National School Code of Conduct needs to be reviewed and revised to address the concerns highlighted by the various stakeholders in the education system who shared their views on the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct with this committee.

We recommend that the MoE engage in a series of stakeholder consultations to revise the National School Code of Conduct within one (1) year of the laying of this report.

Training for teachers and principals

3.2.18 The Committee was informed that the Teaching and Teacher Development Division (TTDD) of the MoE provides training for Principals, Deans, Heads of Departments and Teachers in areas such as **Classroom Management, Conflict Resolution, Problem Solving Skills, and Improving their Understanding of Regulations** as they pertain to treating with aberrant student behaviour. Further, we were informed that training for principals is done in clusters periodically, once per month and it was indicated that training will continue in 2016. The Committee was advised that fraternity meetings amongst principals occur once per month with the respective school supervisor so that principals exchange thoughts and ideas. In addition, the Association of Principals convenes annual conferences.

3.2.19 With regards to training for principals and teachers the Committee noted the following information submitted by the TTUTA representatives:

- a. that teachers are not subject to psychometric evaluations/testing and in this regard, TTUTA recommended a comprehensive review of the recruitment process for teachers;
- b. that despite its limited resources and capabilities, TTUTA conducts several training programmes annually so that teachers exchange practical ideas;
- c. that TTUTA indicated that the responsibility for training lies with the employer (the MoE) to ensure that its employees are continuously exposed to professional development opportunities;
- d. that TTUTA recommended the establishment of a School Leadership Institute to train and prepare principals of both primary and secondary schools to better manage their schools;
- e. that stakeholders such as the University of the West Indies (U.W.I.), School of Education, the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) all be part of the process to ensure that teachers are adequately trained, prepared to enter the classroom and recognize the changing paradigm in the education system.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.20 Given the evidence set out, the Committee is in strong support of the provision of training customised to meet the demands placed on Principals and Teachers, particularly those who serve in schools with high levels of violence and overall student misconduct.

- A. We recommend that a comprehensive training regime for Principals and Deans at the Primary and Secondary levels be implemented. This training regime should be informed by a needs assessment of the skills gaps and developmental needs of those involved in managing schools.
- B. We recommend that the MoE continue to work closely with tertiary level institutions that offer Degree and Certificate programmes for teachers and School Administrators to ensure that the curriculum of these programmes are relevant to the needs of the education system.

Teacher absenteeism

3.2.21 The Committee attempted to determine the impact a lack of student supervision, (caused by absent Teachers) has had on the level of discipline in schools. The committee was informed that there are a number of teachers who are habitually late or absent in schools which may contribute to the escalation of violence among students. However, the MoE indicated that there is a process for treating with such teachers which is applicable to both Government-run and Denominational Schools. It was also indicated that the MoE intends to proceed with *Regulation 90* to treat with a number of teachers who have been more than 1,000 minutes late. We were informed that Principals have received guidance through training sessions, on how to treat with such teachers.

3.2.22 The Committee was able to surmise the following based on submissions received from TTUTA:

- a. there is need to ensure that all schools are adequately staffed so that there can be adequate supervision given that there may be understaffing issues which contributes to the absenteeism;
- b. there may be various circumstances which result in teachers being absent from school or in a classroom. In some instance, a teachers may be legitimately out of the classroom or may be in another part of the school engaged in some other activity;
- c. teachers have the legitimate right to their fourteen (14) days occasional and fourteen (14) days sick leave which in certain circumstances is used to visit the head office of the MoE for salary arrangements and to request and collect a job letter; and
- d. teacher absenteeism and lateness contribute to the deviant behaviour among students.

Substitute Teachers

3.2.23 The Substitute Teacher programme was expanded to include Primary Schools in November 2014. Notwithstanding, the MoE indicated that it has been challenged by the low number of persons registered on the system and has been attempting to encourage more persons to register via the Ministry's website. Further, the Committee was informed that the Service Commissions Department maintains an Order of Merit list with teachers awaiting placement based on vacancies. All unplaced persons on the Order of Merit list have been invited to register as a substitute teacher.

3.2.24 The Committee noted that TTUTA concurred with the use of substitute teachers to address the issue of teacher absenteeism. However, TTUTA indicated that whereas there is a pool of substitute teachers available for primary schools, it is more difficult with respect to secondary schools. In addition, the minimum period of absence required for a substitute to be provided is ten (10) days as opposed to one (1) or two (2) days. As it pertains to the use of On-the-Job trainees in classrooms, the Committee was informed that the MoE's policy is that On-the-Job Trainees are not to supervise classes and if this is occurring the MoE will investigate. We were informed that OJT's in primary or secondary schools have specific functions. For example, at secondary schools they assist the technical/vocational teachers or the librarian.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.25 The Committee was encouraged to learn that the Ministry has developed a mechanism for measuring tardiness on the part of teachers. **Teachers who have exceed 1000 minutes (16.6 hours) per annum in respect to late arrival should be issued warning notices, referred to the School Supervisor in the Education District, and face appropriate sanctions.**

4.2.25 **Accordingly, in an attempt to encourage a higher standard of professional conduct by teachers as it concerns tardiness, we recommend that the Ministry of Education consult with the representative body for teachers with a view to negotiating a revised condition of employment that would allow the Ministry at the end of the year to deduct the monetary value of the cumulated time a Teacher arrives late. Alternatively, at Teacher's punctuality record should be taken into consideration when he/she is being considered for a promotion.**

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

3.2.26 During the inquiry there was a general consensus that providing opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities was an effective strategy for allowing students to channel their energy into constructive rather than destructive endeavours. The MoE advised that it has asked schools to involve all students in at least one extracurricular activity. Additionally, discussions with the cadet force and other organisations have begun and during the public hearing it was indicated that at least ten (10) schools were supposed to be commissioned.

3.2.27 The views of Primary and Secondary School Principals on the benefit of extracurricular activities were captured during a public hearing and it was determined that most schools do engage in extracurricular activities and that the MoE has been instrumental in providing some of the resources for these activities such as sporting equipment. The Committee also learned that some schools received corporate sponsorship/support in this area.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.28 The Committee fully endorses the incorporation of extracurricular activities in education system. There was general support among stakeholders for the further incorporation of extracurricular activities within the education system as a means of providing young people with a viable alternative to deviant and delinquent activity. The management of schools must incorporate such activities within the timetable to ensure the appropriate balance in the curriculum.

The Committee recommends that the Ministry facilitate a registry of NGOs, CBO, other organisations and individuals who are involved in extracurricular activities such as Girl Guides, the Cadet Force, St John's Ambulance, retired sportsmen, coaches, martial artists, musicians and others willing to do volunteer work. Once the Registry is properly vetted, schools can then draw upon this diverse pool of professional experience and talent when developing an extracurricular programme.

Revision of the Education Act

3.2.29 The Committee was informed that the MoE was in the process of reviewing the Education Act Chapter 39:01. A series of consultations to obtain recommendations for improving the governance of the Education System was conducted and the issue of violence and indiscipline was an area specifically targeted by the MoE. In particular, the MoE is reviewing sections 83 and 84 of the Act which addresses parental responsibility for compulsory student attendance. The MoE also indicated that there is also need to consider for inclusion:

- parents' responsibility for damage to school property and personal injury to victims of violence; and
- the requirement for compulsory parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences and counselling sessions.

3.2.30 In addition, we noted the recommendation that the role of Social Workers be included in the Education Act Chapter 39:01 and further recommended a review of the organisational structure between principals, social workers, teachers and guidance officers so that there is a clear understanding of the roles of each professional in the school environment.

CURRICULUM REFORM

3.2.31 At the hearings some stakeholders suggested curriculum reform as another strategy for reducing the level of anti-social behaviour among primary and secondary school students. It was recommended that students should be exposed to religious instructions/ teachings as a means of perpetuating a greater sense of morals, tolerance and understanding among the student population. The Committee also noted the negative effects poor academic performances was having on the self-esteem of primary school students who despite their age, were struggling to cope with the school curriculum. This situation result in such students demonstrating their frustration with the "system" by bullying fellow students and getting involved in other delinquent forms of behaviour.

3.2.32 One Guidance Officer suggested that the 'post-primary' system be reintroduced as it streamed underperforming students to more vocational type programme. The view was also expressed that the promotion of Form 3 students should not be automatic but provide the option

for students to seek alternative schools. There are multiple intelligences and although a student may be underperforming in one area, but may be proficient in another. Additionally, it was noted that some kinaesthetic children may be lost and may act out.

3.2.33 The Anti-bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ABATT) indicated that it agreed that there should be specialised components of the schools' curriculum that exposes students to anger management, conflict resolution and mediation from as early as the pre-school age and continuing throughout the primary and secondary school levels. In addition, it was recommended that children should be taught courtesy, manners, good behaviour and civil interaction.

3.2.34 Both the MoE and TTUTA shared the view that the current approach to the delivery of the curriculum places emphasis on completing the syllabus and preparing for and passing exams rather than on developing students in a holistic manner. As such, there is a focus on teaching the subject rather than the child. The Committee noted that TTUTA has been calling for a radical overhaul to the approach to education beginning with national dialogue that would focus on the nature and purpose of education to address this issue. Further, TTUTA indicated that Trinidad and Tobago has been operating with an antiquated colonial type system which has been adapted as far as is possible.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.35 The Committee appreciated the input of stakeholders on the potential impact the school curriculum may have on the development and behavior of students. There appeared to be consensus among stakeholders that there is a real link between curriculum content and the responsiveness of students to learning. The Committee believes that teaching methodology should aim to develop students holistically as opposed to focusing on completing the syllabus and examination success. In addition, developing an inclusive education system that is responsive to various learning styles, abilities and talents of students should be one of the main objectives of the Ministry of Education.

3.2.36 Arguably, the Continuous Assessment Component (CAC) was an attempt to widen the criteria by which a student's performance is assessed. Given the Committee's appeal for a more holistic approach to education, we believe that it is incumbent on the Ministry of Education to develop a feasible alternative to the CAC.

- A. In the event that such an assessment has not been conducted, we recommend that the Ministry conduct an assessment of the primary and secondary school curriculum with a view to determining how conducive they are to the ‘multiple intelligence’ of the student body. The findings of this review exercise should inform further reforms in the existing curricula.
- B. We recommend that the curriculum, particularly at the secondary school level, should include a “life skills” component whereby students can be taught how to cope with life’s myriad of issues and challenges.
- C. In order to promote a more inclusive education system, we recommend the urgent development of a properly structured programme for directing persons with special learning needs out of the mainstream classroom into specially customizing learning environments.
- D. We recommend that the MoE expose students who are more inclined with practical learning methods to technical/vocation certification E.g. CVQs early in their secondary school career. Under proper career guidance, these students can be motivated to pursue skilled centered education at the secondary and tertiary levels.
- E. We recommend that students displaying deviant behaviour be assessed by the SSSD as early as at the pre-school age. This recommendation is subject to the Ministry acquiring the necessary parental approvals.

Inquiry Objective Topic 3

Effectiveness of multi-sectoral efforts and rehabilitative services for students

ROLE OF THE NPTA

3.3.1 The NPTA indicated that the Association's four (4) objectives are to:

- a. promote the welfare of children and young persons at home, school, church and in the community;
- b. raise the standard of living at home and in the community;
- c. secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and young persons; and
- d. bring into closer relationship the home and the school so that parents and teachers may co-operate intelligently in the training of the child.

3.3.2 The Committee noted that these and other objectives are outlined in the Act that incorporated the Association i.e. Act No. 18 of 1976. MoE indicated that all schools are required to establish Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) but there is no policy that mandates a school to be affiliated to the NPTA. The NPTA confirmed that the MoE does not have a policy to stipulate that schools be required to join the NPTA. With respect to objective (d) above, the NPTA created a Parent Manual and copied the pages concerning parental involvement and the responsibility of parents and distributed them across the country. The NPTA advised that it was involved in three hundred (300) schools which comprises PTAs that are financially and actively involved and those that are inactive.

3.3.3 The Committee took note of the connection between schools with high numbers of suspension and those that are not affiliated to the NPTA. The NPTA espoused that from analysing its own data, schools with well-structured PTAs were more disciplined.

3.3.4 The NPTA was requested to engage in a Citizens Security Programme for fourteen (14) months in two (2) high risk areas and for three (3) months in a third high risk area. To involve children in the programme, the NPTA engaged in community visits to parents. The NPTA indicated that they found this programme to be a suitable rehabilitative option for students particularly for those portraying violent behaviour. Further, the NPTA recommended that the programme be extended as

it provides an opportunity to directly engage the community and parents of 'at risk' and deviant students.

3.3.5 The NPTA also promotes their Health and Family Life Education Programme (HFLE) which covers topics such as mannerism, personal hygiene, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and good behaviour.

Improving Parent Participation

3.3.6 The information received from various stakeholders suggested that the active involvement of parents in the education of their children is critical to their success. However, the level of attendance at PTA meetings in many schools is poor. **Work Commitments was cited as one of the main reasons why parents are unable to attend PTAs and other school meetings. There is need for a national policy to allow parents time-off from their respective jobs to attend PTAs. Failing this, PTA meetings on Saturdays is recommended.**

3.3.7 Additionally, we noted the positive effect of parental involvement in one primary school where parents were invited to assist in supervision during the lunch period. Further, the Committee took note of a recommendation that social media could be used to interact with parents, teachers and school administrators. Incentives for parents to encourage greater attendance at meetings was also suggested.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.3.8 Given the importance of parental involvement to the development and effectiveness of schooling, we concur that parental involvement should be a priority in all schools particularly schools where there is a high level of violence. Existing mechanisms for promoting parental involvement such as PTAs are useful. However, there appears to be a need for a more flexible and innovative approach which can be aided by the use of Information and Communication Technology.

A. We recommend that the Ministry of Education hold discussions with the NPTA and a sample of schools with a view to developing new and innovative strategies that would encourage and facilitate greater parental interaction with the school's administration through the use of ICT. As a start, consideration should be given to facilitating live online viewing of meetings for the benefit of parents who cannot be physically present

- B. We recommend that the MoE develop the necessary policy and guidelines to allow schools to utilize the various forms of communication including social media to communicate with parents, teachers and school administrators.**
- C. We recommend that the Ministry of Education each student to provide the school with the contact information for two other relatives or references (in addition to the contact information for parents/guardian) who can be called upon to engage with school administrators and/or account for a student as the need arises.**
- D. We recommend that the Ministry of Labour develop a policy of time-off for employees to attend PTA meetings.**

TTPS, COMMUNITY POLICING DEPARTMENT

3.3.9 The Committee was informed that in the nine (9) police Divisions there are Community Police Officers who are mandated to make daily visits and patrols to schools in the respective districts and also hold lectures in schools on an ongoing basis. A principal indicated that this has been her experience at her school.

3.3.10 During the Committee's hearing with officials of the Community Policing Secretariat it was submitted that officers would strive to develop working relationships with Principals and School Supervisors of schools falling within their jurisdiction so that concerns can be attended to in a timely manner. Although the response time of the police service to requests for assistance by a school varies, the Principal of one primary school indicated that in his experience, the school receives quick responses from the TTPS, most times within 10-15 minutes. It was recommended that police presence be increased at schools to instill respect and to promote discipline and that the TTPS establish a guideline with respect to response time to incidents in schools.

Police Youth Clubs

3.3.11 The Committee was informed that Police Youth Clubs (PYCs) were formed forty-two (42) years ago in 1974 with two PYCs located at Cocorite and John John. As at February 2016, there was an aggregate of one hundred and twelve (112) PYCs located throughout Trinidad and Tobago, with

ninety-seven (97) in Trinidad and fifteen (15) Tobago, a total of ten thousand, five hundred (10,500) participants. The Clubs are governed by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) constitution and is chaired by the Commissioner of Police. The tenets of the club involve spiritual development, sporting and cultural activities, social and community and education. Students involved in the programme undergo a series of training during their period of suspension. The Clubs targets persons between the ages of 5 to 25 years old.

3.3.12 The Committee noted that in areas where there are established PYCs there has been a reduction in serious crimes and minor offences. The Committee was also informed that, the PYC is seeking to form an alliance with the MoE to advance the initiative in primary schools and more particularly in secondary schools. It was mentioned that the PYC was recommended to reach both students who are facing challenges, as well as those who are well-behaved, so that the interfacing between both types of students can assist those who face challenges. Notwithstanding, it was indicated that the clubs must be able to function during school hours at least once per month as well as after school. This would require adjustment to the time-table.

Crime Intervention for Troubled Youth (CITY) programme

3.3.13 The Committee was informed that an initiative of the PYC is Crime Intervention for Troubled Youth (CITY) which began with the Sangre Grande and the St. James PYCs. This programme requires parents or guardians of suspended students to visit the respective police youth clubs, so that both parent and child can benefit from rehabilitative counselling with the assistance of volunteer professionals, social workers and trained police officers. A progress report is then sent to the principal of the respective school. Ongoing follow-up on the students' progress is done with the school via the respective Principal. This facilitates continuous collaboration amongst the PYC, Community Police and Schools through the Principal. The Committee was informed that since the programme's inception, many professionals have been providing their voluntary services to the initiative. As a result, students have a role model to provide them with guidance. Further, the Committee noted that although some reoffenders are identified during follow-up sessions they are minimal in number.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.3.14 The Committee took note of the fact that the increase in Community Policing presence in schools is an effective deterrent to deviant behaviour by students. This supports the philosophy that there must be positive role models (both male and female) who can guide and mentor young people. The presence of authoritative figures within the school compound and in school activities in general may assist in engendering greater respect for authority, rules and order among students.

- A. We recommend that the MoE consider the merits of implementing a programme that will allow students that are indiscipline or display violent tendencies to interface with role models from the various backgrounds. These role models can be recruited from the military and protective services, the medical, legal and other professional cohorts. We believe that such an initiative may encourage students to channel their energies into aspiring to do something meaningful and positive with their lives as opposed to being delinquent.**

- B. We recommend that the MoE launch a Roster of Volunteers who may be willing to mentor students or to be a “Big brother” to students who display indiscipline and delinquent tendencies. Person must be properly vetted before they are entered on the Roster. A stipend for these volunteers should also be considered.**

Alternative strategies for dealing with youth violence or violence among students

3.3.15 The MoE advised that it has not considered introducing “**boot camps**” as a measure to treat with school violence. Likewise, the Community Policing Unit acknowledged that the issue of boot camps has not been discussed. However, we noted that some students who appeared before the committee suggested that boot camps should be considered. The NPTA, ABATT as well as the Psychologists did not endorse the use of Boot Camps as a measure to treat with school violence but instead recommended that **delinquent students should be involved in community service, introduced to extra-curricular sporting activities and providing services to the schools themselves, such as classroom cleaning and other relevant chores.** However, it was submitted

that these activities should be implemented in such a way that it does not lower the self-esteem of the child.

3.3.16 The Committee learned that at Naparima Girls High School parents are asked to sign a “**behavioural contract**” on behalf of their child at the time of enrolment. The school contended that this contract has proven useful in maintaining the standard of behaviour at the school. It was also recommended that there should be **peer to peer counselling and training** for prefects as a measure to curb violence in schools. In addition, we noted the recommendation of the Catholic Board representative that all schools should have an action plan for discipline.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.3.17 The Committee was pleased to receive the perspective of students and teachers on the issue of alternative methods of addressing school and or youth violence and delinquency. There was a common view among stakeholders that addressing the issue of student or youth violence required an incremental, methodical and holistic approach. Arguably, our society has become more violent and perhaps the violence that is now present within the education system is a reflection of the realities of our society. As such, addressing school violence is akin to addressing the proliferation of violence across the society.

- A. The Committee strongly supports the view that community service can make a major difference for ascribing discipline to students with deviant behavioural tendencies. Such service can include service to the school itself as well as the wider community.**
- B. The National School Code of Conduct (2009) outlines the obligations of all stakeholders in the education system as it relates to forging a peaceful and productive school environment. As such, we recommend that the relevant aspects of the Code of Conduct be properly communicated to parents and students at the time of enrollment into primary and secondary schools. Workshops should be arranged to provide verbal explanations of the meaning and implications of the various Codes of Conduct.**
- C. We recommend that a Peer counselling and mediation programme be established in all Secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, consideration should be given**

to targeting candidates for Prefects and Head Girls/Boys who will act as exemplars to the wider school community.

TREATING WITH BULLYING

Forms of Bullying

3.3.18 Based on evidence received the two (2) most prevalent forms of bullying taking place in schools in Trinidad and Tobago are (1) **physical bullying** such as hitting shoving, punching and (2) **mental bullying** for instance, name calling, “Taxing”, that is, the taking of money and other valuables from a student against his or her will. In most instances this form of bullying involves older students taking advantage of younger students. Notwithstanding, bullying also occurs among similar age groups or cohorts. In the absence of money, bullies take other personal items from their victims.

Factors Contributing to Bullying

3.3.19 The Committee relied on the experiences of the various stakeholders to acquire an understanding of the conditions or factors that motivate a student to engage in bullying. Some of the motivating factors included:

- Poor academic attainment and challenges with coping with the curriculum/syllabus;
- emotional and behavioural disorders;
- Parental bereavement or some loss that may not have been addressed.

3.3.20 As such, an Education and Child Psychologist who appeared before the Committee suggested that the bully should also be examined as a victim who has needs that are not being met. The psychologist also shared that the victim of bullying is perceived by the bully as being “different” or in some ways inferior which may have various connotations. Victims of bullying may even become bullies as a means of retaliating for the pain he/she endured. Suicide, mental illness and or physical illness are some of the detrimental effects bullying may have on the victim.

3.3.21 Commenting on the capacity of educators to deal with these behaviour profiles, one psychologist suggested that teachers are not equipped to deal with emotional and behavioural issues therefore, most issues facing students are not properly diagnosed. She advocated for proper diagnostic

assessments which should be multidimensional and should include the student, parents and teachers. Likewise, she highlighted the importance of knowing the history of the student.

Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago

3.3.22 The Committee was informed that the association has offered support to approximately thirty-four (34) schools most of which are located in the southern region. However, despite being constrained by resources, the ABATT indicated its willingness to work with the MoE to teach children about anger management, conflict resolution and mediation skills. Furthermore, the ABATT is also desirous of implementing an *Anti-bullying Anonymous Reporting Club* which is intended to provide children with the confidence to report any acts of violence and bullying. We noted that the objective of the Club is to use this system to collect statistics to determine the level of violence in school. Further, it is anticipated that it would assist in containing and resolving the issues within the school system instead of the judicial system. The ABATT is willing to work with all stakeholders towards successfully implementing its initiatives but is working to acquire the necessary authorization from the MoE before it proceeds.

Dealing with cyberbullying

3.3.23 The Committee was informed by the MoE that Cyber Bullying is comprehensively addressed in the revised Secondary School Curriculum and a Module on Cyberbullying has been included which outlines the harmful effects of cyberbullying and the merits of cyber wellness practices. Topics include forms of cyberbullying; harassment and threats; impact on students and advice to victims of cyberbullying. The initiatives being pursued by the MoE regarding this issue include:

- a. Creation of campaigns and programmes for students specifically aimed at understanding, recognizing and responding to cyber bullying;
- b. Provision of workshops for parents through Parenting-in-Education programmes on the various forms and impacts of cyber bullying on children and how to identify the signs; and
- c. Inclusion of a module in teacher training which focuses on cyber bullying and cyber wellness awareness for implementation in the classroom through workshops offered by the ICT Unit of the Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD) of the Ministry of Education.

3.3.24 The Cyber-Crime Unit of the TIPS indicated that the unit received fourteen (14) cases and twenty-five (25) cases of online bullying involving students in 2014 and 2015 respectively. The representative indicated that the Unit has been encountering challenges in investigating reports since the evolution in ICT is ahead of the legislation. Also in instances where the police receives sufficient evidence to proceed with a matter, parents are reluctant to have their children involved in lengthy court processes. Finally, the Committee was informed that the Cyber-Crime Unit visits schools to conduct lectures as well as to undertake investigations to identify perpetrators involved in cybercrimes.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.3.25 Based on the information acquired, it would be reasonable to conclude that bullying is present in different forms in our education system. The extent to which incidents of bullying are prevalent would vary among schools. Information received from stakeholders interviewed suggests that “taxing” is a very popular form of bullying. The Committee also noted that in schools where physical bullying is infrequent, there have been reports of cyber-bullying in the form of “online character tarnishing”. The impact of physical and mental bullying are significant and have the potential to seriously impact the victim. Students who are interested in learning should be allowed to do so without feeling threatened and intimidated.

3.3.26 We noted that there are Anti-bullying initiatives that are being pursued by different stakeholders, therefore inter-agency collaboration should be pursued in order to address this issue.

A. the Ministry should undertake a feasibility assessment to determine which anti-bullying initiatives have the highest potential for success and implement those initiatives after consultation.

B. We recommend that the MoE make representation to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs regarding the need to ensure that Cyber Offences/Crime Legislation include provisions regarding the various forms of cyberbullying involving minors/children.

The presence of school Gangs

3.3.27 The MoE indicated that its strategy to treat with school violence particularly gangs, involves strengthening its inter-agency and inter-ministerial collaborations which includes working with the TTPS. However, the Ministry submitted that it was difficult to determine whether groups of students who engage jointly in disruptive behaviour are affiliated with mainstream criminal gangs. Therefore, the assistance of the police is critical in this regard. Officials of the TTPS agreed that both an integrated and in-depth approach is required for treating with the issue. TTPS also gave the assurance that students can contact the Community Police if they witnessed any gang violence and there will be a rapid response.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.3.28 The presence of gang-styled activity within our nation's schools is of great concern, as the continued proliferation of this type of activity will be detrimental to the Ministry's efforts to make schools a safe and productive learning environment. Gangs by nature are constantly seeking to recruit new members. The potential security risk of a group of students engaging in delinquent activity is much more significant than a single disruptive student. As consequence, there must be a zero-tolerance approach to all such joint-enterprises. The Committee noted that the National Schools Code of Conduct prohibits gang related activity in schools.

3.3.29 The Anti-Gang Act 2011 provides limited protection to schools from being influenced by gangs. Section 11(3) provides that:

“Notwithstanding subsection (2), a person who within five hundred metres of a school or place of worship recruits to a gang a person whom he knows or ought to know is a child commits an offence and is liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for twenty years.”

- A. We recommend that the MoE continue to liaise closely with the TTPS to assist Teachers, Deans and Schools Administrators in detecting gang activity and to sensitise them on the Anti-gang Act and the school environment.**

- B. We also recommend that each school be mandated to develop a whistle-blower mechanism through which students with information on gang activities and other delinquent activities within their school can make anonymous reports to their teachers.**

This mechanism should impose a timeframe on the school's management to act on reports.

Rehabilitative services

The Effectiveness of counselling

3.3.30 With respect to assessing the impact of counselling interventions on students, the MoE indicated that it has experienced some challenges in identifying specific criteria for measuring the success/outcome of counselling as this is a qualitative approach. Feedback from Guidance Officers and Social Workers on this matter suggested that students generally responded positively to counselling. The SSD submitted that although progress is made through counselling, it is easily diminished when students return to their communities or home. As a consequence, the SSSD is challenged in terms of maintaining the gains made through counselling because of the environment to which their students are exposed.

Special Education Unit

3.3.31 The MoE advised that students with diagnosed special needs, such as emotional behavioural disorders may display violent tendencies. Students who have been identified as requiring the assistance of the Special Education Unit are visited by a representative of the Unit to determine the extent of support required.

3.3.32 TTUTA highlighted that in an average classroom, approximately 25 to 30 percent of the students have some level of special need and teachers are not trained to identify such students. TTUTA has taken the initiative to partner with the Canadian Teachers' Federation for the last four (4) years to train its teachers during the July/August vacation to detect special needs in students. TTUTA contended that support for persons with "special needs" is still largely undertaken by NGOs and special interest groups and the State has not accepted its responsibility to effectively treat with special education.

RECOMMENDATION Special-needs students should be identified and offered the necessary remedial assistance.

Support provided by Guidance counsellors and social workers

3.3.33 Evidence indicated that Guidance Officers (GOs) are responsible for academic counselling, for career path and for treating with personal social issues such as self-esteem, anger management or personal identity.

3.3.34 School Social Workers deal with moderate to severe psychological issues by adopting a selective and targeted approach. Selective interventions involve group sessions where topics such as anger management, human sexuality and inappropriate behaviour are discussed whereas targeted interventions involve referrals and counselling at the individual level.

3.3.35 The Committee was informed that of one hundred and sixty-four (164) positions for GOs, one hundred and fifty-one (151) have been filled and of one hundred and nine (109) Guidance Counsellors (GCs), ninety-eight (98) are filled. The MoE indicated that currently, there is a 1:1 ratio of GO/GC to schools at the Secondary level with the exception of two Secondary Schools that share one GO. The MoE is striving to achieve the same ratio at the Primary School level which currently is (1:4) or one GO/GO to four schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Additional GO and SW must be recruited to boost the amount of student support services available. The Ministry submitted that its vision was to also achieve the international standard which is defined by officers to the number of students. An ideal ratio in this regard is one officer to two hundred and fifty students (1:250) and one to five hundred and seventy one (1:571) for schools with moderate challenges. The Committee recommends a student ratio of one Social Worker to two hundred and fifty students (1:250). This was the ideal size as indicated by experienced field workers.**
- B. Adopt programmes such as a fathers' programme called from *Foundation to Finish* which provides the opportunity for SWs to engage fathers as adopted in the Caroni District.**
- C. As far as possible, the parent(s) of a student who has been suspended or is the subject of correctional action, should be equally exposed to appropriate counselling. Allowing parents to benefit from counselling and other psycho-social interventions may assist in**

improving the environment in which the child exist, particularly as it concerns the home in which the child resides.

School psychologists

3.3.36 The Committee was informed that there are six (6) psychologists available to treat with severe cases within the primary and secondary school system. A multidisciplinary team consisting of the Senior Guidance Officer, Social Workers and Special Education Teachers determine the cases to be referred to the Psychologist. The Psychologists also conduct psycho-educational assessments.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.3.37 The Committee acknowledges the need for additional support for schools from Guidance Officers and Social Workers particularly in schools where there are high incidences of violence. The burden placed on Guidance Officers and Social Workers some of whom are assigned to up to seven (7) schools was also noted.

We recommend that the MoE undertake the necessary recruitment procedures with a view to filling existing vacancies in the positions of Guidance Officer and Social Worker. In future, the selection process for these positions should include psychometric testing and or a suitable methodology for assessing whether the candidate's has a suitable personality.

Your Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of the Parliament.

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir
Chairman

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP
Vice-Chairman

Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP
Member

Brig. Gen. (Ret) Ancil Antoine, MP
Member

Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP
Member

Ms. Nadine Stewart
Member

Mr. Rohan Sinanan
Member

Ms. Khadijah Ameen
Member

November 16, 2016


APPENDICES



APPENDIX I

The Business of the Committee

The Business of the Committee includes examining and report on issues relevant to the following Government Ministries:

1. Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts
 2. Ministry of Education
 3. Ministry of Health
 4. Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development
 5. Ministry of Public Administration and Communications
 6. Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
 7. Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs
 8. Ministry of Tourism
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APPENDIX II

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS MEETING ROOM (EAST), LEVEL 6, AND THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON FRIDAY FEBRUARY 26, 2016

PRESENT

Members

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP
Ms. Nadine Stewart
Mr. Hafeez Ali

Chairman
Member
Member
Member
Member

Secretariat

Mr. Julien Ogilvie
Ms. Kimberly Mitchell
Ms. Katharina Gokool

Secretary
Assistant Secretary
Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh
Ms. Khadijah Ameen
Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe

Vice-Chairman (Excused)
Member (Excused)
Member

OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Ms. Gillian Macintyre
Ms. Natasha Barrow

Permanent Secretary
Deputy Permanent Secretary

Mr. Claudelle Mckellar
Mr. Harrilal Seecharan
Mr. Ashram Deoraj
Dr. Kathy Bharrathsingh
Ms. Karen Cooper

Deputy Permanent Secretary
Chief Education Officer
Director, School Supervision
Manager, Student Support Services
Systems Analyst II

OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Mrs. Enez Joseph

W/Asst. Commissioner (Ag.),
Community Relations

Mr. Curtis Paul

Superintendent, Community
Relations

Ms. Ellen Lewis

Head, Corporate Communications

Mr. Dale Joseph

Sergeant (Ag.) Cyber-Crime Unit

Mr. Michael Pierre

Asst. Superintendent (Ag.), Public
Information Officer

CALL TO ORDER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and welcomed those present.

1.2 The Chairman informed Members that Ms. Ameen asked to be excused from the meeting.

1.3 Members were informed that the Committee was still awaiting a formal notice of resignation from Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh before the Committee can proceed with the election of a Vice-Chairman.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE SECOND MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 20, 2016

2.1 The Chairman asked Members to examine page by page, the Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday January 20, 2016.

2.2 There being no corrections or omissions, the Minutes were confirmed on a Motion moved by Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein and seconded by Ms. Nadine Stewart.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1 With reference to paragraph 4.3, the Chairman indicated that Members were invited to re-examine the revised list of *Issues for Inquiry* and provide feedback to the Secretariat.

3.2 Members were informed that Ms. Cudjoe submitted amendments to the Secretariat which, pending finalisation, will be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

3.3 With reference to paragraph 5.3, the Chairman informed Members that two (2) Reports relevant to the Committee's inquiry were forwarded via email. A request was made to have the Reports re-sent to Members.

3.4 With reference to paragraph 5.7, the Chairman informed the Committee that by correspondence dated January 27, 2016, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and the Commissioner of Police, were invited to provide written submissions and attend the public hearing scheduled for February 26, 2016.

3.5 Members were also informed that the Secretariat contacted the following organisations to determine the extent of their involvement in youth/student outreach:

- a. the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF);
The TTDF indicated that it has no programmes aimed at schools and school children
- b. the Cadet Force,
No information was forthcoming.

3.6 The Secretariat was asked to determine the following:

- a. the agency under which the Cadet Force falls; and
- b. the schools in which the Cadet Force is active.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REVISED LIST OF PROPOSED AREAS OF INQUIRY

4.1 Members were reminded that the Committee is always open to consider topics which can be added to the revised list of *Issues for Inquiry* and prioritised as needed.

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR AN INQUIRY INTO THE STATUS OF THE STATE'S INTERVENTIONS DIRECTED AT SOCIALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

5.1 The Chairman informed Members that the *Draft Proposal for an Inquiry into the status of the State's interventions directed at socially displaced persons* was circulated to Members via email on January 27, 2016.

5.2 Members were unable to review the document for discussion at the meeting and were asked to provide comments on the draft proposal within one (1) week to facilitate the finalisation of the document at the Committee's next meeting.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS RE: AN INQUIRY INTO THE CURRENT LEVEL OF VIOLENCE AMONG STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON PHYSICAL AND CYBER BULLYING

6.1 Members were informed that pre-hearing submissions were received from the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) and circulated to Members via email.

6.2 The Chairman indicated that submissions were also sought and received from the Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago and the Naparima Girls' High School, RBC Young Leaders Group-2015, and were circulated to Members via email.

6.3 Members were informed that three (3) Issues Papers were prepared by the Secretariat based on the submissions received, and that the Issues Papers were circulated to Members on February 24 and 25, 2016 via email.

6.4 A discussion ensued as to the approach to questioning that would be adopted during the hearing.

OTHER BUSINESS

Proposed Date and Agenda of Next Meeting

7.1 The Chairman suggested that during the public hearing the Committee should seek to address the issue in broad terms and proffer solutions. Thereafter, hearing with specific stakeholders can be convened.

7.2 Members were invited to recommend other stakeholders the Committee can hold discussions with as it concerns its ongoing inquiry.

7.3 The Committee agreed to engage in discussions with the following stakeholders:

- c. the National Parent Teachers' Association (NPTA);
- d. the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (TTUTA);
- e. the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Psychologists;
- f. St. Jude's Home for Girls;
- g. St. Michael's Home for Boys; and
- h. School students

7.4 It was agreed that the Committee's next meeting will be held on Wednesday March 16, 2016 at 9:30 a.m.

Suspension

7.5 The Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:02 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MOE) AND THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE (TTPS)

8.1 The meeting resumed in public at 10:12 a.m. in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room.

8.2 The Chairman welcomed the officials of the MoE and the TTPS and introductions were exchanged.

8.3 The Chairman reminded those concerned of the objectives of the inquiry and made opening remarks.

8.4 Detailed below are the issues/concerns raised and the responses which were proffered during the hearing with the officials of the MoE and the TTPS:

i. Opening Statement by the Permanent Secretary, MoE

a. The issue of violence among students in schools is a complex one which has to be looked at in several levels such as:

- the culture of violence;
- the removal of corporal punishment in schools;
- low levels of literacy and numeracy;
- the socio-economic status of students;
- parent and care-giver involvement;
- weak supervision and the quality of teaching;
- schools' administrative mechanisms and structures; and
- high levels of vacancies.

Solutions and measures which the Ministry is pursuing include:

- risk profiles in terms of incidents in schools;
- collaboration among Deans, Vice-Principals, Principals and Senior Teachers to improve supervision;
- the introduction of coaches for numeracy and literacy in schools;
- conducting parent-in-education workshops;
- collaboration with the Teaching Service Commission to fill vacancies;
- the consideration of a special selection of staff for schools with challenging environments and populations;
- collaboration with other agencies such as the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services;
- peer mediation;
- the RAPP programme;
- Police Youth Clubs (PYCs); and

- encouraging extra-curricular activities in schools such as Girl Guides, Scouts, RBC Young Leaders, and debating competitions.
- ii. Opening Statement by W/Asst. Commissioner (Ag.), Community Relations**
- a. W/Asst. Commissioner (Ag.) expressed gratitude on behalf of her colleagues for the opportunity to participate in the inquiry and hoped that their contributions would be of great value.
- iii. Quality of teaching**
- a. Officials of the MoE indicated that there are some teachers who have the ability to reach students and those who do not. The Ministry indicated that it is working with the Teaching Service Commission to improve the mechanisms for selecting teachers.
- iv. Parental and Care-giver involvement**
- a. Officials of the MoE indicated that its Parent-in-Education programme is an on-going exercise which the Ministry intend to expand. Officials went on to explain that the programme is voluntary and that over the last year, approximately twenty-six thousand plus (26,000 plus) parents attended three hundred (300) Parent-in-Education workshops. A further twenty-seven (27) workshops were conducted. Topics included absenteeism, treating with children with special needs, discipline, and alternative strategies to corporal punishment.
 - b. The Ministry indicated that parents and care-givers of high-risk children, or children who were referred to Student Support Services were targeted to attend the workshops. This approach was somewhat successful as some of the parents who attended the workshops have children who are repeat offenders and so provided suggestions as to the topics that would be of interest to them. These topics included learning new strategies, tools and techniques to help parents help their children.
 - c. The impact of the programme on the students will depend on the parents' and care-givers' understanding of how to empower and support their children. The Ministry indicated that it needs to monitor the numbers of repeat offenders in order to properly gauge the impact.
 - d. The MoE clarified that it is not compulsory for parents to attend Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or school conferences. However, it is the Ministry's policy that every school have a PTA.
 - e. The Ministry advanced the following suggestions to improve parental involvement:

- make it mandatory that parents attend school meetings in relation to issues that arise with their children;
 - explore the possibility of employers providing employees with time off to deal with such matters; and
 - involve both parents and students who may be suspended in conferencing and follow-up action from the Ministry's Student Support Services.
- f. The Committee recommended that the Ministry consider collaborating with the Ministry of Finance to allow parents to access National Insurance coverage in those instances where they need to be absent from work to attend a PTA Meeting, school meeting or counselling session.
- g. Officials of the TTPS indicated that their counselling sessions include parents, immediate family and the delinquent child. There is also the Crime Intervention for Troubled Youths (CITY) Programme in which parents, volunteer professionals, Social Workers, Police Officers and the suspended students work towards transformation. The TTPS also conducts follow-up on students who participated in the CITY programme to monitor their progress.
- h. TTPS officials stated that there is a very minimum rate of reoffenders emerging from the CITY programme.
- v. Police Interventions based on videos depicting violence involving female students**
- a. The TTPS will investigate these matters once the students involved can be identified. The interventions include counselling and sessions with school officials, parents and the students.
- vi. Prevalence of male-on-male, female-on-female and male-on-female violence**
- a. Officials of the MoE indicated that male-on-male violence is much more prevalent and went on to list some of the types of violent acts such as disrespect to authority, fighting without weapons and bullying among others.
- vii. Counselling and rehabilitating of young offenders through Police Youth clubs (PYC)**
- a. The Ministry has not collated empirical data on the impact of counselling provided by PYCs or Student Support Services. However, the general feedback from the Ministry's Guidance Officers and Social Workers was that the response to counselling sessions was positive. However, the Ministry

indicated that it needs to identify specific metrics in order to measure success.

- b. The Ministry identified one challenge with the use of counselling – *how to maintain the positive gains achieved?* which can be impacted/eroded by a child’s external environment.
- c. The Committee recommended that it be mandatory for troublemakers to participate in a PYC. In response, the TTPS indicated that the PYCs attract all students. The intention is to have the PYCs operate during normal school hours with the backing of the TTPS and the MoE.
- d. PYCs programmes include spiritual guidance through various religious leaders.

viii. Collating information on repeat offenders

The Ministry indicated that it does not have information concerning the incidence of repeat offenders. Instead, the Ministry records data on student suspensions and the reason for the suspension.

ix. Whether the TTPS collects data on students who reside in “high risk” communities.

- a. The TTPS indicated that it does not collate information on high-risk students but instead depends on the MoE for that type of information. Based on requests made by the MoE, the TTPS would then intervene usually through the Anti-bullying programme. The programme provides students and teachers with pertinent information and makes the distinction as to what acts would be considered a crime, a serious crime and a minor offence as opposed to a prank.

x. Are students entering Secondary School made aware of what forms of behavior are intolerable

- a. Regarding this matter the MOE stated that schools are required to utilise a School Code of Conduct, which outlines different offences and actions that are unacceptable as well as the consequences for undertaking such actions. Consequences include counselling with students and parents as well as referral to the police and the possibility of being charged with an offence.
- b. Schools are also required to develop a *Discipline Matrix* based on the School Code of Conduct.

- c. Ministry officials revealed that schools utilise a strategy called “*A Circle Time*”, which involves discussion concerning incidents and consequences during homeroom periods. The Ministry has also implemented a strategy called “*safety by design*” which identifies the areas where incidents are most likely to take place on a school’s compound and utilises a multi-team approach involving security guards, safety officers, Deans and Social Workers. The team will develop and implement protocols for various matters such as security procedure for persons leaving and entering the school compound.

xi. Frequency of Police visits to Schools

- a. There are Community Policing Officers present in the nine (9) Police Divisions who conduct daily visits, patrols and lectures in the schools. This is an on-going exercise which is also part of the community policing mandate.
- b. The TTPS submitted that instances of deviant behavior were lower in the schools with a more visible community policing presence.
- c. The Committee therefore recommended that there be a greater physical police presence in schools.

xii. The suspension of students, support to students on suspension and expulsions

- a. Depending on the infraction, a student can be suspended up to a maximum of seven (7) days. This period can be extended in serious cases.
- b. During the period of suspension, Student Support Services would engage the students and parents in counselling or provide other necessary support services. For cases of extended suspension, this will normally involve a conference with the parents, teachers and the students, chaired by a School Supervisor. The aim is to determine the best outcome for the particular child.
- c. The Education Act provides for the expulsion of students, however, the Ministry has not expelled students for the past ten (10) years. Instead, the Ministry tries to rehabilitate students.
- d. The MoE indicated that there was an increase in suspensions during the period 2014 to 2015. However, the increase may be attributed to the Ministry’s institution of a zero tolerance policy on offences/infractions.

xiii. Using Role models to inspire deviant students

- a. The possibility of having young national icons as role models for troubled students was discussed.

- b. Officials of the TTPS indicated that students are exposed to such individuals through the CITY programme which utilises young professionals as volunteers.
 - c. MoE officials indicated that the education system is one that rewards passing tests and getting good grades. It does not encourage learning or the application of learning.
- xiv. Whether there has been an actual increase in the number of Criminal offences committed by students**
- a. The TTPS indicated that there has been a consistent decrease in serious crimes, minor crimes and minor offences committed by students in schools. In 2015 there were forty-five (45) serious crimes compared to fifty-seven (57) recorded for 2014. In the areas of larceny and sexual offences, the amount was nineteen (19) each in 2015, and twenty-three (23) and twenty (20) respectively in 2014.
 - b. There were fifty-one (51) cases of minor crime in 2015 and sixty-nine (69) in 2014. There was also a total of one hundred and forty-three (143) cases of minor offences in 2015 and one hundred and fifty-four (154) in 2014.
 - c. The MoE indicated that data is collected on a school by school basis and by category of offence committed. Principals are required to record all incidents that occur in their school and make the necessary report to the MoE. The Ministry's records revealed that in 2012, at the secondary school level, there were one thousand, nine hundred and twelve (1,912) incidents such as assault with weapons, without weapons and extorting taxes.
 - d. In 2013, there were one thousand seven hundred and nine (1,709) cases, in 2014, one thousand four hundred and five (1,405) cases and in 2015, one thousand six hundred and fifty (1,650) cases.
- xv. Guidance Counsellors, Psychologists and Social Workers**
- a. There are one hundred and sixty-four (164) positions for Guidance Officers, however only one hundred and fifty-one (151) are filled. There are one hundred and nine (109) positions allotted to Guidance Counsellors and ninety-eight 98 of those positions are filled.
 - b. The ideal number of support personnel is one (1) professional per school. At the secondary school level, there is a 1:1 ratio for one hundred and twenty-five (125) schools in Trinidad. The lone exception being a Guidance Officer that has responsibility for two (2) schools.

- c. At the primary school level, the ration is approximately 1:4. The Ministry indicated that more Guidance Officers/Counsellors are needed.
- d. Guidance Officers are responsible for academic counselling and handle personal, social-type issues. They are generally preventative and undertake classroom size interventions.
- e. There are approximately six (6) psychologists who are assigned at a district level to deal with the more serious cases.
- f. Social workers handle more moderate to severe psychological issues and engage not only the child, but the community and the home.

xvi. Teacher Absenteeism

- a. The MoE indicated that there are a number of teachers who are habitually late or absent. In addition, teachers can take up to fourteen (14) days occasional and fourteen (14) days sick leave. Ministry officials admitted that this can exacerbate the problem of violence in schools.
- b. The Ministry stated that there are more than one hundred teachers who were over one thousand (1,000) minutes late. The issue is being addressed in accordance with Teaching Service Regulation 90 and a disciplinary process that has been established. Training sessions were conducted with Principals in in this regard.

xvii. Implementing a substitute Teacher system

- a. The Ministry has re-implemented the Substitute Teacher Programme, which was expanded to include primary schools with effect from November 2014. Persons may register for the programme online and principals can access the database in order to contact such substitute teachers. However, an insufficient number of persons have registered thus far.
- b. The Committee raised a concern about the duration of time an OJT is allowed to teach a class, since OJTs do not possess the relevant training/qualifications.
- c. In response, the Ministry clarified that its policy is that OJTs should not be used to supervise classes and indicated that if this was occurring, the Ministry will investigate. Trainees are usually assigned to assist Tech/Voc Teachers and School Librarians.
- d. The MoE disclosed that it has an Order of Merit for teachers who are awaiting placement. These persons were invited to register as substitute teachers,

however they cannot be utilised in instances of absenteeism as teachers cannot be replaced unless they are on leave.

xviii. Responsibility for disciplining Teachers

- a. Disciplinary processes in relation to teachers falls under the purview of the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and for students, it is governed by the School Code of Conduct.

xix. Disparity of information provided by schools

- a. Ministry indicated that it is working with the Division of School Supervision to improve the monitoring of schools and to ensure that there is compliance in terms of the reporting of all incidences to the MoE.

xx. Special Needs Students

- a. The Ministry stated that it has a Special Education Unit to handle students with special needs. The process entails the Teacher identifying the child, then an officer from the Unit will meet with the teacher to determine whether alternative strategies of intervention or a psych-ed assessment are needed.

xxi. Whether the Ministry or the TTPS are considering creating Boot Camps to rehabilitate repeat offenders and Gang Members

- a. The MoE officials indicated that the idea of boot camps as a measure to deal with repeat offenders has not been explored.
- b. The TTPS also stated that boot camps were not considered as a form of intervention.

xxii. Curriculum reform as a strategy for improving student conduct

- a. MoE officials stated that they have recognised the importance of students' involvement in extracurricular activities and have asked schools to allow students to participate in at least one activity. The Cadet Force is one such activity and it was disclosed that approximately ten (10) schools are to be commissioned in the month of March (2016)
- b. A discussion ensued on the merits of integrating proper behavior, values and socialisation into the curriculum. Officials of the MoE indicated that there is such a programme at the primary school level. In addition, it was disclosed that the Prime Minister appointed a task force to review both the primary school and the ECCE curriculum.
- c. The Ministry disclosed that it recently completed a national consultation on education which included the issue of violence among students in schools.

xxiii. Values, morals and spiritual guidance within the school curriculum

- a. In denominational schools, spiritual guidance is provided relative to the particular Religious persuasion of the school. Although students of other religions do have the opportunity to practice their faith. In the government schools, all religions are facilitated and the Ministry is looking into the merits of teaching students about religions as opposed to the specific tenets of religion.
- b. At the primary school level, values are built in to the character/citizenship module and is not directly tied to any religious perspective.

xxiv. Responsibility of Principals to manage schools effectively

- a. The Ministry indicated that it faces challenges with leadership and governance in schools and while the Principal is in charge, the MoE has required all schools to set up School-Based Management Teams.
- b. It took almost two (2) years for the Ministry to develop a School-based Management Model. The Ministry examined Models around the world and adopted the best elements in creating a customised version for Trinidad and Tobago. It also patterns best practices of local schools such as teaching and learning, parental engagement and leadership and governance.
- c. At the core of the Model is the student. It provides for the involvement of parents and the Ministry is in the process of modifying the Model to ensure the involvement of TTUTA. Thus the management of schools involves some delegation and decision making at multiple levels, and not just at the level of Principal.
- d. All school Principals are required to develop a School Improvement Plan and a School Development Plan, which identifies core areas for development. The Ministry assists Principals to develop those plans.
- e. The TTPS indicated that they have developed a close working relationship with Principals, and School Supervisors of all the schools within their jurisdiction in order to respond to concerns in a timely manner.

xxv. Opportunities for Principals to interact and share experiences

There are fraternities both at the primary and secondary school level, which facilitate meetings between school principals and school supervisors once a month.

xxvi. Success of TTPS Programmes

- a. TTPS reiterated the success of its CITY and PYC programmes and claimed that a number of persons who are now professionals would have participated in these programmes.
- b. TTPS officials gave the assurance that students can call the Community Police if they witness any gang violence and there will be a rapid response.

xxvii. Measures to improve the safety of the school environment

The Ministry indicated that it is committed to providing a safe environment for students and teachers, and disclosed that they utilise a number of strategies and mechanisms to do so. One such strategy was to improve the level of connectivity such as email, telephone, fax and other electronic media, to ensure that all schools are networked with each other and the Ministry.

xxviii. Measures to treat with gangs in schools

- a. The Ministry indicated that while officials may be able to identify groups of students engaged in disruptive behaviour, it is difficult to confirm whether these students are affiliated with gangs outside of the school environment. As such, the assistance of the TTPS is required in this regard.
- b. The Ministry has a standard approach to dealing with instances of deviance in schools, which is also applied to students suspected of being involved in gang activity. The Ministry disclosed that it has been working with the TTPS and other agencies in this regard. Patrols by Police Officers within school compounds is one such measure instituted to deter students from engaging in criminal/gang related activities.
- c. Further, the MoE is working to strengthen its inter-agency and inter-ministerial collaborations.

8.5 The Chairman invited the officials of the MoE and the TTPS to make closing remarks and thanked them for their attendance.

Requested Information

8.6 Further to the discussions that transpired during the hearing, the MoE was asked to provide data regarding the prevalence of male-on-male, female-on-female and male-on-female violence in schools.

ADJOURNMENT

9.1 The meeting was adjourned at 12:21 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

March 07, 2016



MINUTES OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS MEETING ROOM (EAST), LEVEL 6, AND THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON

WEDNESDAY MARCH 16, 2016

PRESENT

Members

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Chairman
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP	Member
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP	Member
Mr. Hafeez Ali	Member
Ms. Khadijah Ameen	Member

Secretariat

Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Ms. Kimberly Mitchell	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Katharina Gokool	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh	Vice-Chairman (Excused)
Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe	Member (Excused)
Ms. Nadine Stewart	Member (Excused)

OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Davanand Sinanan	President
Mr. Martin Lum Kin	3 rd Vice-President

OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

Ms. Zena Ramatali	President
Mrs. Maureen Taylor-Ryan	1 st Vice-President
Ms. Ana Maria Jackson	General Secretary
Mr. Theophilus Nedd	Member

OFFICIALS OF THE ANTI-BULLYING ASSOCIATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Ms. Yvonne Joseph
Dr. Alicia Martin

Director
Senior Serving Member

CALL TO ORDER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.4 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. and welcomed those present.

1.5 The Chairman indicated that the following Members would be absent from the meeting:

- Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh, MP
- Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP
- Ms. Nadine Stewart

1.6 He also indicated that Ms. Khadijah Ameen may be absent or late.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 26, 2016

2.1 The Chairman asked Members to examine page by page, the Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday February 26, 2016.

2.2 The sub-items of Item 7.3 were renumbered to start from (a).

2.3 There being no other corrections or omissions, the Minutes were confirmed on a Motion moved by Mrs. Newallo-Hosein and seconded by Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Antoine.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1 With reference to paragraph 3.6, the Chairman informed Members that according to *Gazette* No. 97 of 2015, the Cadet Force falls under the purview of the Ministry of National Security. A list of schools in which the Cadet Force is active was compiled.

3.2 The Secretariat was asked to circulate the list to all Members.

3.3 With reference to paragraph 5.2, the Chairman informed Members that he forwarded his comments on the *Draft Proposal for an Inquiry into the status of the State's intervention directed at socially displaced persons* to the Secretary.

3.4 With reference to paragraph 8.6, the Chairman informed the Committee that by correspondence dated March 09, 2016, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of

Education submitted a response to the Committee's request for additional information. The response was circulated to Members via email.

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR AN INQUIRY INTO THE STATUS OF THE STATE'S INTERVENTIONS DIRECTED AT SOCIALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

4.1 Mrs. Newallo-Hosein informed the Committee that based on her experience as a former Minister of Social Development, the Ministry cannot independently remove displaced persons from the streets. She suggested that the Ministry must collaborate with the Ministry of Health, to determine whether the persons on the street are mentally unstable or otherwise.

4.2 The Committee was further informed that persons who were picked up and taken to Court were not allowed to appear due to issues such as attire, demeanour and personal hygiene.

4.3 She also shared that anti-loitering laws fall under the purview of the Police. However, upon arresting displaced persons, the Police encountered similar problems as the Court. The Ministry of Social Development had to partner with an NGO who took the responsibility to remove displaced persons from the streets and rehabilitate them.

4.4 The Chairman asked members to review the Draft Proposal and send any proposed amendments to the Secretariat by Friday March 18, 2016 to facilitate the dissemination of pre-hearing questions to the relevant stakeholders.

4.5 The Secretariat was asked to provide Members with a compilation of legislation concerning the removal of street dwellers.

4.6 The Chairman advised that based on the Committee's projected work schedule, the first public hearing on the issue of socially displaced persons may take place in the month of May.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS RE: AN INQUIRY INTO THE CURRENT LEVEL OF VIOLENCE AMONG STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON PHYSICAL AND CYBER BULLYING

5.1 Members were reminded that the Committee would be meeting with the PTA, TTUTA and the Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago.

5.2 Members were informed that pre-hearing submissions were received from the National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA) and the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA).

5.3 The Chairman indicated that an *Issues Paper* was prepared by the Secretariat based on the submission of the NPTA.

5.4 A discussion ensued as to the approach to questioning that would be adopted during the hearing.

5.5 Members were informed that the Committee would not be able to meet with all interest groups due to time constraints.

OTHER BUSINESS

Proposed Date and Agenda of Next Meeting

6.1 It was agreed that at its next meeting, the Committee will meet with a cross section of primary and secondary School Principals and students from schools with high and low frequencies of violence and deviant behavior.

6.2 Members also suggested that the Committee should engage in discussions with other stakeholders such as:

- Principals from denominational schools and schools from Tobago, and
- Peer counsellors and mediators.

6.3 It was agreed that once a Principal is invited, he/she will nominate a student to attend the meeting, subject to parental consent.

6.4 Members discussed the possibility of having two (2) meetings in April to deal with any unresolved issues concerning its current Inquiry. This discussion was not conclusive.

6.5 It was agreed that the Committee's next meeting will be held on Wednesday April 20, 2016 at 9:30 a.m.

6.6 There being no further business for discussion in camera, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 1:31 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF THE UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION, THE NATIONAL PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION AND THE ANTI-BULLYING ASSOCIATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

7.1 The meeting resumed in public at 1:40 p.m. in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room.

7.2 The Chairman welcomed the officials of the National Council of Parent-Teacher Associations (NPTA), the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA), and the Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago and introductions were exchanged.

7.3 The Chairman reminded those concerned of the objectives of the inquiry.

7.4 The Chairman acknowledged the submissions received from:

- The MoE;
- The Community Policing Unit, TTPS;
- The NPTA;
- The TTUTA; and
- The Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago.

7.5 Detailed below are the issues/concerns raised and the responses which were proffered during the hearing with the officials of the ABATT, TTUTA and NPTA:

i. Opening Statement by the President, NPTA

- a. The NPTA President thanked the Committee for inviting the Association to voice its concerns and stated that it was the Association's first appearance before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament.
- b. The NPTA President indicated that the Association's four (4) objectives are to:
 - Promote the welfare of children and young persons at home, school, church and in the community;
 - Raise the standard of living at home and in the community;
 - Secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and young persons; and
 - Bring into closer relationship the home and the school so that parents and teachers may co-operate intelligently in the training of the child.

ii. Opening Statement by the President, TTUTA

- a. The President of TTUTA expressed gratitude on behalf of his Association for the opportunity to participate in the inquiry and indicated that it was also TTUTA's first appearance before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament.
- b. The President indicated that the education system is in a state of major dysfunction and that the problem is rooted external to the school system, and therefore a joint effort at the national community level is required to treat with it.
- c. He indicated that there is need for an immediate intervention as well as a long-term strategy to craft an education system that will ensure maximum benefit to all children.

iii. Opening Statement by Dr. Alicia Martin, ABATT

Dr. Martin expressed her gratitude on behalf of the ABATT for the opportunity to participate in the inquiry. She indicated that the Association represents an effort pioneered by Mr. Jeromy Rodriguez, a student, to try and address the issue of bullying in schools.

iv. Opening Remarks by the Chairman

i. The Chairman of the Committee indicated that it is important to meet with persons who actually deal with the problems diversity as they can provide advice to the Committee as to what can be done at the level of the Committee and the Parliament.

v. “No Child Left Behind”

a. The President of TTUTA indicated that the phrase concerns ensuring that each child is able to go to school and take advantage of the schooling/learning opportunities provided to them.

b. He further explained that children must be able to access:

- A rich and diverse curriculum that will cater to their diverse needs,
- Schools that are well resourced and able to compensate for students with diminished social capital; and
- An education system that provides children with the opportunity to realise their maximum human potential.

vi. Access to School books

a. The Committee raised the issue of students from a low-income background being unable to access school books, which may result in them being put out of class. However, the President of TTUTA indicated that the MoE provides students with textbooks via a textbook rental programme.

b. The President further indicated that all students should therefore have access to the basic text books. However, some parents may be required to purchase supplementary resource text books.

c. The Committee was informed that most often, students despite having the necessary text books, would not take the books to school citing the excuse that the books are too heavy.

d. The President of TTUTA stated that teachers would sometimes adopt different methodologies to treat with students who go to school without their text books. He further stated that he was not aware that students are

put out of classrooms for not having their text books. But if it does occur, then it is an issue to be handled by the school administration and principal.

vii. Pressures exerted upon Teachers

- a. The President of TTUTA expressed the view that Trinidad and Tobago has an education system which prioritises the delivery of the academic curriculum over the education of a child as a human being.
- b. Teachers are therefore judged on the number of students who are successful at exams and how much of the curriculum they can cover within a particular time frame. This therefore places teachers under enormous pressure to teach the curriculum rather than teach the child.
- c. He reiterated the Association's call for a radical overhaul to the approach to Education and recommended that this start with a national dialogue that would focus on the nature and purpose of education.
- d. The President of TTUTA stated that Trinidad and Tobago has been operating with an antiquated colonial system, which has been adapted as far as possible. He further stated that our notion of education is that of certification and not the ability to produce good, decent, productive human beings.

viii. Implementation and Enforcement of the National School Code of Conduct

- a. The President of TUTTA indicated that all schools are expected to abide by the code of conduct and adapt it to their particular circumstances. Schools are also expected to have a Discipline Matrix which lists infractions and the consequences for committing those infractions.
- b. Principals upon instruction from the MoE, would make copies of the Matrix and provide to parents of students entering the school, to ensure that they are cognizant of what is expected of them and their children. However, the issue of enforcement arises as very often the consequences that are defined in the Discipline Matrix are not enough to treat with a particular offence.
- c. In cases where infractions are committed, a note will be sent home to the parents requesting that they report to the school to discuss the problem concerning the child. However, in most cases, parents do not show up. There are therefore challenges in enforcing the Discipline Matrix and the School Code of Conduct.
- d. In instances where a child has to be disciplined and his/her parents fail to report to the school, that child has to remain at the school. Principals cannot remove students from school unless they pose a threat to the safety and

security of other persons and students on the compound. In such instances, schools may enlist the help of the community police to take the letter to the parents and encourage them to visit the school.

- e. TTUTA expressed the view that the School Code of Conduct assumes that children go to school prepared to access schooling with a certain background.
- f. The President of TTUTA contended that it was also unreasonable to expect children who behaved in an indiscipline manner at home to behave differently when at school.

ix. Parental involvement

- a. The NPTA stated that some school administrators are averse to having PTAs. The Committee was informed that there are schools in San Fernando where the principals have “put out” the PTA and refused to have parents on the school compound.
- b. The NPTA submitted that the MoE does not have a policy encouraging schools to join the NPTA, and despite having an Act of Parliament (NPTA), principals can choose not to have a PTA in their schools.
- c. The NPTA created a Parent Manual and copied the pages concerning parental involvement and the responsibility of parents and distributed them across the country.
- d. The Chairman of the Committee expressed surprise at the NPTA’s comments on the role of the MoE in promoting PTAs in schools, since at the Committee’s previous public hearing, the MoE indicated that it was policy to have a PTA in every school.
- e. In response, the President of the NPTA stated that it was optional for schools to join the NPTA and principals use this to their advantage. Principals tend to consider PTAs favourably as a vehicle for fund-raising at the expense of promoting parental involvement.
- f. The NPTA stated that having a structured, active PTA in every school will go a long way towards stemming the incidence of school violence. It is important to have the NPTA involved in school PTAs to empower parents and explain to them their role and function.
- g. The NPTA recommended that there be some sort of policy or legislation to grant parents the time off needed to attend to matters concerning their children without the loss of remuneration.

- h. The Chairman of the Committee made a counter proposal that perhaps PTA meetings should be held on Saturday mornings in order to ensure that parents do not lose any remuneration.
- i. The NPTA indicated that they do have PTA meetings on a Saturday morning for training.

x. Teacher Training and Preparation

- a. The President of TTUTA stated that there is need to revamp the approach to teacher training. He underscored this point by referring to the fact that children of today are quite different from those from twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) years ago, especially given the advances in communication technologies.
- b. Today's children are more aware of their rights and are more inclined to challenge authority. Steps should therefore be taken to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to face the current realities. Stakeholders such as the U.W.I School of Education, the University of Trinidad and Tobago (U.T.T) and the University of the Southern Caribbean (U.S.C) should all be part of the process. The need for continuous teacher training and professional development was therefore underscored.
- c. Teachers do not undergo psychometric testing/evaluation. But TTUTA has recommended a comprehensive review of the recruitment process for teachers.
- d. TTUTA provides several training programmes for teachers on an annual basis, however the responsibility lies with the employer (MoE) to ensure that its employees are continuously exposed to professional development opportunities.
- e. TTUTA recommended the establishment of a school leadership institute to train and prepare Principals of both Primary and Secondary Schools to better manage their schools.
- f. TTUTA's primary mandate is to secure good terms and conditions of employment for teachers and to ensure that they work in safe and secure schools. However, the Association sees its mandate in a broader context and so seeks to promote Education.

xi. Teacher absenteeism and tardiness

- a. It was disclosed that there may be different circumstances which result in teachers being absent from school or in a classroom. In some instances, a

teacher may be legitimately out of the classroom or may be in another part of the school engaged in some other activity.

- b. TTUTA officials indicated that teacher absenteeism and lateness do contribute to the existence of deviant behavior among students in schools. However, in instances of legitimate absence, there is nothing a Principal can do since "Leave" is a term and condition of a teacher's employment.
- c. Further, the issue of understaffing was also raised and examples were given of Primary Schools that had to merge First Year and Second Year classes, and sometimes Standard 1 and Standard 2 classes. The MoE therefore has to ensure that all schools are adequately staffed to ensure sufficient supervision.
- d. The Substitute Teacher Programme was discussed as a solution to deal with teacher absenteeism and lateness. The Committee was informed that the programme is in place but there have been challenges in ensuring that it works. For instance, it was stated that the programme works better in primary schools as it is easier to find a substitute teacher at the primary level. It was disclosed that the process works when the minimum period needed for a substitute is ten (10) days as opposed to one (1) or two (2) days.
- e. In the secondary system it is difficult to maintain a pool of substitute teachers as one will not find hundreds of qualified persons waiting to be called to a particular school for two (2) weeks and then to another in a different part of the country for another two (2) weeks.

xii. Principals, Teachers and handling instances of violence

- a. The President of TTUTA indicated the standard procedure to be applied by a teacher during a violent incident in the class room involves the teacher trying to resolve the altercation while a student goes to the Office to get help. There are also School Safety Officers, the Principal, Vice-Principal and Deans who may be able to assist in such situations. However, Deans may not always be available as they too have teaching responsibilities. So in the interim, while help is on the way, teachers need to be able to survive the altercation.
- b. The President of TTUTA indicated that in his experience as a Principal, in cases of violence, the response of the Police is contingent on the availability of personnel. Sometimes the police would respond an hour or two hours after.
- c. The Anti-Bullying Association submitted the recommendation that there be specialised training for teachers to help empower them to deal with issues of violence in schools. The Association further recommended that the Code

of Conduct be revised. The ABATT also suggested that school bodies, at the level of Prefects, Head Boys/Girls be empowered to treat with such matters as well.

- d. ABATT also recommended that there should be mentoring programmes within the school system utilising not only external professionals but also role model students from within the school environment.
- e. The NPTA endorsed this recommendation and stated that classroom management training should be provided for teachers who cannot cope with difficult students.

xiii. The level of NPTA involvement in schools

- a. The NPTA is involved in three hundred (300) schools, out of which there are those PTAs that are financial and actively involved and those that are inactive.
- b. A concern was raised regarding the involvement of the PTA with parents of suspended students and it was disclosed that the schools identified with high incidents of student suspensions, particularly Chaguanas North Secondary, are not affiliated with the NPTA. The NPTA indicated that it is now in the process of setting up a PTA in the Caroni region.

xiv. The involvement of the Anti-Bullying Association in the school system

- a. ABATT indicated that it has visited thirty-four (34) schools, the majority of which were in the southern region of the country.
- b. The Association is not funded and so operates within its means. The Association facilitates lectures and conducts follow-up activities based on incidents which occurred in schools.
- c. The Association recommended that there should be specialised areas within the curriculum to deal with issues such as anger management, conflict resolution and mediation. The Association stated that it can assist in this regard through the hosting of workshops or addressing the issues during particular periods within the school day.
- d. ABATT also proposed the establishment of Anonymous Anti-Bullying Reporting Clubs, which would be a reporting system in which children can take note of violent incidents and make a report. The objective is to use this system to collect statistics to determine the level of violence in a school. The intention is not to create more conflict but to try and contain and resolve the issues within the school and the school system as opposed to the judicial system.

- e. The Association further recommended the following:
 - The adoption of proactive approaches with an effort towards engendering a culture of peace; and
 - Having current research on school violence.
- f. The Committee recommended that all stakeholders need to work together to address the issue of violence in schools.

xv. The participation of the NPTA in the Citizen Security Programme

- a. The NPTA stated that they found the Citizen Security Programme to be a suitable rehabilitative option for young persons, inclusive of students who display violent tendencies.
- b. The NPTA recommended the continuation of the programme as it provides an opportunity to directly engage the community and parents of “at risk” and deviant students.
- b. **Impact of neglecting under-achieving students**
The President of TTUTA was unable to provide the Committee with statistics concerning this correlation. It was further stated that the majority of students require personalised attention and methods should be identified to meet and treat with such students.
- c. The President of TTUTA agreed with the view that the majority of students who are violent and trouble-makers are those who have difficulties with their school assignments, reading and writing.

xvi. Stakeholder perspectives on Boot Camps

- a. The President of TTUTA suggested that the Minister of Education did not introduce boot camps but a programme of out-of-school suspension. The programme is based on the understanding that when a child commits an infraction that warrants suspension from school, the child is being placed right back into the environment that gave rise to the negative behavior. Instead, the child should be placed in an environment that facilitates all the relevant interventions needed to rehabilitate the child.
- b. The old approach to suspension worked on the assumption that the parents and the community would make the relevant interventions but in reality this does not happen.

- c. The NPTA did not agree with the boot camp model and instead recommended national service. Another recommendation submitted, was that of mandatory parenting sessions for those parents who have deviant children. In instances where children do not have a parent, someone must be held accountable for the child such as parent surrogate, and if no one comes forward, the children can be placed in the MiLAT or MYPART programmes to instill the necessary level of discipline.
- d. The ABATT also did not agree with the concept of boot camp and recommended mediation between parents and children. However, in instances where students may be behaving like a mini-gangs, taxing other students and engaging in violent/criminal activities within the school, they may need to be removed. The treatment of these students will be dependent on assessment.
- e. The ABATT also agreed with the NPTA's recommendation of national service and even getting students involved in a sporting programme.
- f. The Committee recommended that there be roving child psychologists, specialised in problematic children under the age of 12, who can visit schools to have sessions with those children.

xvii. Student support services

- a. The NPTA stated that there is need to have sufficient social workers, guidance officers and school psychologists within the school system to treat with defiant behaviours.
- b. The President of TTUTA stated that guidance officers attached to secondary schools, are also attached to a cluster of primary schools. There are also schools with a large number of "at-risk" and under-performing students with no additional guidance officers/counsellors.
- c. TTUTA expressed the perspective that the MoE is focusing on secondary schools when greater attention should be paid to the primary and the ECCE levels since behaviours and traits can be identified as early as those levels.

xviii. Modifying the curriculum

- a. The ABATT recommended that children be taught courtesy, manners, anger management, good behavior and civil interaction, and that these behavior norms should be included in the curriculum from as early as the pre-school level.

- b. The NPTA agreed with this recommendation and indicated that they promote Health and Family Life Education (HFLE). It was further stated that building the relationship, and the manner of interaction between parents and children are very important factors that need to be taken into consideration.
- c. The Committee recommended the re-introduction (where applicable) of extra-curricular activities such as the Girl Guides, the Cadet Force, St. John's Ambulance, and sporting activities such as football and cricket tournaments.

xix. Special Education

- a. The President of TTUTA stated that the "literature" indicated that approximately 25 to 30 percent of the students in any "normal class" will have a special need. Teachers are not trained to detect those special needs. However, TTUTA has partnered with the Canadian Teachers' Federation for the last four (4) years and facilitates a summer institute every July/August vacation to teach teachers how to identify special needs students.
- b. It was also indicated that the issue of special needs is still largely undertaken by NGOs and special interest groups. The President of TTUTA expressed the view that the State has not accepted its responsibility to effectively treat with special education.

xx. Religious Education

- a. The NPTA stated that some schools still have Religious Instruction (RI), particularly the government schools.
- b. The Chairman recommended that there be ethics and religious education on the curriculum for all schools. The NPTA agreed with this recommendation and added that such education will help build emotional intelligence in children.

Requested Information

7.6 Further to the discussions, the NPTA was asked to provide the Committee with a list of schools that have a well-structured and well-functioning PTA.

7.7 The ABATT was asked to provide the Committee with a list of schools in which it has an intervention programme.

ADJOURNMENT

8.1 The meeting was adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

April 04, 2016



**MINUTES OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT
APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION, HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS MEETING ROOM (EAST), LEVEL 6,
AND THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT,
TOWER D, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON**

WEDNESDAY APRIL 20, 2016

Members

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Chairman
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP	Member
Mr. Esmond Forde	Member
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP	Member
Mr. Hafeez Ali	Member
Ms. Nadine Stewart	Member
Ms. Khadijah Ameen	Member

Secretariat

Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Ms. Kimberly Mitchell	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Katharina Gokool	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe	Member (Excused)
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OFFICIALS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Mr. Daniel Sahadeo (Principal)	Canaan Presbyterian Primary
Mr. Carel Lewis (Principal)	Laventille Boys Government Primary
Mishael Henry (Student)	Laventille Boys Government Primary
Mr. Eric Christopher Floyd (Principal)	Moruga Anglican (Holy Cross) Primary
Rennie Nicholas (Student)	Moruga Anglican (Holy Cross) Primary
Mr. Lance Mottely (Principal)	Carenage Boys Government Primary
Kareem Spears (Student)	Carenage Boys Government Primary

OFFICIALS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Mr. Faizal Rahaman (Principal)	ASJA Boys College Charlieville
Mr. Raoul Kunjah (Student)	ASJA Boys College Charlieville
Mrs. Sharlene Hicks-Raeburn (Principal)	Barataria South Secondary
School	
Leonardo Brutus (Student)	Barataria South Secondary
School	
Mr. Robert Walters (Dean)	Brazil Secondary
Mrs. Romeeda Ali (Principal)	Chaguanas South Government
	Secondary
Charlene Charles (Student)	Chaguanas South Government
	Secondary
Mrs. Carolyn Bally-Gosine (Principal)	Naparima Girls High School
Danielle Seunarine (Student)	Naparima Girls High School
Mr. Gary Ribeiro (Principal)	Presentation College Chaguanas
Tarick Boodoo (Student)	Presentation College Chaguanas
Mrs. Alicia Lucien-Baptiste (Principal)	Russel Latapy High School
McKiyah Jospeh (Student)	Russel Latapy High School

CALL TO ORDER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. and welcomed those present.
- 1.2 Members were informed that Mr. Daniel James, Clerk of the House of Assembly, Dominica would be observing the proceedings.
- 1.3 The Chairman indicated that Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP would be absent from the meeting.
- 1.4 He also informed Members that Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh, MP, formally submitted his resignation from the Committee and that Mr. Esmond Forde, MP, was appointed to serve on the Committee in lieu of Mr. Deyalsingh.

ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN

- 2.1 The Chairman invited nominations for the post of Vice-Chairman. Ms. Ameen nominated Mrs. Newallo-Hosein. There was no seconder.
- 2.2 Brig. Gen (Ret.) Antoine nominated Mr. Esmond Forde and the nomination was seconded by Ms. Nadine Stewart.

2.3 There being no further nominations or objections, the Chairman declared Mr. Esmond Forde the duly elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE FOURTH MEETING HELD ON MARCH 16, 2016

3.1 The Chairman asked Members to examine page by page, the Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday March 16, 2016.

3.2 There being no corrections or omissions, the Minutes were confirmed on a Motion moved by Mrs. Newallo-Hosein and seconded by Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Antoine.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

4.1 With reference to paragraph 4.4, the Chairman informed Members that he submitted amendments to the *Draft Proposal for an Inquiry into the status of the State's interventions directed at socially displaced persons*.

4.2 The Chairman enquired whether Members reviewed the proposal and informed them that due to the proposed date of the hearing on Socially Displaced Persons, the Secretariat forwarded the questions contained in the proposal to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services for the Ministry's response.

4.3 With reference to paragraph 4.5, the Secretariat was asked to provide Members with a compilation of legislation concerning the removal of street dwellers. The Chairman enquired whether there was legislation dating back to the 1800s.

4.4 The Secretary informed the Chairman that the matter will be researched and the information will be forwarded to Members.

4.5 With reference to paragraph 7.6, Members were informed that the NPTA provided a list of schools that have a well-structured and well-functioning PTA. The list was circulated to Members via email.

4.6 The Chairman raised a concern that the statements made by the Ministry of Education and the NPTA as it concerns PTAs were in conflict with one another. It was recommended that the Secretary forward a copy of the verbatim notes of both parties to the Ministry of Education in order to give the Ministry an opportunity to provide an explanation.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS

5.1 The Chairman indicated that the day's proceedings would be very historic as it would be the first time the Parliament would have invited Primary and Secondary School students accompanied by their Principals to appear before a Joint Select Committee.

5.2 He assured Members that the necessary protocols were followed to facilitate the participation of the students at the public hearing.

5.3 Members were informed that correspondence was sent to the THA in respect of the ongoing inquiry. However, the response was only received on April 19th, 2016.

5.4 The Chairman identified the schools who will be represented at the public hearing. Members were reminded that the schools were chosen based on the statistics received from the Ministry of Education on schools with high and low levels of violence.

5.5 A discussion ensued on the approach to questioning that would be adopted during the hearing.

5.6 The Chairman suggested that the Committee should attempt to obtain the experiences of the different students and assure them that the information they provide will benefit the entire student population in Trinidad and Tobago. It was also indicated that the Committee should strive to make the students feel as comfortable as possible.

5.7 The Committee agreed to first meet with the Primary Schools and then with the Secondary Schools.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Inquiry re: socially displaced persons

6.1 With respect to the inquiry concerning the socially displaced, it was suggested that the Committee may need to engage the Ministry of Health and the Community Police, as these bodies are also involved in this matter.

6.2 The Chairman suggested that the Committee should aim to conclude its inquiry into school violence and the socially displaced persons and have the reports prepared before the end of the first session.

6.3 Ms. Ameen recommended that the Committee hear from Denominational School Boards in relation to its ongoing inquiry. In response, the Chairman indicated that the Secretary already invited some of the Boards to make a submission.

Date and Agenda of Next Meeting

6.4 The Chairman sought the agreement of Members to convene the Committee's meeting on April 29 in order to hear from its final group of witnesses.

6.5 There being no further business for discussion in camera, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:08 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

7.1 The meeting resumed in public at 10:15 a.m. in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room.

7.2 The Chairman welcomed the officials of the Primary Schools and introductions were exchanged.

7.3 The Chairman informed those present that the Committee considered this inquiry to be of critical importance as it was of the view that students must be given every opportunity to excel.

7.4 Detailed below are the issues/concerns raised and the responses which were proffered during the hearing with the officials of the primary schools:

- i. Opening Statement by the Principal, Laventille Boys Government Primary**
 - c. The Principal of Laventille Boys Government Primary, indicated that his school recognizes that violence and indiscipline are issues that are complex in nature and that any attempt to address these issues should adopt a multi-faceted approach. He indicated that the school has experienced indiscipline in several forms and revealed that they have instituted a number of strategies which have been successful in reducing the number of violent incidents at the school.

- ii. Opening Statement by the Principal, Canaan Presbyterian Primary**
 - d. The Principal of Canaan Presbyterian Primary, indicated that the escalating trend of violence in primary schools is a concern because it disrupts the learning environment and the peace and harmony that are supposed to be in schools.
 - e. The Principal indicated that his school has adopted several strategies to deal with the issues. He advanced the view that there is a serious disconnect between parents and the schools, and once there is strong parental involvement, then harmony and peace will be restored within the school system.

- iii. Opening Statement by the Principal, Moruga Anglican (Holy Cross) Primary**
 - a. The Principal agreed with the view of the previous Principals that violence and indiscipline are serious problems. He revealed that these problems have been creeping into the Moruga area, but his school is of the belief that once you sufficiently engage students, and their parents are 'on board', then some of these issues can be addressed.

- b. The Principal indicated that his main concern was that of instilling discipline and consequences for actions.
- iv. Opening Statement by the Principal, Carenage Boys Government Primary**
- j. The Principal indicated that violence and by extension, indiscipline, is a major problem at Carenage Boys Government Primary School. However, he further indicated that the school adopted a number of successful measures to deal with the issue.
 - k. The Principal reiterated the view that poor parenting is a major contributor to indiscipline in the school environment.
- v. Student experiences with bullies in their schools**
- c. The student from Laventille Boys' Government Primary stated that a bully usually attacks children through physical and mental bullying. Students may be beaten or told negative things to make them think badly of themselves. When the latter occurs, the negativity may remain with them up to adulthood, where they may decide to take matters into their own hands and commit suicide or murder.
 - d. The student from Carenage Boys Government Primary indicated that bullies may say bad things about the victim, take their money or may physically hurt them. He also indicated that there are bullies throughout Standards 1 to 5.
 - e. The student from Moruga Anglican (Holy Cross) Primary stated that he knew of someone who was bullied and it made him feel sad.
- vi. Has society failed children/students?**
- a. The student from Laventille Boys Government Primary shared the view that some adults may fail children.
 - b. The student indicated that bullying is prevalent since children may be afraid to tell their parents. This signals to the bully that they can continue with such behavior and move on to bully other children.
- vii. Protocol to deal with bullying on the school compound**
- a. The Principal of Carenage Boys Government Primary stated that the National School Code of Conduct provides guidelines on how to address many of the issues facing schools as it concerns violence and bullying.
 - b. He went on to explain that the first step would involve engaging with the child and having a student conference to find out the reason behind such behaviour. Depending on the severity of the issue, the next step will be to

have a conference with the parent to address the issue. The Principal stated that this may work for a period of time.

- c. The Principal of Carenage Boys Government Primary indicated that as it concerns suspension, there are issues regarding where exactly the child will be suspended to, especially his/her parent is not at home. He recommended the establishment of suspension centres.
- d. The Principal of Moruga Anglican (Holy Cross) Primary stated that the measures he utilised would involve in-school suspension which would entail the Principal taking charge of the student for a period of time, be it forty-five (45) minutes or being denied playtime.
- e. The Principal stated that this measure was based on guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education as well as the principal's discretion. In more severe situations, suspension may be utilised. However, it will not be effective unless the parent receives the notice of suspension in his/her hand. If this does not take place, the students cannot be sent out of the school.
- f. The Principal of Canaan Presbyterian Primary indicated that suspension is never a course of action for him and that since he has been principal, he has not suspended any student for the last fifteen (15) years.
- g. The Principal explained that the Minister attached to their Church would be contacted to provide counselling and guidance to the student involved. He stated that his school does not have a major issue with bullying or violence.
- h. At the Laventille Boys Government Primary, the school's established protocol would be based on the Ministry's philosophy of a zero tolerance approach to indiscipline.
- i. The Principal of Laventille Boys Government Primary indicated that the bully would be taken to the office and the matter investigated. Based on the circumstances, the victim and the bully may be called in together and apologies would be offered to the victim or money would be returned.
- j. The Principal revealed that the school documents the infractions committed by students. In instances of repetition, the victim and the bully are referred to the Student Support Services Division, for further assistance.

viii. Counselling for students

- a. It was revealed that although schools are provided with personnel from the Student Support Division, not all schools are provided with the full cadre of student support officers.

- b. The correlation between indiscipline and a non-performing child was also highlighted.
- c. The Chairman of the Committee was surprised to learn of this development as this was not articulated by the Ministry of Education to the Committee. He stated that this would need to be clarified.
- d. The Principal of Laventille Boys Government Primary indicated that the Student Support Services Division has been active at his school. The Social Worker and the Guidance Officer visit the school once per week and also collaborate with other stakeholders such as the IATF through the Hearts and Minds Programme.

ix. Parental involvement

- a. The Principal of Carenage Boys Government Primary stated that his school has a very active PTA that considers the issue of violence and indiscipline in the school.
- b. He revealed that he would invite facilitators and experts from time to time, to address parents and provide them with guidelines on how to treat with discipline in their home environment as well as bullying.
- c. The Principal further indicated that this measure has realized some success but not at the rate at which they would like it to take place. He also revealed that he took a list of parents from the PTA who would be interested in supervising and interacting with the children during lunchtime.
- d. The objective was to have the children play in a structured/supervised environment. The Principal revealed that it has worked and he has attempted to revamp it, however parents do have commitments.
- e. The Principal of Moruga Anglican (Holy Cross) Primary indicated that he recently got the scout leader for the area, and the Commissioner of Guides and Brownies to address a PTA meeting in order to discuss setting up Cubs Scouts, Brownies and Guides, football and cricket programmes in the school.
- f. The Chairman of the Committee summed up this issue as there being a need for community involvement in areas such as sporting, reading and extra-curricular activities, in cases where parents are unable to be involved.
- g. The Principal of the Carenage Boys Government Primary School recommended that there be a mandatory parenting programme at the standard 5 level which should form part of the School Leaving Certificate of

a primary school child. He further advanced that this programme be replicated at the secondary school level.

x. Root causes of bullying

- a. The Principal of Carenage Boys Government Primary stated that poor parenting or the absence of parents in the home environment is one of the root causes of indiscipline in schools.
- b. Additionally, in attempting to engage some parents of difficult students, the school administration, teacher and principal are verbally attacked. This verbal abuse may even extend to other children in the school.
- c. The Principal indicated that parents are refusing to accept that their children have a problem and/or that they too may have challenges with parenting.

xi. Adequacy of the School Code of Conduct in today's realities

- f. The Principal of Laventille Boys Government Primary expressed the view that the School Code of Conduct in its current form is inadequate. He noted that the Ministry of Education would not account for all scenarios in its document.
- g. The document is a guide and the responsibility lies with the Principal to create a school policy or school code of conduct in collaboration with teachers and students, specific to that school's circumstances. Each school's code would therefore be unique.

xii. Creating other opportunities for difficult/deviant students to shine

- a. The Principal of Laventille Boys Government Primary stated that some of those students who are involved in deviant behaviour may have other abilities, and granted an opportunity to participate in non-academic discipline, they would excel.
- b. The Committee was advised by the Principal of Laventille Boys that the primary school cricket league is still in existence and that sporting equipment is also provided to schools by the Ministry of Education. He also shared that his school arranged for past pupils and community members to come in and work with the students to hone their skills in areas such as football and cricket.
- c. Canaan Presbyterian does not have a playground and the school is overcrowded. However, when the car park is cleared, the activities can take place after school. The Principal stated that the school has a small multi-purpose hall where infant children can interact.

- d. The Carenage Boys Government Primary school has a homework centre and the community is engaged in the operation of the centre.

xiii. Schools' relationship with the Community Police, TTPS

- a. The Principal of Laventille Boys Government Primary indicated that his school has benefitted from interventions conducted by different arms of the protective services. The Community Police provided lectures to the students and the Child Protection Unit is scheduled to deliver a lecture. He also indicated that the IATF partnered with the school to bring about changes in disciplinary procedures.
- b. The Principal also indicated that the response of the police to incidents at the school was usually quick (within fifteen (15) minutes.)
- c. The Principal of Carenage Boys Government Primary stated that the police may respond quickly, but are constrained by the same issues as the schools, such as trying to contact parents.
- d. He also indicated that the police is very active in his school and that a Police Youth Club has been established. However, he revealed that students are now seeing police officers as members of the teaching staff and as a consequence they are losing respect for them.

xiv. Recommendations proffered by students

- a. The student from Laventille Boys' Government Primary indicated that times have changed and the relevant authorities need to think outside the box. He suggested that the mindsets of bullies be examined. He also suggested that members of the protective services should be assigned to interact with bullies so that they can learn to respect authority and understand how it feels to be intimidated.
- b. The student further recommended the use of boot camps and in these camps children can be shown pictures of what happens to persons who engage in violence.
- c. The Chairman of the Committee recommended that other than the teachers and the principals, other interested persons such as sporting heroes, adult role models and respected persons from the community should also go into to schools to engage with the bullies and the badly behaved students and let them know that they are there to look after the smaller children willing to do work.

- d. The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Education recruit soldiers who retire early to go into the education system as teachers since this would provide the kind of discipline and support needed in the schools.

7.6 The meeting was suspended at 11:27 a.m. to facilitate the exit of the primary school officials and the entrance of representatives of the secondary schools.

7.7 The meeting resumed at 11:35 a.m.

7.8 The Chairman welcomed the officials of the Secondary Schools and introductions were exchanged.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH OFFICAL OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS

8.1 Detailed below are the issues/concerns raised and the responses which were proffered during the hearing with the officials of secondary schools:

i. Experiences of Principals and the solutions implemented

- a. The Principal of Russel Latapy High School stated that her school caters for students who obtained a score of 0% to 30% at the SEA. She also deemed her school to be low-risk. She went on to state that the school has come a long way largely due to the various partnerships that have been established over the years. Some of these partnerships include the involvement of the Community Police.
- b. The Principal indicated that the police is very active at her school and very supportive. The school has a resident Guidance Officer who may be called out once or twice, as well as a Social Worker who would visit the school at least twice per week. The School also has two (2) Safety Officers who work with Deans to instill discipline.
- c. The School administration has a healthy relationship with MTS and meet at the head office on a monthly basis so there are no issues with regards to security. The Principal stated that once the school has its security strength, they are deployed throughout the school.
- d. The Principal of ASJA Boys College, Charlieville, indicated that his school can be considered low-risk. The school's security is provided by the ASJA Educational Board. School administrators have regular meetings with the security personnel at the school, with protocols for entry and exit of the school compound.
- e. The Principal, Deans and the Vice-Principal address the incidents of indiscipline. Regular meetings are held with the Deans fortnightly and the

Deans themselves meet on a weekly basis to plan and strategise so that as matters arise, they can act on them immediately.

- f. The Principal of Barataria South Secondary School indicated that her school is classified as high-risk and revealed that within the last five years, there have been numerous suspensions. These suspensions were in excess of at least an average of one hundred (100) per month.
- g. Barataria South Secondary has a student population of approximately eight hundred and thirty (830) to eight hundred and fifty (850). The variances in the number is due to students with irregular school attendance. The Principal clarified that despite students' inconsistent attendance record, they cannot be turned away, as they are guaranteed five (5) years of education.
- h. The Principal also stated that at her school, each form has a Dean who is responsible for discipline.
- i. The Dean of Brazil Secondary stated that the school has a low incidence of violence. He stated that there is a strong team that works with students to lower the risk of violent incidents. In addition, the school has implemented certain policies and protocols where parents are called in to have discussions on a regular basis. Suspensions are given out not so much for physical violence, but other forms of delinquent behaviour.
- j. The Principal of Naparima Girls indicated that her school is a very low risk school and its suspension rate is less than 0.6 per cent. The Committee was informed that the culture of Presbyterian schools is rooted in tradition and the prevention of indiscipline.
- k. When students enter Form 1 at Naparima Girls, the students participate in an orientation programme which sets the tone and informs students of the school's expectations as it concerns discipline and indiscipline. Students and parents are provided with a handbook that contains such guidelines.
- l. The Committee was informed by the Principal of Naparima Girls that students and parents are required to sign a "Behaviour Contract". The school also recently introduced a new document which stipulated that upper school students must have at least ninety (90) per cent attendance at school, no infractions relating to indiscipline and must participate in at least two (2) or more extra-curricular activities, in addition to excellent academic performance, in order to get a good recommendation from the school. The Principal reported that this measure has led to a reduction in absenteeism.

- m. The Principal was asked whether the “Behavior Contract” was constitutional in terms of adherence to Ministry of Education guidelines. She responded that the contract was already in place when she became Principal and she did not check to determine whether it conformed to those guidelines. As it concerns the other document stipulating ninety (90) per cent attendance, the Principal indicated that she consulted with her supervisor on that matter.
- n. The Principal of Chaguanas South Secondary School stated that the school’s vision is to provide its students with opportunities to enhance their holistic development. Religious Instruction (RI) is taught to students on a weekly basis and the school has been trying to have its students participate in extra-curricular activities such as cadets, scouts and netball.
- o. The school regularly achieves one hundred (100) per cent passes in areas such as agri-science and physical education. However, the school is characterised as high risk because it is located in a community with a high level of violence.
- p. The Principal of Chaguanas South Secondary indicated that many students come from impoverished and violent homes and this presents a challenge in motivating these students. There is a lot of bullying and assaults at the school.
- q. The Principal of Presentation College, Chaguanas indicated that the school is a relatively low risk school. The school has had to issue nine (9) suspensions in six (6) years for acts of fighting and other forms of minor violence. There has been no extended suspensions during that time and the Principal believes that the school’s tradition of discipline and the self-discipline of students is the reason for this. However, he admitted that there is bullying at the school but is concerned about the rising level of cyberbullying in the community.

ii. Students’ perspectives of bullying at their schools and the most common forms of bullying

- a. The student from Russel Latapy High School indicated that the level of bullying in his school has dropped. The main form of bullying taking place at the school is that of mental bullying and not much physical bullying. The student also indicated that taxing also takes place at his school, where the bullies approach other students and put their hands into their pockets of those students and take their money.

- b. He also stated that some bullies may try on more than one occasion to take things from one particular student and when they realised that they will not get anything, they move on to another student.
- c. The student from ASJA indicated that at his school, bullying is mainly psychological/mental in nature. This may involve a student saying hurtful things to another student. He also stated that “taxing” and cyberbullying also occurs.
- d. The student from Barataria South Secondary indicated that the school has a lot of fights that stem from students having a lack of respect for themselves and their peers. He explained that a fight may break out as a result of one student calling the other ‘stupid’ or referring to him/her in another hurtful manner.
- e. The student from Naparima Girls stated that violence is not a feature of life at the school due to the culture of the school. She indicated that there have been minor instances of physical altercations, but that the main form of bullying at her school was that of cyberbullying. She provided examples such as framing, online degradation of one’s character, impersonation, rumour-spreading, and gossiping. At the lower Forms (1 to 3), more prominent examples are name-calling and heckling.
- f. The student from Chaguanas South Secondary stated that bullying in her school takes the form of taxing where bigger students would normally target younger students. The students may get shoved or be the subject of obscenities. The Committee was informed that there are students who go to school exclusively for taxing other students. They do not go to classes but sit outside waiting to tax others, mainly from the lower Forms.
- g. The student from Chaguanas Secondary also stated that the bullies walk through classes when a teacher is not around and ask for money.
- h. The student from Presentation College indicated that the school has a few incidents that mostly stem from taxation, cyberbullying and mental bullying.

iii. Students’ perspectives on low parental involvement

- a. The student from Russel Latapy High School indicated that he agreed that students lack parental guidance but to a point. He advanced that even though some parents may be there for their children, those children still end up participating in rebellious acts. He also stated that he believes students lack time consuming activities.

iv. Regular meetings of Principals

- a. The Principal of Barataria South Secondary indicated that there are regular fraternity meetings that occur once a month as well as regular meetings with school supervisors where best practices are traded.
 - b. The Committee was informed by the Principal of Barataria South Secondary that there is an Association of Principals that host annual conferences and invite stakeholders to voice their concerns and share ideas.
- v. Interventions of Prefects/Head Boys and Girls in addressing instances of violence/bullying**
- a. The student from Barataria South Secondary indicated that one or two Prefects are assigned to every class so that in instances where students give trouble, the Prefects would speak to the individuals on a student-to-student level. If the student reacts negatively, the Prefect will then inform the Form Teacher who in turn will inform the Dean. However, in most instances the Prefects are able to manage the class as they would have a better relationship and understanding with the students.
 - b. The student from Presentation College, Chaguanas revealed that the students from his school undertook an initiative called "*The Make the Difference Anti-Bullying Campaign.*" The objective was to change the way people viewed bullying and to also make the general public aware of the issue. The campaign encourages students to stand up and speak out.
 - c. The student further advised that students involved in the campaign went around to different schools to launch the campaign. They also held interactive sessions in primary schools where the experience of bullying was reported to be that of name calling.
- vi. Adequacy of the National School Code of Conduct, and the effectiveness of the consequences**
- a. The student from Naparima Girls High School stated that she found the School Code of Conduct to be structurally sound but does not address the issue of cyber-bullying.
 - b. As it concerns the effectiveness of the consequences outlined in the School Code of Conduct, the student indicated that the main form of punishment/discipline taken by Schools is that of suspension. However, she believes that students do not see suspension as a punishment but rather as a mini-vacation. It is therefore not the most effective method. The student therefore advanced the implementation of suspension centres.
 - c. The student from Chaguanas South Secondary revealed that her school utilised extended suspensions, but this appears not to be effective as the students returned to the school with the same mindset and even worse.

- d. The student from Russel Latapy High School stated he was not in support of suspensions since in his view, they do nothing but return the child to the environment that reinforces the bad behaviour. He indicated that his school takes a different approach where they have peer resolution volunteers, and instead of suspending students, they are given school service such as helping to clean and straighten the classrooms.

vii. Peer counselling and alternative forms of discipline

- a. The student from Naparima Girls High School indicated that the school has an Anti-Bullying Campaign as well as a peer-helper system similar to that of Russel Latapy High. She stated that her school believes that in some instances, peer-to-peer counselling is much more effective since students may be reluctant to disclose certain things to Teachers and Guidance Counsellors. The students who serve as Peer-helpers receive formal training from Families in Action.
- b. The peer-helping body at Naparima Girls High School is trained to mitigate situations such as bullying and other personal issues students may face. They recognise that not only does the victim need help but so too does the bully who would also be going through different stresses.
- c. The school also has a “Big Sister Programme” where students of the upper forms are paired with one or two students of the lower forms. The programmes fosters an open relationship in which students will be comfortable to share personal issues with their “Big Sister”.

viii. Teacher Bullying and established protocol to deal with bullying on the school compound

- a. The Principal of Russel Latapy High stated that her school does not have incidences where Teachers are bullied. As for the protocol to deal with bullying, the school utilises a discipline matrix which would have been developed from the School Code of Conduct. In instances of bullying, both parties are required to fill out an Incident Report Form after which there is intervention from the Teacher, Dean and parent.
- b. The Principal of Barataria South Secondary indicated that the teachers at her school are not bullied, however there would be isolated incidents of disrespect to teachers by students. She stated that there is very little teacher-student violent confrontation. The Principal admitted, however, that some teachers feel intimidated depending on the situation.
- c. The Principal of Chaguanas Secondary expressed similar experiences as that of Barataria South Secondary. She stated that students may ‘steups’, display

negative body language or challenge a teacher. However, there are no instances of teachers being bullied.

ix. Behaviour of students in a competitive environment

- a. Barataria South Secondary has a co-curricular policy which the school has been working on. The policy provides guidelines that students who engage in co-curricular activities must follow. It also outlines the responsibilities of the students and the consequences for non-adherence to the guidelines.
- b. The Principal also indicated that the school has a period allotted to Personal Development for Forms 1 and 2 to ensure that students are able to make better decisions. Aspects of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) were used to set up the programme which is taught by teachers.

x. Factors that account for the varying levels of success in promoting discipline in schools

- a. The Principal of Presentation College Chaguanas indicated that the low level of violence at his school was due to the self-discipline of the students at the school which starts from the primary school where they are focused on their school work and sports and have little time to engage in violent activities.
- b. The Principal of Russel Latapy indicated that her school's success lies in the systems they would have put in place together with having a small student population.

xi. Existence of Student Gangs in schools

- a. The Principal of Chaguanas Secondary revealed that her school has a few gangs made up of mostly boys who vandalize school property.

xii. Teacher absenteeism and its effect on discipline in the classroom

The Principal of Russel Latapy High stated that it all goes back to the systems in place at the school. She used her school as an example and stated that classes receive daily supervision so that even if the teacher is not there, the Head of Department will arrange for supervision. In addition, there are also Deans and Safety Officers on patrol who are mandated to do clinical supervision and spot checks.

xiii. Recommendations/Solutions proffered during the public hearing:

- a. The Chairman of the Committee suggested that students be taught about conflicts and how to control their anger and to avoid using injurious words from as soon as they enter Secondary school. He further recommended that this form part of the school curriculum.

- b. The Chairman recommended that there be laws to regulate cyber-bullying with penalties for persons who injure another's character through the use of social media.
- c. The Committee suggested that perhaps the Ministry of Education can replicate Naparima Girls High School's "Behaviour Contract" and the document a stipulating ninety (90) per cent attendance record.
- d. The Chairman recommended that there be an annual convention sponsored by the Ministry of Education for all secondary school principals to meet and exchange ideas and experiences on what they have been doing to address violence and indiscipline in their school.
- e. The Chairman of the Committee endorsed the Dean of Brazil High's suggestion that students across the academic spectrum, regardless of their IQ, be given the opportunity to shine in another areas. The Dean of Brazil High further recommended that focus should be placed on students' achievements and building their self-esteem.
- f. The Principal of Chaguanas South Secondary recommended that the Life Skills Programme become a mandatory part of the school curriculum for Forms 1 to 5. She also advanced the need for a remediation/literacy programme to assist students having difficulties with their school work.
- g. The Principal of Chaguanas South Secondary also recommended that promotion of Form 3 students not be automatic and instead provide the option for students to seek alternative schools.
- h. The Principal of Russel Latapy recommended that a policy should be implemented to mandate employers to grant employees time off to attend meetings, or at least establish an arrangement with NIS to ensure that parents can be compensated for taking time off work. She also recommended that CVQs be more diverse and provide more choices for male students.
- i. The student from Barataria South Secondary recommended that permanent Guidance Counsellors and Social Workers be assigned to schools. The student from Naparima Girls High School went further to suggest that that these officers should be able to relate and interact well with the students.

Requested Information

9.1 Further to the discussions, the Principal of Russel Latapy High School was asked to provide the Committee with information concerning the systems which were put in place that have led to successes in dealing with violence and bullying at her school.

ADJOURNMENT

10.1 The meeting was adjourned at 1:17 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

April 27, 2016

**MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT
APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION, HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS MEETING ROOM (EAST), LEVEL 6,
AND THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT,
TOWER D, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON**

FRIDAY APRIL 29, 2016

PRESENT

Members

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Chairman
Mr. Esmond Forde	Vice-Chairman
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP	Member
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP	Member
Mr. Hafeez Ali	Member
Ms. Nadine Stewart	Member
Ms. Khadijah Ameen	Member

Secretariat

Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Ms. Kimberly Mitchell	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Katharina Gokool	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe	Member
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OFFICIALS OF DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION BOARDS

Mr. Howard N. Nicholson	Methodist Board of Management
Mr. Lennox Sirjuesingh	Presbyterian Board of Education
Mr. Satnarayan Maharaj	Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha
Ms. Jessica Cunningham	Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Board of Management
Mr. Yacoob Ali	Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat Association (ASJA)
Dr. Roland Baptist	Catholic Education Board of Management

Archbishop Barbara Gray Burke

St. Barbara's Spiritual Shouter
Baptist Board of Management
Anglican Education Board of
Management

Ms. Ann Thornhill

OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
GUIDANCE OFFICERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Ms. Jasmine Mohammed

Guidance Counsellor (Iere
(Government)

Ms. Judy Monica Thomas

Guidance Counsellor (Mayaro
Secondary School)

Ms. Tenille Quamina

Guidance Counsellor
(Longdenville

Mr. Andy Matamora

Government Primary School)
Guidance Counsellor (St. Paul
A.C.

Ms. Marcelin Alicia Melville

Primary School)

Guidance Officer I (Barataria
North Secondary)

Ms. Nadira Hakim

Guidance Counsellor (Couva
West Secondary)

Ms. Ancilla Nicholas

Social Worker (Carapichaima
A.C. Primary School)

Ms. Allison Paul

Social Worker (Princes Town
Methodist Primary School)

Ms. Akisha Flavinney

Social Worker (Barrackpore
West

Mr. Frankie Driggs

Secondary)

Social Worker (Five Rivers
Secondary)

Mrs. Alana Bruce-Webster

Social Worker (Chaguanas North
Secondary)

Mr. Sule Dyer

Social Worker (Chaguanas North
Secondary)

PSYCHOLOGISTS

Dr. Maraika Gooding

Educational and Child
Psychologist

Mrs. Margaret Nakhid-Chatoor

Psychologist, Senior Lecturer

ACADEMIC

Dr. Hakim Williams
Gettysburg

Assistant Professor, Africana
Studies and Education,
College

**REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CYBER CRIME UNIT, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE
SERVICE (TTPS)**

Mr. Dale Joseph

Sergeant (Ag.) Cyber Crime Unit

CALL TO ORDER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. and welcomed those present.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE FIFTH MEETING HELD ON APRIL 20, 2016

2.1 The Chairman sought and received the agreement of the Committee to defer the confirmation of the Minutes to the next meeting due to the short period of time the Secretariat had to prepare and circulate the Minutes.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1 The Chairman informed Members that although the Minutes were not confirmed, there were matters arising out of the last meeting he wanted to highlight. These were as follows:

- a. a listing of the legislation concerning the removal of street dwellers was compiled and will be circulated to Members during the Meeting;
- b. the Principal of Russel Latapy High School submitted the requested additional information concerning the systems attributed to the school's successes in dealing with violence and bullying.

3.2 Members were also informed that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services requested an extension until Friday April 29, 2016 to submit responses to questions posed by the Committee concerning the socially displaced.

3.3 The Chairman suggested that no further extensions be granted to the Ministry and that in future instances, extensions would be granted reluctantly.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The Chairman identified the entities that would be represented at the public hearing.

4.2 Members were informed that the School Boards invited to appear represent the major religious faiths in Trinidad and Tobago and that the Guidance Officers and Social Workers were selected based on the statistics provided by the Ministry of Education concerning the schools with the highest incidences of violence.

4.3 A discussion ensued on the questioning strategy that should be adopted during the hearing. Members raised the following issues they wanted to discuss:

- a. experiences and challenges faced by denominational school boards;
- b. cybercrime legislation;
- c. parenting;
- d. services and structures provided by psychologists; and
- e. what is required of the Student Support Services.

4.4 The Chairman informed Members that a list of possible questions was prepared by the Secretariat and circulated to Members. Members were invited to review the questions.

4.5 The Committee agreed to meet with the Denominational School Boards during the first segment of the meeting, and with the professionals during the second segment.

OTHER BUSINESS

Date and Agenda of Next Meeting

5.1 The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday May 18, 2016 to deal with the inquiry into socially displaced persons.

5.2 Members were invited to consider the stakeholders they would like to hear from during the course of this inquiry and email their suggestions to the Secretariat.

5.3 There being no further business for discussion *in camera*, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:06 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS

6.1 The meeting resumed in public at 10:10 a.m. in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room.

6.2 The Chairman welcomed the officials of the Denominational School Boards and introductions were exchanged.

6.3 Detailed below are the issues/concerns raised and the responses which were proffered during the hearing with the officials of the denominational school boards:

i. Number of Schools represented by the Boards

- a. The representative of the Anglican Education Board of Management indicated that the Board is responsible for sixty-three (63+) plus schools.
- b. The Presbyterian Primary School Board of Education is responsible for seventy-two (72) primary schools.
- c. The Catholic Education Board of Management is one of eight (8) Catholic Boards and is responsible for one hundred and nineteen (119) primary schools, and six (6) secondary schools. Other secondary schools are represented by smaller boards within the Catholic system.
- d. The Seventh Day Adventist Board of Management operates twenty (20) schools across Trinidad and Tobago, sixteen (16) primary and four (4) secondary schools.
- e. The Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS) Education Board of Management is responsible for forty-three (43) primary schools, five (5) colleges and twenty (20) pre-school centres.
- f. The Secretary General of the SDMS indicated that seventy-five (75) percent of all primary schools, thirty-three (33) percent of all secondary schools, and most pre-school centres are owned by the denominational boards.

ii. Experiences of Denominational Boards with violence and bullying in schools and measures for addressing it

- a. The representative of SDMS indicated that there is always communication between the parents and the schools and whenever a problem should arise, parents are contacted, and together with the student and the school administrator, they meet to resolve the issue quickly.
- b. The Chairman of the Catholic Board suggested that there is limited violence and bullying in "catholic schools". There is also strong parental involvement/engagement in these schools. The Catholic Education Board of Management has also implemented a quality assurance programme which provides support to the teachers and principals. The programme also allows parents to be more involved.

- c. Catholic run schools utilise a more expanded curriculum to that of the Ministry of Education's curriculum. Students are able to participate in a number of sport and cultural activities.
- d. The Presbyterian Primary School Board had a conference with principals on the issue of violence and bullying. The board intends to have follow-up workshops and monitor everything that takes place in the schools to ensure that principals report all acts of violence.
- e. The Anglican Education Body is divided into regions, north-west, north-east, south and Tobago. There are various Committees that visit the schools on a regular basis. In Tobago the Anglican Board instituted a programme referred to as "child friendly school", where counsellors were brought in to assist teachers with setting standards for the schools.
- f. The Chairman of the ASJA Education Board indicated that ASJA managed schools do not have a discipline problem however, there may be the occasional errant child. In such instances, both parents must attend a hearing together with the child and the teachers in order to deal with the issue.

iii. Perspectives on the level of violence in denominational run schools vs. government run schools

- a. The Secretary General (SG) of the SMDS stated that in his experience, violence is more pervasive in Government schools and less in schools run by denominational boards.
- b. The Chairman of the Catholic Education Board of Management stated that his schools do not have a huge problem with violence and bullying.
- c. The representative of the Presbyterian Primary School Board indicated that the Board has received little reports of violence among its schools.
- d. Anglican managed schools do have issues of violence and bullying, however incidents are in the minority.
- e. The representative of the Methodist Board of Management stated that there is less violence in denominational schools compared to others. He attributed this to the fact that denominational schools instill behavioural norms and values in their students.

iv. Under-reporting and suppression of statistics concerning incidents at Denominational Schools

- a. In response to whether there may be under reporting of incidents in denominational schools, the Chairman of the Catholic Education Board of Management indicated that he did not believe this was the case.
- b. He later admitted that there might be a level of under-reporting in instances where there is not enough supervision in the schools such as when teachers are absent or vacancies exist. He was unaware of any instances where information on incidents was suppressed. Instead, he indicated that the Board may not be aware of the incident/s.

v. Role of Denominational Boards in upholding school standards

- a. The Seventh Day Adventist Board (SDA) works with each school, be it assisted or private in having a local school board. These boards operate based on the policies of the Ministry of Education and the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church.
- b. The representative of the SDA Board of Management indicated that in her experience, when the boards are fully functional then the administration, teachers and stakeholders receive support.
- c. Instances of gross indiscipline are usually discussed at the meeting of individual school boards and despite its inability to execute discipline, the Board can make recommendations for punishment, consequences and for improving the overall discipline of a school.
- d. The Spiritual Shouter Baptist Board has a familial relationship with the PTA and parents.

vi. Assistance provided by Denominational Boards to Principals

- a. The Catholic Education Board provides support to its schools' principals through Vicariate Managers who are similar to School Supervisors. These managers come from the Catholic Education Board and work with the principals, visit all the schools and monitor the quality assurance programme.
- b. The Secretary General of the SDMS indicated that the Board meets regularly with its principals.

vii. Rate of Teacher absenteeism in Denominational Schools

The Chairman of the Catholic Education Board of Management clarified that in instances where there are vacancies in schools and teachers have to make up for those vacancies, there may be less supervision of students. This may lead to a rise in incidents of misbehavior.

viii. Relationship between denominational schools and the Ministry of Education

The staffing of schools fall under the purview of the Teaching Service Commission. However, a denominational board can object to the appointment of a teacher on spiritual and moral grounds.

ix. Are denominational boards able to hire their own guidance counsellors or institute such positions at their schools?

- a. The Anglican Board does not hire guidance officers, however, each school has a priest assigned based on the parish in which the school is located. These priests are also the managers of their parishes and are trained in counselling and to provide such assistance.
- b. In the SDA schools, the Chairman of the local school board is usually a Church Minister who would be trained in general and pastoral counselling. There are also school chaplains and appointed school counsellors who would deal with the spiritual/religious, guidance and counselling.

x. Parental neglect and methods of encouraging greater parental involvement

- a. The Secretary General of the SDMS stated his belief that parents are to blame and not the school administration. He further stated that the Parent Teacher Association is failing to fulfil its responsibilities.
- b. In the SDMS Board run schools there are regular PTA meetings and principals have the contact information of parents so that whenever incidents arise, parents can be immediately contacted. Principals also have a register of resource personnel for example, a parent or a community member may be an electrician or a plumber who would be able to assist the school as the need arises.
- c. Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) run schools have a low and declining incidence of violence and bullying. This is attributed to the engagement of the local school boards with students and teachers, and the collaboration of the Parent- Teacher Associations within the schools.
- d. The representative of the SDA Board of Management indicated that one of the SDA schools had a "Father/son Bonding Programme" where sixty (60) fathers and sixty (60) sons attended an excursion. This was reported as a success.
- e. At Anglican managed early childhood centres, a child's family is enrolled at the centre. Parents or representatives have to be present for an interview in

order to get an understanding of the programme. There is also an orientation programme which involves parents documenting their enrolment.

- f. Anglican schools also have a body called the “Mothers Union” which is involved in parent education throughout the schools.

xi. Denominational Board Members’ views on the function of the PTA

- a. The Secretary General of the SDMS indicated that part of the PTA’s function is to raise funds but it is not its the Association’s sole function. He also agreed with the Chairman of the Committee that the main function of a PTA is to ensure that there is continuous communication and dialogue. He also shared his view that the national PTA is a sham and only exists in about fifteen (15) schools.
- b. The representative of the Presbyterian Primary School Board shared his view that he found the term “parent/teacher” to be too restrictive. He stated that students and the community are part of management of a school. In his capacity as a principal, he had a Parent-School Organisation as opposed to a PTA. The student council president was a member of the executive and attended meetings.

xii. Role of religious instruction in denominational schools

- a. The representative of the Methodist Board of Management stated that the practice long ago was that the church and the school buildings would be proximate. Students were able to go to services once per week, the principal would be a local presbyter in the church, and nearly all the teachers in the school would be Methodists, who would assist in upholding the values and teachings of the faith.
- b. This view was echoed by the Secretary General of the SDMS who indicated that in his schools, there is morning devotion during the period 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. which sets the tone of the school for the day.
- c. Other Board representatives agreed that there are still religious instruction sessions at the schools with the presence of the instructors on the compound.
- d. The representative of the SDA Board indicated that such sessions help to develop students’ spiritual and social conscience. She also revealed that the Board has its students engaged in community outreach.

xiii. Role of the Community Police in Denominational schools

The Chairman of the Catholic Education Board indicated that the Community Police do play a role in his schools. He even submitted that in some instances students are allowed to do their homework in the police station where parents or guardians are unavailable to supervise.

xiv. Recommendations/Solutions proffered during the public hearing:

- a. The Secretary General of the SDMS recommended curriculum reform so that students who do not cope well with academics can find other avenues to excel.
- b. Denominational Board representatives all agreed that there is need for continuous parental involvement from pre-school and onwards. This involvement should be tailored to the environment and the particular idiosyncrasy of the school itself.
- c. Board representatives also reiterated the need for religious instruction/ethical training in schools which should begin at 8:00 a.m. right down to the termination of classes.
- d. The representative of the SDA stated that the Board encourages students to become involved in community service and agreed with the Chairman's suggestion that students not only perform community service but also school service.
- e. Board representatives agreed that having Principals and teachers of the same religious faith aids in upholding the standards of the school.
- f. The representative of the Presbyterian Primary School Board recommended that the Ministry of Education introduce Cubs Scouts and Girl Guides programmes into all schools.
- g. The Chairman of the Catholic Education Board recommended that all schools have an action plan for discipline.
- h. The SDA Board representative recommended that consideration be given to the formulation of an intentional anger and conflict management programme for all schools.

6.5 The meeting was suspended at 11:24 a.m. to facilitate the exit of the officials of the denominational boards and the entrance of the guidance officers, social workers, psychologists and other officials.

6.6 The meeting resumed at 11:32 a.m.

6.7 The Chairman welcomed the Guidance Officers, Social Workers, Psychologists and other officials and introductions were exchanged.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH GUIDANCE OFFICERS, SOCIAL WORKERS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, GETTYSBURG COLLEGE, AND REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CYBER CRIME UNIT, TTPS

7.1 Detailed below are the issues/concerns raised and the responses which were proffered during the hearing with the Guidance Officers, Social Workers, Psychologists, Assistant Professor, Gettysburg College, and representative of the Cyber Crime Unit, TTPS:

- i. The most pervasive type of Bullying in the Primary and Secondary Schools**
 - a. The Guidance Counsellor (GC) from Longdenville Primary School suggested that physical and verbal bullying were the two (2) most prevalent forms of bullying in the primary school system.
 - b. The Guidance Officer (GO) from Couva West Secondary indicated that in her view, the most prevalent form of bullying in the secondary schools is that of physical bullying, especially in terms of taxing and extortion of money. She further contended that in some secondary schools there is a “committee” of students who orchestrate the extortion/taxing of students. She explained that this type of violation of students sometimes results in some of the victims becoming bullies themselves.
 - c. She further stated that if such students are caught, the immediate response is suspension for seven (7) days at home. She stated that this method may or may not be an effective form of punishment as students look forward to suspensions.
- ii. Learning Enhancement Centres (LECs)**
 - a. A GO I from Barataria North Secondary indicated that previously, the Ministry of Education had the Out of School Suspension Programme which has been changed to Learning Enhancement Centres. These centres provide the necessary rehabilitation for students on suspension and extended suspension.
 - b. The Learning Enhancement Centres provide group guidance sessions that focus on conflict and anger management, decision-making, and problem solving. Provision is also made for individual work with the students and their parents. These Centres are managed by both the Guidance Officers and the Social Workers.

- c. There are currently three (3) Learning Enhancement Centres, one in the South-East district, one in the Caroni district, and one in the St. George East district.
- d. A GO I from Barataria North Secondary informed the Committee that the evaluation of children referred to the LECs includes; an assessment of student performance, multiple intelligences, and functionality in the school environment. This aids the Guidance Officers to make recommendations as to whether the student should go back to school or should go into another programme be it Servol or MIC.
- e. A Social Worker (Barrackpore West Secondary) stated that the LEC was piloted in the South-Eastern district in 2015 and twenty-six (26) students passed through the Centre. Parents are mandated to accompany the child when he/she is referred to the LEC. However, in practice it is not compulsory as it is not a legal requirement.
- f. In instances where parents fail to go to the LEC or even to the school, the Social Workers will undertake home visits where assessments will be done to determine the factors that led to the student's behaviour. If parents still fail to co-operate, a report is made to the nearest police station. She informed the Committee that she had made around fifteen (15) such reports.
- g. The LEC's success is measured by the number of students who repeat offences. In instances where offences are repeated further interventions may be made, or the Officers in charge may look at alternative placement based on the assessment of a Special Education Teacher.

iii. The mentality/mind set of a bully

- a. The GO I from Barataria North Secondary shared that from her experience, many of the bullies are students whose needs are not being met by the curriculum, and are therefore frustrated and unable to cope.
- b. The Educational and Child Psychologist stated that the bully should also be looked at as a victim who has certain needs that are not being met.
- c. Another Guidance Counsellor from the St. Paul's A.C Primary School indicated that taxing at the level of the primary school is usually undertaken by older students who were kept in a lower standard. However, because of their age, these students are placed in Standard 5 since they need to leave the primary school system by age 15 to go into the secondary school system. When this occurs, these students are much older in comparison to their fellow cohorts and are going through different challenges such as puberty

and body image changes, as opposed to their younger counterparts who may be outperforming them in school work.

iv. Services for victims of bullying

- a. The Educational and Child Psychologist stated that attention should be paid to the types of services that are available for victims at the schools. She further stated that short-term solutions do not work.
- b. The Assistant Professor, Gettysburg College indicated that it is important to incorporate any short-term initiatives into a long-term strategic plan and echoed the Educational and Child Psychologist by stressing that research has shown that short-term initiatives do not work because they are unsustainable.
- c. He went on to state that the educational system in Trinidad and Tobago is quite burdened and under-resourced in many areas. He further indicated that despite having the existence of learning enhancement centres, there are not enough. The Assistant Professor, Gettysburg College informed those present that he was currently running a pilot programme in one school to train students in conflict management and peer resolution.
- d. The Psychologist and Senior Lecturer stated that the victim of bullying is someone who is always perceived as different by the bully and this difference may have various connotations.
- e. She stated that most of the discussions surrounding victims and bullies centre on the academic issues. However, they may be facing emotional and behavioural disorders and parental bereavement or some loss that may not have been addressed. She went on to indicate that many teachers are ill-equipped to deal with emotional and behavioural issues and shared her view that most of the issues facing students are not properly diagnosed.
- f. The Psychologist and Senior Lecturer indicated that there should be proper diagnostic assessments which should include the parents, teachers and the student. She highlighted the importance of knowing the history of the student and stated that in her view, although the guidance counsellors may be doing an excellent job, there is no follow through.

v. Perspectives of Guidance Officers/Counsellors on evaluating and reforming a bully

- a. A GO I (Barataria North Secondary) informed the Committee that the Guidance Officers have different types of assessments which can be used to determine the level of intervention needed. She stated that they utilise a

multi-sectoral approach and refer the bullies in particular, to the Child Guidance Clinic, which unfortunately is understaffed.

- b. A Guidance Counsellor (St. Paul's A.C Primary School) stated that there are multiple intelligences and that many of the students who may be labeled as underperforming, may simply be proficient in another area. He also revealed that children who are auditory or visual do extremely well as opposed to the kinesthetic children who may be lost and acting out.
- c. A Social Worker (Barrackpore West Secondary) indicated that at her school, the Ministry of Education has been trying to address issues within the school environment through an internal action plan. The action plan is viewed through the *SARA model; Scanning, Analysing, Responding and Assessing* the school environment to make it more conducive to learning.
- d. Barrackpore West Secondary has been utilising the *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)* in order to create a more holistic environment in the school. The CPTED looks at the offender, the victim and the opportunity and how social workers can remove one of the aspects out of the equation to reduce the incidence of violence at schools.

vi. Mechanisms/interventions used in a treatment plan for bullies and violent students

- a. The Psychologist and Senior Lecturer stated that treatment plans must have a triangular approach that involves the parents, students and the schools. She further highlighted the fact that the home must be included as life situations have so many dynamic variables that would help inform a treatment plan.
- b. The Educational and Child Psychologist agreed that the plan would need to involve different persons. She also stated that the context in which the bullying takes place, as well as the bully's relationship with his/her environment and how the environment impacts upon the bully are important factors that need to be considered.
- c. She further informed the Committee that during her time as a School Counsellor, she would be expected to make a difference in a student's life, sometimes within a day or even a few hours. However, that same child may be suspended by the afternoon period. She advanced that the relevant authorities need to take into consideration the context of the bully's behaviour which should be used to inform the treatment plan.

vii. Intervention processes followed by Guidance Officer/Counsellor

Guidance Officers receive a referral which is signed by the principal and parents are called in. He stated that in the current system, the victim and the perpetrator are counselled and are then returned to the same environment. Ninety (90) percent of the rehabilitation becomes undone and the process must be repeated.

viii. Caseload of the Guidance Officers and Social Workers

- a. A Social Worker (Princes Town Methodist Primary School) informed the Committee that school social workers deal with the psychosocial issues of the students, so that the time-frame for counselling a student will vary. She indicated that in one day she may see five (5) students. She revealed that the South-Eastern district is overworked and there is a lack of human and other resources and they are therefore unable to meet the specific needs of students. She stated that they are unable to develop a custom design and intervention to suit each child.
- b. Social Workers face challenges in fulfilling their duties as they may not be on the school compound during regular school hours every day. They are attached to different schools, sometimes five (5), and based on the circumstances, they may have to leave one school to address an urgent incident at another. The Committee was also informed that not all schools have social workers due to a lack of human resources.
- c. The Committee was informed that the recommended ratio is one counsellor to two hundred and fifty (250) students. The Guidance Counsellor (St. Paul's A.C. Primary School) stated that he works with close to one thousand (1,000) boys; five hundred and seventy-seven (577) at St. Paul's, and four hundred and thirteen (413) at his second school.
- d. A Social Worker (San Fernando Boys' Government Primary School) indicated that he is assigned to seven (7) schools; five (5) primary and two (2) secondary. He suggested that if he were to have the appropriate Social Worker to student ratio of 1:250 students, then he would be able to perform all his tasks effectively.

ix. Role of the Social Worker vs the Guidance Officer/Counsellor

- a. Social Workers have selective and targeted interventions. In terms of selective interventions, this would involve group sessions where topics such as anger management, human sexuality and inappropriate behaviour will be discussed. On the other hand, targeted interventions, would deal with referrals and counsel the individual students.

- b. The main goal of a social worker is to enhance the emotional and overall well-being of students in the school environment. Social Workers also have parental consultations and Parenting in Education programmes which are conducted in each Social Worker's school. Parents are invited but not mandated to attend meetings. At these programmes, topics such as alternatives to corporal punishment, alternatives to discipline, homework and punctuality are discussed.
- c. The Guidance Officers/Counsellors have universal interventions and focus on three (3) main areas; career development, academic development and personal social behaviour. Guidance Officers would normally have group guidance where the officer will conduct approximately 3 to 5 classes per day. Referrals are dealt with subsequent to these classes.

x. The structure of counselling sessions

A Social Worker (San Fernando Boys' Government Primary School) indicated that social workers utilise group, talk and play therapy. However, in his experience, play therapy is more effective to talk therapy.

xi. Cases received by the Cyber Crime Unit involving students

- a. The representative of the Cyber-Crime Unit, TTPS informed the Committee that the Unit has recorded a number of cases of cyber-crimes. In 2014, the unit received fourteen (14) cases and in 2015 the unit received twenty-five cases (25) cases of online bullying involving students.
- b. The representative indicated that the Unit has been encountering challenges namely; the fact that technology is ahead of the legislation and in instances where the Police receive evidence to proceed with a matter, parents do not want their children to be involved in lengthy court processes.
- c. The Cyber-Crime Unit usually goes into schools to conduct lectures as well as undertake investigations to identify perpetrators involved in cybercrimes.

xii. Findings of the case study on school violence

- a. The Assistant Professor, Gettysburg College, informed the Committee that he tried to share the findings of his research on school violence with the Ministry of Education. However, he has encountered difficulties in communicating same to the Ministry. He stated that the Ministry possesses research on regional school violence however it has been somewhat embargoed, and is therefore difficult to access.
- b. He also reiterated that the approach to school violence has to be multi-sectoral, systematic and long-term.

xiii. Mechanisms utilised by Guidance Officers and Social Workers to encourage parental interventions

- a. A Social Worker (Chaguanas North Secondary) indicated that in the Caroni district, there is a fathers' programme called "Foundation to Finish" which provides the opportunity for the social workers to engage fathers. This is done in three (3) phases; the first is where the parents would benefit from information provided by various professionals on how to empower yourself as parents. In the second phase, parents tend to get less interested and the third phase is where the children and the parents can interact and socialise.
- b. The Guidance Officer assigned to Barataria North Secondary School indicated that a "form level parent meeting" is held on a yearly basis. The principal, deans, form teachers and subject teachers are all involved in the process. In some instances alternative arrangements are made to accommodate the working schedule of parents. If this is not possible, the social worker may conduct home visits to meet with the parents.
- c. The Educational and Child Psychologist stated that teachers should be trained to engage with parents.

xiv. Psychologists' views on 'boot camp' and the introduction of retired military officers into the education system

- a. The Psychologist and Senior Lecturer, stated that in her opinion, the word 'boot camp' is synonymous with punitive discipline. She explained that when children become bullies, or even victims, they lack social skills and are unable to interact with people. As such, if they are placed into boot camps, they are being placed into an artificial environment. It follows that when they return to society, they are dysfunctional since they have not been exposed to real-life situations.
- b. The Psychologist went on to state that she had reservations with the proposal to introduce retired military personnel into the education system as they themselves have issues with their own inter-personal skills. She went on to state that there are high incidences of domestic violence among military personnel and generally among persons in the protective services. She advanced that these persons will need to undergo a period of "de-freezing" and training.
- c. The Educational and Child Psychologist stated that there have been numerous interventions over the years such as alternative education, and out of school suspension, but these have not worked. She advanced that these interventions did not work because no specific targets were put in place in terms of strategic planning.

- xv. Success rate of At-Risk students and those with ADD, ADHD and Dyslexia**
The Psychologist and Senior Lecturer indicated that many of the students who are referred, due to aggressive and violent behaviour had learning difficulties. She further stated at one institution 83 percent of boys, with an average age of 15, were functionally illiterate. She informed the Committee that in her view, the success rate is high once there are parenting skills programmes, and mentoring programmes in place for both parents and the boys.
- xvi. The British System and what could be implemented in the local system**
The Educational and Child Psychologist shared that the main difference between the British Education System and our system is the availability of resources and services. She also highlighted the need to create a supportive culture which is also the case in Britain.
- xvii. Recommendations/Solutions proffered during the public hearing:**
- a. The Assistant Professor, Gettysburg College, recommended that students should be trained in peer mediation, conflict resolution and restorative justice.
 - b. The Chairman recommended that when a bully is suspended for a period of 5 to 7 days, the principal should be authorised to suspend the bully to the home, but on the condition that he/she must attend the sessions at the LEC.
 - c. The Chairman also recommended that there be a change in the curriculum so that underperforming students who may be proficient in other areas are given an opportunity to do so. He advanced this view by suggesting that students have the opportunity to participate in activities such as arts and craft, sporting activities, and football.
 - d. The Guidance Counsellor from St. Paul's A.C. Primary School recommended that the post-primary system be reintroduced as it streamed underperforming students to more vocational type programmes.
 - e. The Social Worker from San Fernando Boys' Government recommended that each school should be assigned a social worker, a guidance counsellor and a special education teacher. He also recommended that the ratio of students to guidance counsellors should be 1 to 250.
 - f. The Assistant Professor, Gettysburg College recommended that the Guidance Officers and the Social Workers should have all the resources needed available to them in order to execute their jobs.
 - g. The Educational and Child Psychologist recommended that teachers be trained to engage with parents. She also advanced that there should be

processes that allow for engagement between teachers and parents in order to exchange views. She further recommended that each school conduct a needs assessment.

- h. The Chairman recommended that parents, teachers, principals and students interact once per month as a means of promoting dialogue.
- i. The Social Worker assigned to San Fernando Boys' Government also recommended the use of social media to interact with parents, teachers and school administrators.
- j. The Psychologist and Senior Lecturer recommended that there should be incentives for parents to encourage greater attendance at meetings. She also recommended that there be holistic diagnostic assessments of students.
- k. The Guidance Counsellor assigned to Iere Government recommended that schools should have extra-curricular activities for students such as karate, netball, football and Girl Guides.
- l. The Social Worker from Carapichaima A.C. Primary School recommended that it be mandatory that parents attend workshops and sessions. She also recommended that social workers be included in the Education Act. She further recommended that there be a review of the organisational structure between principals, social workers, teachers and guidance officers so that there is a clear understanding of the role of each professional in the school environment.

ADJOURNMENT

8.1 The meeting was adjourned at 1:14 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

May 11, 2016

APPENDIX III

NOTES OF EVIDENCE

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS ROOM (EAST), LEVEL 6, (IN CAMERA) AND J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM (MEZZANINE FLOOR) (IN PUBLIC), OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTER, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2016 AT 10.12 A.M.

PRESENT

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Chairman
Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine	Member
Miss Nadine Stewart	Member
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein	Member
Mr. Hafeez Ali	Member
Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Kimberly Mitchell	Assistant Secretary
Katharina Gokool	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Miss Shamfa Cudjoe	Member
Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh	Member [<i>Excused</i>]
Miss Khadijah Ameen	Member [<i>Excused</i>]

10.12 a.m.: *Meeting resumed.*

OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Ms. Gillian Macintyre	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Harrilal Seecharan	Chief Education Officer
Ms. Natasha Barrow	Deputy Permanent Secretary

Mr. Claudelle Mckellar	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Mr. Ashram Deoraj	Director, School Supervision
Ms. Karen Cooper	Systems Analyst II
Dr. Kathy Bharrathsingh	Manager, Student's Support Services

OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Mrs. Enez Joseph	W/Asst. Commissioner (Ag.)	Community Relations
Mr. Curtis Paul	Superintendent,	Community Relations
Ms. Ellen Lewis	Head,	Corporate Communications
Mr. Dale Joseph	Sergeant (Ag.)	Cyber-Crime Unit
Mr. Michael Pierre	Asst. Superintendent (Ag.),	Public Information Officer

Mr. Chairman: Good morning. A pleasant good morning to the viewing public of the Parliament Channel. A very good morning to members of the police service, and a welcome and good morning to members of the Ministry of Education. This is the Committee's first public hearing for the Eleventh Parliament, and the subject of enquiry of this Committee, which is the Committee on Public Administration and Social Services, is to deal with a highly topical and current issue of violence amongst our school age population.

This is a subject that is of tremendous concern to us as a society, and it is for this reason this Joint Select Committee, made up of Opposition, Government, Independent—Members from both Houses of Parliament agreed that we need to find out from the various stakeholders in the society what really is the cause of this problem, why is it persisting and how can we craft solutions. We hold the view in the Joint Select Committee that of all the problems facing Trinidad and Tobago, this is the one that is perhaps the most unacceptable because it represents the next generation, and we are here to legislate not only for the current generation, but to make decisions which will improve the quality of life of our citizens in the future.

Before I open the introductions, I would like to simply reiterate for the participants in today's enquiry and for the listening public the objectives of the current enquiry for today. First objective, to determine the extent to which violence is pervasive among students in primary and secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago; second, to understand the line Ministry's plans—the line Ministry is the Ministry of Education—and strategies for addressing school violence and, in particular, the wide subject of bullying in schools, bullying in all its forms; and the third, to determine the effectiveness of multisectoral efforts

and rehabilitation services targeted towards students who have displayed a tendency to be violent or engage in acts of violence; and also to determine what is the effect on students who have been the subject of violent attacks on their person or on their psyche.

We invited submissions from a number of stakeholders and we acknowledge the submission that was made to the Committee from the Ministry of Education, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago, the Naparima Girls' High School, RBC Young Leaders 2015. This is, I think, the first of our enquiries into the subject because there are a number of issues we need to deal and a number of stakeholders we would need to consult with.

Today we have present with us the representatives of the Ministry of Education and representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. We would be posing questions to them and engaging them in a discussion on this issues with an aim of crafting solutions. The ultimate objective of this enquiry is to prepare a report which will be submitted to Parliament for consideration and, of course, for the line Ministries and various stakeholders in arm of the State to take action so that we could eliminate this problem, which according to what we see in the media seems to be pervasive.

I will ask members of the Committee to introduce themselves before I ask members of the Ministry of Education and the police service to also introduce themselves. May I start at my left?

[Members of the Committee introduce themselves]

Mr. Chairman: May I invite members of the Ministry of Education to introduce themselves.

Ms. Macintyre: Good morning. My name is Gillian Macintyre, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education. To my right is Mr. Harrilal Secharan, Chief Education Officer in the Ministry of Education; next to him is Ms. Natasha Barrow, Deputy Permanent Secretary with responsibility for human resources in the Ministry of Education; Mr. Claudelle Mckellar who is our Deputy Permanent Secretary responsible for infrastructure in the Ministry of Education; and behind if I start at the extreme right, Ms. Karen Cooper who is our Systems Analyst II in the IT area; Mr. Ashram Deoraj who is our Director, School Supervision; and Dr. Kathy Bharrathsingh, our Manager for Students Support Services, both very important persons in this area.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much and we are pleased to see such a turnout from the Ministry of Education, and may I invite Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to introduce themselves.

[Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service introduce themselves]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much representatives of the police service. Oh, we have more—I am so sorry.

[Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service continue to introduce themselves]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. And that is the contingent from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service,

right? Thank you very much. Before I begin the formal questioning to the representatives, may I ask the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Education to address the Committee with her brief opening remarks and then I will move to the representative of the police service who will do similar. Thank you.

Ms. Macintyre: Mr. Chairman, we are extremely happy to be here to contribute to this Joint Select Committee on the issue of violence in schools and, in particular, bullying. It is of concern to the Ministry of Education that there is an apparent increase if you look at, in particular, what has been happening within the last week or so. I just want to say upfront we are here to answer any questions that you ask, and if we cannot provide those answers we would be happy to provide them afterwards, if we cannot provide them on spot. We also are hopeful that we would have some recommendations that would help us for moving forward.

Just to summarize where we sit, what are some of the factors, because our opinion is that it is a very complex issue which has to be looked at in several levels and we do welcome this opportunity for partnership with the police service in particular. The first factor to me is that we are part of a culture of violence, both in terms of history and in terms of the way we live right now. If you go back, although we have removed corporal punishment, it is not allowed in schools, I think if you check the population, every two and three persons would have experienced corporal punishment. They would not have had an opportunity in school where they were felt affirmed. Many of them may have experienced actual beating, and so you have parents in fact who cannot help their children because the system continues.

Even though you do not have physical beating, you have attacks in terms of verbally how certain students are dealt with. This in turn comes about, yes, because of things like low levels of literacy and numeracy which again may be impacted by the socio-economic status of the persons attending in certain schools, low levels of literacy and numeracy often shows itself as early as Standard 1 and follows on into the Form 1 in the secondary schools.

Again coming back to violence, it is on the television, it is on the Internet, we are seeing it in other jurisdictions, and so you will find that copycat type patterns are developing which I would think is contributing to the apparent rise.

Parent and caregiver involvement I have hinted to already. Parents have experienced it and so are not even able to help their own children in the school system. Weak supervision and the quality of teaching is another issue. The schools administrative mechanisms and structures, vacancies, high levels of vacancy would contribute to weak oversight and, again, the community that you are in because the school is only a microcosm of wider society. So if you are in a community where there are gangs, or even in the more prestige schools where there is cyberbullying or things like that, it impacts on the school system.

What are some of the solutions that we see and we have been working with? Risk profiles in terms

of incidents in schools; deans and VPs, principals and senior teachers working together to improve supervision. We have introduced coaches for numeracy and literacy in schools, but we are also reviewing that. We have been conducting parental education workshops, collaborating with the Teaching Service Commission to fill vacancies. As recent as this week, we are setting up a series of meetings to try and identify where the vacancies are, what are the priorities for filling. One thing we have not looked at, but I would like to put on the table that may be something we could consider, is special selection of staff for schools with challenging environments and populations.

Working with other agencies such as the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services in a collaborative mode. Two examples of that are the WRAP programme which I am sure the police would talk about as well, and the peer mediation as well as the police youth clubs. Extracurricular activities are being encouraged in schools: Girl Guides, Scouts, the RBC Young Leaders, the debating competitions, et cetera. And, although there are some protocols for critical incidents, I believe we have to strengthen the protocols that are in place for perceived security threats that may come from the surrounding community or the population.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Ms. Macintyre. A lot of the recommendations you are making will come up in the discussion, so I will want to give you the opportunity and the Ministry of Education to elaborate on some of those interventions that you are advancing for us. But I would like to give the representatives of the community policing unit to address the Committee briefly on their own perspective on this problem. Thank you.

Mrs. Joseph: My colleagues and I of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service wish to express our gratitude for the privilege of participating in this enquiry. It is our hope that our contributions would be of great value and we look forward to the outcome of such an important enquiry which we feel certain will only augur well for our youths and our country. Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Asst. Commissioner of Police. I will now open the enquiry for questioning. And so, I could start at my left, MP Christine Newallo-Hosein, to start with her own question for the Committee.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Chair. Sir, to the Ministry of Education. Permanent Secretary, even in your listing you spoke of the quality of teaching being an inhibitor for the progress of what is happening in schools, can you expand on what do you mean by quality of teaching?—there is a lack of quality teaching.

Ms. Macintyre: I think all of us having gone through the school system would have experienced that there are some teachers that reach children and are relevant, and there are some that just do not. So one of the things that we have to do is to improve our selection mechanism and, I as indicated, one of the

things we are doing is meeting with the Service Commission in that regard.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Chair, if I may? You spoke about parental seminars, are you looking at these seminars being mandatory? Because you have even PTAs; parents do not show up for PTAs or you may have an incident in school concerning a child and the parents do not show. Understanding how important parenting is at home for the attitudes to be addressed, how strict will you adhere to this seminar and parents attending?

Ms. Macintyre: Could I refer that question to Dr. Bharrathsingh because those are in progress right now.

Dr. Bharrathsingh: Thank you. Good morning, Committee members. In terms of the parenting in education programme, this is an ongoing exercise that we are planning to expand on. It is a voluntary exercise, meaning that we cannot coerce parents to come into these, but we certainly do encourage parents to attend these. We have had over the last year approximately 26,000-plus parents attending 300 and approximately 27 workshops again in the area of parenting and education. Topics would involve absenteeism, treating with special needs children, discipline issues, alternative strategies to corporal punishment for instance—a number of areas—and these areas would be targeted to the particular needs of those schools. We again plan to increase those numbers as much as we can.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. May I follow-up as the Chair, with your leave, MP? The issue that is raised is parental involvement and I really would like to get from the Permanent Secretary the policy of the Ministry of Education with respect to having a PTA in every school in Trinidad and Tobago. Do you have such a policy since PTA, of course, is governed by an Act of Parliament?

Ms. Macintyre: The CEO wanted to add to what Dr. Bharrathsingh said, and I am sure he will also answer the question.

Mr. Seecharan: Thank you, Chair. Just to add to the issue of parental involvement, as you are aware and as Dr. Bharrathsingh said, there is not anything compulsory for parents to attend conferences in school or even parent/teacher interaction. And in the submissions we made, one of suggestions we looked at is one, to make it mandatory for parents when they are required to attend school in relation to issues that arise with their children, and for the possibility of employers providing that time off. Because in many instances we have parents who would say well I cannot get time off from my job, and this is more so in the schools where we have issues.

The other thing in relation to that has to do with out of school—students who may be suspended, and some of the initiatives that the Ministry is trying to implement in terms of having both parent and student involved in those conferencing and the follow-up action from the Students Support Services where currently, again there is no compulsory requirement for parents to attend along with their students. So

those are two suggestions in terms of the administrative framework that we have put forward in terms of consideration going forward.

The question that you asked is in relation to PTAs in schools. The Ministry's policy is that every school is required to have a parent-teacher association. The current dynamic within the education system is that you have PTAs in schools who function at the level of that school and there are others who may be affiliated to the National Parent Teacher Association. There is no specific requirement that all PTAs join the National Parent Teacher Association, but from a policy perspective all schools are required to have PTAs.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Okay, a follow-up question from Sen. Hafeez Ali.

Mr. Ali: I just want to know, with those 22,000 parents that attended the workshop you all had, how have that impacted upon these students with some violent behaviour and the bullying aspects; and with those parents with those children who usually display those types of behaviour usually come to the workshop?

Ms. Macintyre: Dr. Bharrathsingh?

Dr. Bharrathsingh: Thank you for the question. So in terms of the feedback that we have gotten from the parents—so let me just quickly step back. The parents and caregivers that attend these workshops are actually targeted, meaning that the high-risk children, those that have been referred to student support, at the first instance, are the ones that we are trying to get the parents and caregivers to attend these meetings because these are our most challenging groups.

We have been somewhat successful in getting them to attend. The feedback that we have gotten from them and we know some of this because they are repeat attenders if you will, they provide suggestions as to other topics that they will be interest in. Some of the feedback—and I can probably provide this to the Committee after—included learning new strategies for instance, not being aware of certain information because—remember, it is geared towards providing information, tools and techniques to help parents help their children. It is an empowerment type programme. So the feedback from the parents in general tends to be quite positive.

Now in terms of what we are seeing impacting the children, how that will operate is if the parents get it, understanding a bit more about how to treat with the children, that they in turn, in terms of empowering and supporting their children, would be able to translate some of that. So supervision is one area in terms of care for their children after school, being aware as to where your children would be, et cetera. And since this programme over the last year, one of the things that we would need to do, literally, is look at some of the number, particularly the numbers of repeat offenders.

10.35 a.m.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chairman. I would like to direct this question to community policing. In light of the fact that the programme that is carried by the Ministry of Education—it is not mandated for the parents to attend—I see that in 1974 when the police youth clubs were, in fact, established, that your target groups, they were difficult as well as the delinquent youth and that you provided on-going interactions through counselling. Have you included parents and the immediate family in those counselling sessions?

Supt. Paul: Morning again. Thanks very much. Youth development is fundamental to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, to have youths geared towards a positive life away from crime. We have several initiatives, namely, one, we have our police youth clubs. The police youth clubs were formed 42 years ago, 1974, with two police youth clubs—Cocorite and John John. Going forward, January, February 2016, we have 112 police youth clubs with 10,500 children throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago; 15 in Tobago and the rest in Trinidad. Throughout our nine police Divisions, we have police youth clubs. We are governed by our Constitution and is chaired by the Chairman, who is the Commissioner of Police. We have our tenets as spiritual development, sporting and cultural activities, social and community and education.

Mr. Chairman: Could you confine yourself to the question posed by MP Newallo-Hosein, please? Could you pose the question again?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am asking if your counselling sessions include the parents as well as the immediate family members of the child who may be delinquent or difficult as guided by your establishment.

Supt. Paul: Yes, Ma'am. Part of the framework, structure of the police youth club is a parent body and, in that arm there, there is what we call the catalyst for the police youth clubs. It is structured around a child, a parent or a guardian as the case may be and it is fundamental to the child's development so the parent must be present in the functioning and operation of the police youth club.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Before I move to Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine who will introduce himself, he came in a little bit late, I want to really pose a question to the community police. We have seen some disturbing videos of girl-on-girl violence. Young girls fighting other young girls. I have seen it, you have seen it. When you observe such an instance occurring and you are able to identify the participants in that unacceptable activity, what does the community police do? What does the police do with respect to these girls? Do you all take them in a counselling session? Do you identify them? Tell them that this behaviour is unacceptable? Do you intervene in any way?

Supt. Paul: Counselling, among other things, is one of the initiatives of having teenage people, and girls as you indicated, to harness where the police youth club is being accepted.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, but the question is this: do you intervene once you are able to identify the participant? Do you say “We have seen the video, we have seen 12 girls engaged in unacceptable behaviour”—do we at that time point in time intervene with all the participants and have a session immediately with them, together with the school, together with their parents, together with their teachers, to indicate we cannot behave this way? Do you intervene in that way?

Supt. Paul: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You do. Thank you. Could I ask Sen. Nadine Stewart to come in at this point?

Miss Stewart: Good morning, again. Just a follow-up question from Mr. Chair. What is the prevalence of male-on-male violence, female on female and male on female, and what measures are in place to deal with each separately?

Mr. Chairman: That question is directed to anyone with the data and information. The incidents of the various types of violence. Ministry of Education, do you have data on that? Community police, from just casual observation, would you say that you have much more male on male as opposed to female on female? What type of violence seems to be most prevalent? Just for casual—perhaps you do not have the data but casual observation from your experience.

Ms. Macintyre: The CEO is willing to take a shot at it.

Mr. Seecharan: Thank you, Chair. We do have a sense of what type of violence—and I am talking in a broader context here—disrespect to authority in terms of students who are suspended is at the top of the list, fighting without weapons, bullying. These are some of the areas that are at the top of our list in terms of suspension.

I just want to go back—the Senator asked in relation to the prevalence of male-female, male on male, what our data shows—I did not have it disaggregated for all that she said, but what our data shows is that male on male is much more prevalent than female-female or male-female interactions. I can work out the specific ratios but in terms of the prevalence, male on male is at the top of the list.

Mr. Chairman: Could I intervene here? We would like to get, if possible, the Ministry has the information, the data, if you could send that in writing to us at a subsequent time. It would certainly guide us in the kinds of recommendations we will be making. Before I go back to MP Newallo-Hosein, I would like to bring in Ret. Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine, MP. Please, introduce yourself to the Committee, Brigadier, and pose your question.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Good morning. I am Ret. Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine. I am the MP for D’Abadie/O’Meara and the Minister of Public Utilities. I want a follow-up question to my colleague, Mrs. Newallo-Hosein. I know that you say that your policy in the police youth clubs is about counselling of young offenders, if you want to put it that way, and their parents and immediate family. But history

has shown that there is difficulty in getting parents to attend PTA meetings, to attend sporting events. When there is counselling of young men, young women, who have gone afoul of the law, of the school regulations, is there a response from the parents and family members to joint counselling of these young people?

Supt. Paul: Yes, Sir. One of our initiatives is what we call crime intervention for troubled youths. This initiative came out of the Sangre Grande Police Youth Club, also the St. James Police Youth Club under Mr. Sharbodie. In the Sangre Grande Police Youth Club, in 2012, what we had were children who are suspended from school, a letter is sent to the police youth club and their parents or guardian visit the police youth clubs in Sangre Grande and St. James. A form is filled out and we have volunteer professionals, social workers and others, together with the police officer who is trained in certain skills to inform that transformation of that child, also the involvement of the parents, and when that is finished, a letter is then sent back to the principal of that specific school with the end result as the case may be.

Mr. Chairman: Any follow-up, Brigadier?

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Yes, and this question is now to the Ministry of Education. What is the response of the school authorities in terms of the counselling of young offenders through the police youth clubs?

Ms. Macintyre: Either CEO or Dr. Bharrathsingh. CEO?

Mr. Seecharan: My response would be in the broader context because we have not collected data separate from counselling provided by the police or by our Student Support Services. Our feedback from our guidance officers and social workers has indicated that the response to counselling has been positive. One of the challenges we have there is that we need to identify some specific metrics. We have qualitative feedback but we have not identified specific metrics to quantify that measure of success.

But what I also want to say, and this is also from our officers and their own intervention with students who need services, is that very often the gains made through the counselling process, when many of these students go back into the communities, is often offset because students are often forced, or not forced, when they go back within the communities to display characteristics which are accepted within the community. So we are often challenged in terms of maintaining the gains that we have made through the counselling process because of the external environment to which students are exposed.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ali, do you want to come in?

Mr. Ali: Yes. This is for the police service. What is the police service doing to identify those individuals, high-risk students—and exactly where the Chief Education Officer just said—and cutting that umbilical cord that creates the problem on the whole that when they go back into the community and they have these individuals who are influencing them, how will the police step into that part there and separate the two to keep the child on the correct path? Does the police have a method of dealing with

that?

Mrs. Joseph: ASP Pierre will take this one.

Asst. Supt. Pierre: Good morning. Regarding the information of the high-risk students, we do not collate that information. We receive the information from the Ministry of Education and it is then based on the request by the Ministry of Education, we would intervene and we usually utilize the anti-bullying programme that we go from school to school. In that programme, we would identify to the students and the teachers as well all the relevant information that would identify what would be a crime as opposed to what might be a prank or what children might feel is just normal everyday behaviour. What we would do, we would also include the social workers in the school in our anti-bullying programme. So when that situation arises where we identify particular students, the social workers will then take it further from there and as long as the police are needed to assist, we will do so.

Mr. Chairman: Could I follow up on that? And that is, with respect to the practicalities of the situation. Take, for example, a student, he wishes to use the washroom and as he enters the washroom, he has encountered someone who says you have to pay me a \$5 tax to enter, and the student is terrified and he needs to get some measure of comfort that this situation will not happen. When the student makes a report—I would imagine to his teacher—how does that student get redress in a timely manner from that unacceptable behaviour?

Asst. Supt. Pierre: Now, with regard to the anti-bullying programme, we identify all crime types. Now, we have serious reports of crimes; we have minor crimes and we have minor offences. We identify crimes such as extortion, robbery, larceny from the person, larceny, malicious wounding, malicious damage—there are many different crime types, right? What we have realized in doing this programme is that a lot of the students would not realize that “taxing”, in some instances depending on how it is done, it could be an extortion. It can also be a robbery which carries a very serious penalty and in some instances, incarceration. Therefore, when we educate the students with regard to the information, we see that it initiates a change in their behaviour.

Mr. Chairman: And a follow-up. Is it that students in schools are aware as soon as they enter schools that these are the types of crimes that the community police have been able to identify; these are the crimes that are punishable and these are the crimes that can lead to suspension of students? Do you have that kind of programme to alert students from Form 1 that these are the behaviours that will be considered to be criminal offences?

Asst. Supt. Pierre: I would say yes to that question, Mr. Chair, in that the anti-bullying programme targets students from Form 1 up to Form 6. Therefore, the education factor regarding the type of crimes is given to all students when we enter into the schools.

Mr. Chairman: Could I get a response from the Ministry of Education on that as well? Because, this seems to be drilling down to the real heart of the problem. How do we resolve these pervasive problems? And it has to include the Ministry of Education's policy as well with respect to such deviant actions.

Mr. Seecharan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to the different incidents which are considered outside of what is acceptable within schools, all schools are required to either utilize—we have a school code of conduct which identifies the whole gamut of offences that are unacceptable and also the consequences of that. Consequences range from counselling with student/parent all the way to a person being charged where it is referred to the police. So that all schools either utilize the school code of conduct which provides specific guidelines or they utilize the school code of conduct and they develop a discipline matrix which is now specific to the schools and this is a requirement for all schools. So that that information is conveyed to students in several ways.

Some schools would have converted that into specific rules and guidelines for students which are shared with them. Some schools share that information through assemblies, homeroom periods. We have something called “A Circle Time” where during homeroom periods, discussion takes place in terms of incidents and the consequences. And our feedback, for example, in terms of bullying, maybe more than 80 per cent of our students are very knowledgeable and aware of what it is and about 20 per cent have a fair knowledge. So it is something that is part of the requirement for schools to share.

Having said that, Chair, you would appreciate that when you are dealing with the large number of schools, there is sometimes that gap. So because incidents do not happen in a particular school, sometimes we tend to slip in terms of sharing that information. It is something that we will need to address.

I also want to touch on the issue raised with respect to, for example, a student being bullied or teased going to the toilet and all of that. There are standard procedures that we have shared with schools but we recognize that we need to reinforce. So for example, we have utilized one strategy which is safety by environmental design.

Now, while we cannot change the physical structure of a school, we are rolling out and we are sharing with schools—and have already done so with many schools—where, for example, areas where incidents are likely to happen in schools are identified. We are using a multi-team approach within schools involving our safety officers or security officers—MTS or in the case of denominational schools, officers hired by the denominational board—and the complement of deans. Also part of that team would involve the guidance officers, social workers, in terms of coming up with simple things, starting from the gate where protocols for persons entering and leaving and also in terms of deployment of resources at specific times, we are utilizing data collected at the school level to make those decisions.

So, for example, what are the incidents based on the data you have are likely to occur and how

prevalent they are; where are they likely to occur during the day and when, so that the deployment of the resources in terms of supervision within the compound will be effective. Some of these things, in some schools, have already been implemented and others, we are rolling out.

Mr. Chairman: CEO, many times, these things break down. We have had the instance with the Chaguanas North Secondary School, I think, in which you had a situation of almost crisis. So that what we are trying to get at is, despite all the interventions you are making, why it is that there are sometimes lapses, serious lapses in the security.

But I want you to hold while I pose a question to the community policing department. How often do you actually visit schools and display a physical presence, simply to walk around the school? Do you do that often? In all schools, do you simply display that there is a presence? Because it is known, simply seeing a police officer is enough to discipline the majority of the population. So do you actually make it your business, together with the school principals, to visit schools, walk around and show that you have a presence on the compound?

Supt. Paul: Yes, Sir. In the nine police Divisions, there are community policing officers and on a daily basis, visits and patrols, together with lectures, are being done in the schools in the station districts. And if I would say, I would say that is throughout Trinidad and Tobago. It is an ongoing process and it is part of the community policing mandate.

Mr. Chairman: And would you say that in schools—because you have limited resources in community policing, would you say that in schools where there is more visible community policing presence, the instances of deviant behaviour tend to be lower?

Supt. Paul: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So therefore, one recommendation we would like to make immediately is that the community policing department make a greater presence in schools, physical presence. Simply a visit, a good morning, a hello, how are you, we are here. Do you think that is something that will augur well for the reduction of violence among students?

Supt. Paul: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, thank you very much. I will come back to MP Newallo-Hosein who has been quiet for a little bit.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. I just want to come back to CEO. Earlier in your comments, you had indicated that the counselling programme was, in fact, successful and then you said that you did not have any qualitative or quantitative data to provide that success rate because of the fact that when the student went back into the environment, he or she, in fact, would have to conform to whatever takes place in the community, which, in fact, is not a success rate in my opinion. Therefore, I

am going to ask: is there a high rate of repeat offenders in school?—that is, the same students are being suspended for violent encounters on a recurring basis.

Mr. Seecharan: Let me just make a slight correction. I said based on the qualitative data; that is the feedback from the guidance officers and the individual students that we have gotten positive feedback. I also said, in terms of some of those students who have displayed positive outcomes based on the counselling, they often regress because when they go back into the community, they end up being required to conform to certain behaviours. So I was not referring to the entire group but the challenge in terms of ensuring that the counselling and the service provided by the Student Support Services maintain the positive outcomes that we expect and we have seen.

I do not have with me incidents of repeat offenders. That, I will have to get for you in terms of looking at the data. Because our current data collection, what we do is, we collect incidents and they are collected as suspension in separate categories, and that is one of the areas we have identified in terms of improving the metrics, in terms of making decisions.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is there a time frame for that information to be collected and collated?

Mr. Seecharan: Well, it is not just collection, I think PS might have mentioned we have revised and we continue to revise our strategy to deal with violence and indiscipline. But you may be aware that as part of our overview of the education system, we are also looking at violence and indiscipline as one of the issues that we want to treat with. And therefore, our review will also factor in the feedback from the different stakeholders in terms of making the determinations. While that is happening, we continue to work on trying to improve what we have currently.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What is the maximum period of suspension a principal—[*Interruption*]

Ms. Macintyre: Could I just add that we recently completed a national consultation on education and this was a specific issue. So, there is both the data coming out of the consultation and the survey that we would have undertaken prior to the consultation. So again, that is another source of data on this matter.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. MP Newallo-Hosein, could I ask Sen. Nadine Stewart to come in at this time?

Miss Stewart: My question is to the community policing. Based on something you said prior where counselling sessions are done for students through the police youth clubs and a report is sent to the schools, so my question is, after this report is sent, do you all have any follow-up sessions with the students, whether through the school or through your own initiative?

Supt. Paul: Yes, Ma'am. We have ongoing follow-up with the school with the involvement of the principal. When the child is reaccepted back to the school, there is continuous follow-up with a view of obtaining the status of the child, as the case may be. So, there is always collaboration between the youth

club, community policing and the school via the principal.

Miss Stewart: One more question. So have you all noticed any reoffenders coming out of your programme through the follow-up sessions?

Supt. Paul: At a very minimum rate, Ma'am.

Miss Stewart: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: MP Antoine.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: In the youth subculture, they have different perspectives than we adults do. When a young man or a young woman is suspended from school and they return, they tend to be elevated in rank in the eyes of the other students because he is "ah bad boy" as the case may be; he has been suspended as the case may be. What mechanisms do you have in place—and this is both for the police youth clubs and the Ministry of Education—to deal with students who have gone afoul of the law, being suspended and returning to school? Do the other students see that, for instance, their parents have to come in school at a certain time? The offenders are isolated in a sense that they have to go to different counselling sessions and so? What mechanism does the Ministry of Education and the police youth clubs have in place to deal with the perspectives and the perceptions of the youth subculture in the school? Or does the student just simply return to the school environment and just melt into the school environment and there are no consequences in terms of the suspension and the whole perception of the young people in terms of somebody who has a rank because he has been through suspension?

11.05a.m.

Ms. McIntyre: Would you like the Ministry of Education to answer?

Mr. Chairman: The Ministry of Education, most appropriate, yes, thank you.

Mr. Seecharan: The suspension or the removal of students from school process is well defined. So, for example, a student creating an offence in school can be suspended by the principal up to a maximum of seven days. If the incident warrants and it is serious enough, the principal can request for an extended suspension and the Minister normally would grant that extended suspension.

In terms of what happens to the student outside, if it is within the seven days Student Support Services engages students and parents, as required, in terms of providing counselling and the necessary support, in terms of trying to introduce whatever corrective action.

In the case of extended suspension, there is also a defined process, in terms of a conference between the parent, teachers, and students, chaired by the school supervisor, in terms of determining the process and the best outcomes for that particular child. So there are a number of things. For students returning to school, there is also ongoing support for students.

In terms of informing or making sure that other students within the school are aware of that, I am not sure. I would ask Dr. Bharrathsingh to expand on that but I am not sure that that is the most appropriate way to treat with it but I would ask my colleague from Student Support Services to add.

Mr. Chairman: But really, the question posed by MP Antoine was really this, the value system amongst the young person, the young offender, may be different from the value system of the adult population, in that once someone has returned from a period of discipline or suspension, he returns elevated, as opposed to demeaned.

I want to pose, before we go off to your staff in the Ministry of Education to pose to the Community Policing Department the possibility of using real role models to inspire these deviants. For example, we have role models in cricket, role models in football, role models in entertainment. These are the young people who are going to create, to my mind, a greater impact amongst fellow young people than other people in the society. Have you used these young national icons to indicate to these youthful deviants that the stars they look up are really the pseudo stars and the real inspiring figures they should look up to are the young people, their own age group who are very successful at the national level, regional level, community level? Have you done that to address the issue raised by, the perverse issue of who really is a role model to follow, raised by MP Antoine?

Asst. Supt. Pierre: I would like to respond to that. I would like to take the opportunity to refer to the CITY Programme, that is the Care and Intervention for Troubled Youths. Since that programme has been introduced we have had many professionals giving voluntary service to the initiative. In that way, the students or young people, they are exposed to professionals who would be guiding them along the way and being direct role models to them.

It also lends the ear to the use of the Police Youth Club. Because with the CITY programme, the programme is not just where they go through a period of two weeks of suspension or howsoever much time and go back into school, they are trained or given a series of training so that when they go back into the education system they have a greater understanding than when they were suspended before.

Mr. Chairman: May I intervene here?

Asst. Supt. Pierre: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: As a suggestion now, do you see merit in creating a roster of young individuals in the society in the sciences, in the professions, in the arts, in entertainment, in sport, who are really individuals young people should follow and using that roster encouraging these young people to participate with community policing so that they can interact with the chronic habitual offenders in the youthful population?

Asst. Supt. Pierre: Definitely, Mr. Chair. I think it is an opportunity for all the professionals, young

professionals, middle-aged professionals even to intervene to lend that support to an initiative like this.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. So another recommendation definitely coming out is that use our young icons to inspire the youthful deviants. Brig. Antoine you have a follow-up.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: I would like the response from the Ministry of Education to the previous question.

Ms. McIntyre: I think that in my opening I hinted to the fact that if you equate performance and how a child would have gone through a school system, you probably have one in three children that have done well. Your two in three that did not do well and so would not necessarily have been treated as favoured students in your school system, experienced beatings, experienced harsh words and continue to experience it. That is not an objective measure. I am simply using what are normal performance rates and I am just saying that if you bear in mind that you really have two in three persons who I would call abused persons from a system, because it is certainly not the kind of system that encourages learning, that encourages application of learning. Instead, it rewards passing tests, getting good grades.

Even your icons have experienced this. I am simply trying to say that we have a problem and we have been attacking the problem with traditional measures and there is an absolute culture that has to be changed if we are to get at the true root of the problem.

Mr. Chairman: And we intend to get to the root of the problem and look at the culture but we cannot change the culture. We may be able to influence it. But I will ask MP Hosein to come in and then Sen. Hafeez Ali wants to get in as well.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Just coming back to a statement you had made CEO, regarding the code of conduct that is distributed throughout the schools for guidelines and guidance and coming back to what MP Antoine had indicated, we assume that the children have the same values as the adult and, therefore, we expect that when we send these codes of conduct that they will adhere to it, which is not going to happen because they are children and they should be treated as such, in terms of mandating, ensuring, articulating and putting guidelines in place for them to adhere to the instructions.

So I am asking, if in fact, as MP indicated, a student is charged with a criminal offence is the student allowed back into the school and why is there suspension? Is there something in place where the Education Act does not allow expulsions?

Mr. Seecharan: Okay, let me start with the last part of your question. The Education Act allows for expulsion of students. The Minister has the Authority to expel. However, we have not, for the last 10 years, as far as I can remember, expelled students.

I think it comes back to the philosophy that we can rehabilitate students. So even if students are suspended, or they go on extended suspension we still try to work within the system to look at trying to

rehabilitate those students.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If, after 10 years it is not working, I think it is about time we address it in a different manner. But in addition to that, I just wanted to ask Chair.

Mr. Chairman: One last question before I go over to Sen. Hafeez Ali.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thanks Chair. I hear all of the work that is being done. Yes, I applaud both sides, education and particularly community policing. But if after 42 years we are seeing a proliferation of violence, I do not want to assume so I am asking a question, is this normal or it is as a result of the media, the technology, that it appears to be increased? So I am asking, is there an increase in violence in schools or a decrease? I do not want to assume so I am asking.

Ms. Lewis: I would like to respond to that question, if I may.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Sure.

Ms. Lewis: In terms of the data of the Police Service, we have a consistent decrease in serious crimes, minor crimes and also minor offences; that is offences committed by students in schools. If I may, in the category classified as serious crimes we would have had 45 such crimes committed in 2015, as against 57 in 2014. The major areas were larceny and sexual offences.

In 2015, there were 19 such sexual offences committed against children and a similar figure for larceny involving school children. The previous year, stood at 23 and 20 respectively. With respect to minor offences which will involve things like indecent assault, malicious wounding, larceny, we would have had for 2015, 51 such offences. In 2014, there were 69 such offences. These are minor offences which involved assault by beating. We would have had 143 in 2015, as against 154 in 2014. Overall, therefore, for 2014 and 2015, we would have had 280 in 2014.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much for those statistics. Very, very interesting statistics but what I would like to pose before I come to Sen. Ali, do you collect data on a school by school basis, with respect to reports by students against other students or actions against them which, according to the community police, exist on a list that you sent off at the beginning of the school year on unacceptable actions of students.

Ms. Lewis: We would have through our Crime Problem Analysis Unit, we would be able to pull such data for you if you request such.

Mr. Chairman: I am simply asking whether you collect it on a school by school basis? Do you ask the school on a per term basis? Could you give me all the reports that students have made to their teachers, with respect to taxing and bullying? And I think that is the kind of information that I would like to get to know the true extent of the problems in the in the schools. I thank you for giving us the official crimes statistics that we have.

Ms. Lewis: But Chair, if you permit me, I think one of the questions the member was also asking is about whether or not certain programmes have an impact in different communities. And we also want to share that information with you as well, if we may.

Ms. McIntyre: Chair, just to say that we do have the data by school, the Ministry of Education for suspensions.

Mr. Chairman: But do you have the data for all the offences you report? Because the way the school is organized, a student has to report to someone. A student who has been aggrieved has to report to some authority. That has to be logged somewhere and recorded. Does the principal of the school have the information, just as the superintendent in the police station has a logbook with all the crimes reported in a station? Is the principal mandated to keep a log of these offences and then submit this log in a timely manner to the Ministry of Education or to the divisional officers to whom he has to report?

Mr. Seecharan: Principals are required to collect—in other words they provide us with information based on particular categories in which students are suspended. For example, whether it is assault with weapons, bullying, extorting taxes, principals provide us with that information periodically or as requested. So we do have that information.

I want to just add a little bit to the issue of whether there is an increase or decrease. When we were preparing our response for the Commission we looked at, because the focus was on physical violence. So we pulled out areas such as assault with weapons, assault without weapons, extorting taxes in those areas, and we looked over the period 2012 to 2015, where in 2012, for example, at the secondary level we had 1,912 cases; in 2013, 1,709; in 2014, 1,405; in 2015, 1,650. So that in terms of those violent, physical confrontations the pattern is more or less the same.

However, and again as part of the Ministry's strategy going forward, when we look at instances of suspensions, we have an increase between 2014/2015. But in terms of interpretation of the data, if you were not aware that the Ministry had instituted a policy of zero tolerance on these activities you would not have realized that the increase may have been in relation to that directive where we take a zero tolerance approach. So that would have contributed. Now that has to be interpreted in the context of the school code of conduct where there is a variation in the penalties that can be applied, from counselling to suspension or it may go to the police.

So, schools will determine whether this case warrants counselling or whether the student should be suspended. Zero tolerance would have shifted some of those counselling and parent engagement conferences to suspension and, therefore, the interpretation of the data has to be viewed in that context.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. I would want the Ministry of Education to give some thought to something I would raise. Before you answer me I would just raise this issue and then I would ask Sen.

Hafeez Ali to pose his question.

The issue I want to raise is this, I am quoting from the Education Act, Chap. 39:01 of Trinidad and Tobago. Section 27, “Responsibilities of Principals.” and it says:

“Subject to this Act and the Regulations, Principals of schools shall be responsible for the day to day management of their school including—

(a) the supervision of the physical safety of pupils;”

I do not want you to answer my question now but I want you to give it some thought because I want to come back to it subsequently. How is the Ministry of Education equipping principals of schools to allow them to discharge this function, the supervision of the physical safety of the pupils, as mandated by the Education Act of Trinidad and Tobago?

While you consider that, I would ask Sen. Hafeez Ali to pose his question.

Mr. Ali: This is to the Ministry of Education. How many guidance counsellors are there and is this amount adequate with the perceived high level of troubled students?

Ms. McIntyre: Dr. Bharrathsingh would you like to respond?

Dr. Bharrathsingh: Yes, PS, thank you. In terms of the guidance officers, we currently have allotted 164 positions. We have 151 filled. We have 109 counsellors, of which 98 are filled. What we are looking for here is the ideal one to one ratio. Currently in the secondary schools we operate at pretty much one to one for the 125 here in Trinidad. There are two schools that we have an officer sharing responsibility for both schools.

In terms of the primary schools, we operate at approximately a one to four ratio. So, in answer to the question, do we need more guidance officers/counsellors? Yes, and the reason we would, not only because of what we are seeing right now but from a best practice perspective, guidance officers as well as social workers tend to treat with the more moderate severe psychosocial issues in the system; so in particular the violence that we are seeing.

What we look at and we are trying to move towards is not just the one to one ratio in the schools but the international best practice of ratio as defined by officers to student numbers. So in that regard, what the ideal ratio is approximately one to 250. If you have schools that have moderate challenges, we can go up to about one to 571, in terms of students. So, while initially we are trying and moving towards the one to one school to officer ratio, ideally we want to move towards the numbers.

Mr. Ali: And does the teacher absenteeism contribute to this bullying problem that we are having, that the students are left alone? I ask that question because of the school my children go to. I would leave it as that. I would not call any names. But in your opinion, does it contribute at all to that?

Ms. McIntyre: The Chief Education Officer is going to take the question.

Mr. Seecharan: We have a number of teachers who are habitually late or absent in schools. As you are aware, teachers can take up to 14 days occasional and 14 days sick leave. Many of them do.

We also have a process which we treat with teachers who are habitually late, who go beyond, in terms of the disciplinary process. So the short answer to your question is that there are schools where teacher absenteeism or unpunctuality impacts on this process. It is something that the Ministry has already started addressing, in terms of, first of all, the process of getting teachers to be aware of the consequences, but also the disciplinary process and we have done training sessions with principals, in terms of guiding them.

We have had this problem for some time. The problem we had, in terms of addressing it is often the disciplinary process that the Ministry can take action was not followed and, therefore, we moved along the process with evidence. But because it was not followed you end up not having—so we have done some training for principals. We have worked with our supervisors and that is being addressed.

We have a number of teachers who are in fact 100-plus teachers who have taken more than 1,000 minutes late, which the Ministry is going to proceed with Regulation 90 and, therefore, we are aware that there are schools in which irregularity and punctuality are issues and we are working to deal with it.

Mr. Chairman: A possible solution and I am going to raise it to the Ministry of Education for your consideration, and the solution to this is that an absent teacher is going to create the condition for students to behave in deviant actions because there is no supervising authority.

Has the Ministry given any consideration at all to having a system of substitute teachers available in schools, so that on a day in which a teacher is late or a teacher is absent a substitute teacher from the OJT programme, which we have in the country can simply be asked to leave the staff room and supervise this form two or form three class? In that way you would have a reserve pool to actually fill in teachers who are chronically late or absent. Have you given any consideration at all to that possibility?

Ms. McIntyre: Deputy Permanent Secretary Barrow will respond.

Ms. Barrow: Good morning. We did re-implement, because it was implemented before, the substitute teacher and we expanded it now to primary schools in November of 2014. So we expanded the programme so that it is available online for anybody to register to be a substitute teacher. It is fully automated, so there is not a lot of paper work involved, so it reduces the amount to time that you would take to put everything in place. So basically principals can access the system on a short notice and get access to substitute teachers.

The issue that we do have though is that we do not have enough persons registered on the system, so we have been trying to encourage more persons to register so that they can be a substitute teacher in the system.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. So that once the programme gets going, I am coming back

to you, Sen. Hafeez. But once the system gets going, could we say that maybe by 2017, unsupervised classes will be a thing of the past in Trinidad and Tobago?

Ms. Barrow: I do not know if it would be a thing of the past but I do think that the situation will be improved. We have had some good results with the system so far, and I just wanted to also add that since 2014, we have been focusing on teacher punctuality and irregularity and that is why we have been able to work a little bit closer with the Service Commissions Department, with regard to actually implementing Regulation 90 against persons.

Mr. Chairman: Let us look at January 2017 as a target date then. It should not be too difficult to implement this programme.

Mr. Ali: This is just a statement I want to make. I am aware that you all use the OJTs to supervise, if you want to call it, the classes when there are no teachers. I will assume as well that the OJT does not have the qualification as a qualified teacher. My problem is that the OJT sometimes becomes the teacher for two academic years. That is my problem and the students eventually suffers.

Mr. Seecharan: The Ministry's policy is that OJTs are not used to supervise classes, so if it is happening then it is something that we need to look at. The OJTs that we have sent, for example, in primary or secondary schools have specific functions. At the secondary schools they assist, for example, the tech/voc teachers, they assist the librarian. So there are specific functions where they do not take the lead but they work alongside and I am not saying that it is not happening but it is against the Ministry's policy to use OJTs in that way.

Mr. Ali: Well, when I have meeting with my constituents I get dozens and dozens and dozens of reports about OJT teaching the classes. That is a fact and it has to be dealt with now.

Mr. Seecharan: You can bring it to our attention and we will address it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, one follow-up question to that before I go to MP Hosein and that is do you have a pool of qualified but unplaced teachers in the Teaching Service of Trinidad and Tobago?

Ms. Cooper: We have an order of merit list with the Service Commissions Department for teachers who are awaiting placement based on vacancies.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, and can this pool be used in collaboration with the Teaching Service Department to draw upon, to assist schools which may be having a problem with absenteeism while they are awaiting their placement?

Ms. Cooper: All the persons on the order of merit list were invited to register as the substitute teachers and some of them did, so we do use them to that extent. But with regard to absenteeism we would not be able to replace persons unless they are on a leave of absence like that.

Mr. Chairman: And may I recommend to the Ministry to send out a notice again to these teachers

that they should re-register once again. Maybe they may have missed the first online notice.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. I have a couple of questions but I just want to ask a follow-up to Sen. Ali to Ms. Bharrathsingh regarding guidance officers. In addition to guidance officers, do you have psychologists in the various schools?

Dr. Bharrathsingh: We do have a small cadre of psychologists. They are assigned at a district level, again, to treat with the more severe cases. We have also been leveraging the expertise to conduct psycho-educational assessments. Again, it is a small cadre, approximately six.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. To the Ministry of Education, is there a difference in the systems used to monitor discipline in government schools, as opposed to denominational schools? That is the first question.

11.35 a.m.

Mr. Seecharan: The disciplinary process—well, first of all, let me say that the purview of discipline lies with the Teaching Service Commission but the disciplinary process is the same for all schools. So that if an infraction is committed by a teacher the process is identical to both Government and Government assisted schools.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, and that is pertaining to teachers, now students.

Mr. Seecharan: The code of conduct applies system wide and, therefore, the guidelines provided are the same.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I understand that—okay, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no, you can continue one more but I do want to bring in other members at this time who may want to speak, including the Chair, of course.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Do you have—I understand, through your document that you had sent, that there is a disparity in terms of the information that you get from the schools, other than Government, maybe because of the fact that they do not want to highlight that there are issues in their school, and so forth, so how do you plan to address that disparity? And how do you deal with students who have been diagnosed with special needs or disorders in terms of behavioural problems and attitudinal problems which could contribute to violence in school?

Mr. Seecharan: Okay, I will answer the first part and I will pass the second part to Dr. Bharrathsingh. I think you are speaking specifically to the reporting of incidence that may take place. The Ministry of Education, one of the things within the last year and a half, or two years, we have identified really speaks to the issue of leadership and governance at the level of the school, and the supervision of that. So we have in fact been working with the Division of School Supervision in terms of monitoring and ensuring

that, to some extent—not to some extent but there is compliance in terms of the requirements and matters that should be reported. There is a requirement for every single incident that takes in a school to be reported by the principal to ensuring compliance. In fact, every incident that takes place in a school is a requirement for immediate reporting, so that we are working along with School Supervision and principals in all schools, denominational and Government schools, to ensure that the guidelines and the procedures are followed. I would let Dr. Bharrathsingh answer the other part, in terms of special needs students.

Ms. Bharrathsingh: So we do have a Special Education Unit in the Ministry of Education. Once the child is flagged, whether it comes from the teacher or the principal, the Special Education Unit, specifically the teacher, would go down into the school. It might be something that would be mild that we can deal with relatively quickly in a meeting with a teacher; and a brief screening, we would be able to determine whether or not the child has met its milestone or not, provide teachers with alternative strategies of intervention, and we could do it at that level. The other level would mean intervening on a more deep level, if you will, for psych-ed assessments, or other types of assessments, to determine what exactly might be the challenges of this child and institute an IP, and move forward like that.

Mr. Chairman. Yes, thank you very much. Ms. Stewart.

Ms. Stewart: My first question to the Ministry of Education, what role does the guidance officer and the social worker, as two separate entities, play within the school system?

Ms. Bharrathsingh: The guidance officers, they are responsible for academic counselling, for career pathing, and for treating with personal social type issues, examples would be self-esteem, anger management—these types of issues—personal identity. They operate in terms of what we call a universal approach. There are generally a lot of classroom size interventions; it does not mean that they do not deal with individuals at times, and they are heavily preventative. The social workers, again, we do not have them one to one, but they deal with more moderate to severe psychosocial issues. Their mandate is to treat, not just with the child in the school, but to go out into the homes and into the communities, so in terms of that area.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. A follow-up from Sen. Stewart.

Ms. Stewart: I know you mentioned earlier, I think you said there are a number of psychologists attached to these schools, at what time is a referral done to the psychologist?—or a psychologist is asked to come into the school to conduct an assessment on a particular student.

Ms. Bharrathsingh: At this time—actually, I am just sort of clarifying—we do not have psychologists in the schools. As I mentioned, they operate at a district level, and how that is done, is when the cases come up at a district level, they come to a multidisciplinary team, that would mean the leadership of the

district which consists of guidance, the senior guidance officers, social workers, and special ed. The case would then be determined at that point which would be a best fit, and, in this instance, it might be referred to the psychologist who would then begin to address the situation.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: The concept of boot camps have been around quite a while now, not so much in Trinidad but in the United States of America. I do not have any data or any statistics on its effectiveness, but is the Ministry of Education and/or the police service thinking about the use of boot camps to deal with repeat offenders or members of gangs? Or, as we are seeing, I think I heard the Minister of National Security mentioned it recently, but the fact that the two young men from Trinity East, and I believe another school, who were killed recently appears to be members of gangs, and my question is, is the Ministry of Education and/or the police service are considering the use of boot camps to deal with repeat offenders or members of gangs?—identified members of gangs.

Mr. Chairman: Both from the Ministry of Education and the community policing department.

Mr. Seecharan: I can respond for the Ministry. What I can tell you is that it is not one of the measures that we have considered at the level of the Ministry—and I am going to say, as yet. I do not know what would have come up from the consultations that we have had, and, therefore, it may be one of the suggestions coming forward but we have not, at this point in time, considered that as one of the options.

Mr. Chairman: From the community policing department, we are talking now about the chronic offender. I mean the really bad student, not the one who can be rehabilitated, the one who is committing major crime; do you think that the initiative suggested by Brig. Gen. Antoine is something that will assist the community policing in separating some of these chronic repeat offenders from those whom you can assist in rehabilitating?

Mrs. Joseph: Mr. Chair, we have not discussed the issue of boot camp at this point.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. I would want to raise then for consideration, both by the Ministry of Education and the community policing department, the initiatives which existed half a century ago in many of the high schools in Trinidad and Tobago in which discipline was not such a big problem was always there. We did have a national cadet force, we did have a girl guides unit, we had, I understand, the St. John's Ambulance having a presents in many of the schools, teaching people disciplining in caring for others, do you think that we need to give a serious consideration, once again, to reintroducing some of these disciplinary measures which will instil the correct values in the young people at a particular early age?—and that will maybe help in dealing with these chronic offenders. Both from the community policing because we are coming back more to the community policing as we close.

Mr. Seecharan: Mr. Chair, we have done more than consider, in fact, what we have done, and we have recognized the importance of involvement of students in extracurricular activities in relation to all

dimension of school and schooling, and their overall development, so we have actually asked schools to facilitate at least every student being involved in one extracurricular activity. And, in fact, our interaction with the cadet force and some of these other organizations has started. In fact, next month, I think, there are about 10 schools who we are supposed to commission. So these things are more than a consideration for us, it is actually part of our strategy going forward.

Mr. Chairman: I would ask Sen. Stewart to come in at this point.

Ms. Stewart: To the Ministry of Education, when it comes to violence among students often, or sometimes, the perpetrators themselves are victims of a larger social problem, maybe it is stemming from home, the community, some may even have a mental or psychological problem, how does the Ministry of Education collaborate, let us say with the parents, or the identified doctor or physician, in treating with these students?

Mr. Seecharan: The approach utilized by the guidance, the Student Support Services Division takes both the offenders and the victims into consideration, so it is both ways. Dr. Bharrathsingh mentioned a process where things can be dealt with a person who is connected to the school can be escalated to a district team or to the psychologist. I know there is also the opportunity, for example, for assessments to be done based on recommendations from the school, or the officers attached to the school. I could probably ask Dr. Bharrathsingh to expand on that.

Mr. Chairman: Before Dr. Bharrathsingh comes in, I have a follow up to the question posed by Sen. Stewart, a slightly different angle, and that is in relation to the school curriculum itself; if the socialization in the community and the home seems to be lacking with respect to proper civil behaviour, it seems to be that the school has a responsibility to contribute to the re-socializing of the individual to follow authority, and to follow certain structures of civil society, I would like to know if the Ministry of Education has, at this stage, considered looking at the curriculum of schools and teaching students from age five, when they enter the primary school system, the types of behaviour that they should and should not engaged in, as part of the curriculum, what they should and should not do in relation to teachers, parents, and other students? Do you think it is worthwhile to start teaching students on what correct behaviour and protocol and manners would be at an age five level?

Mr. Seecharan: At the primary school level we do have, as part of the curriculum, currently, some of those very skills that you are talking about incorporated in different elements. The primary school curriculum utilizes an integrated approach, so that it is not as subject-centred as you go higher up the primary or at secondary school, and a lot of what you are speaking to is in fact part of that process. In addition to that, we have, what we call health and family life at the primary school, which is a skill-based approach which is integrated across and treats with the issue of values, the self, relationships, so it is in

there. I do not know if you were looking at pulling it out and making it much more visible—

Mr. Chairman: Could I stop you? What I am talking about is that these programmes, no doubt, exist but we have a problem nonetheless, how effective have the programmes been? And have you re-evaluated what you have been doing both at the primary and at the secondary schools with respect to inculcating into students social skills which are acceptable to the wider society?

Mr. Seecharan: Chair, what I can telling you, and what you are probably not aware of, is that the curriculum in the primary school has been revised. We are still looking at it again as part of our review process. It has been revised and what has been implemented—I think it is in 2013—is now in the process of being rolled out, so that it is pretty early to say, you know, or to give a true assessment of the implementation on the roll-out. In that review process we would have considered some of the concerns you have raised, and we actually put it in, so it is now being rolled out, and, therefore, I guess, subject to the review that we are doing right now, we would be able to make a determination.

Ms. Macintyre: Could I also add that the Prime Minister just, about three weeks ago, appointed a task force to review both the primary school and the ECCE curriculum. In addition to the national consultation it was, again, one of the matters discussed, and it was part of the survey that was administered prior to the consultation.

Mr. Chairman: Before I go on—thank you very much, Permanent Secretary—to members of the Committee, a question now to the community policing department, is the community policing department considering being involved in the school curriculum in terms of dealing with the youngers?—age five, secondary school students entering Form I are age 11, as the police force, before a community police existed, the police officers in a district visited schools to actually interact with students, that was 30, 40 years ago; are you considering that kind of intervention as well?—a once-a-week visit to a school simply to interact with students on behaviour, not necessarily within a school, but as they leave school to get their transport, as they are in school uniform how they conduct themselves, the types of activities that are acceptable, that are unacceptable, the types which are of a criminal nature, and you begin to socialize at an early age, and you continue the socialization and teaching the process in Form I in the high school system, are you considering such a programme from your department?

Supt. Paul: Yes, Sir, we have already considered that and we have implemented that, in that, from a community policing perspective, this system has already been implemented throughout the schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: Is it that you have a structured programme where the community police department, in a particular district, has a schedule that today we are going to visit the school, so every week the school sees your presents? Or is it not so structured yet?

Supt. Paul: It is so structured, Sir, and it is a tremendous success, as we speak. It is an ongoing process and it is part of our proactive initiative for fighting crime, or solving the challenges as it pertains to the school children throughout the nation's school.

Ms. Lewis: Mr. Chairman, can I contribute to what my college would have said?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, sure.

Ms. Lewis: In addition to what Supt. Paul would have said, one of the things that we are seeking to advance at this enquiry is having our police youth clubs more properly settled in secondary and primary schools, more particular secondary schools. The target market for the PYCs, as you know, is children from five to 25 years old. What we have recognized in all the districts, where we have PYCs established, we have seen a reduction in serious crimes, as well as minor offences. We feel that if the Ministry embraces this—we are looking towards boot camps, which is an American approach to dealing with their challenges, we have some home-grown solutions which have worked over the years. All these programmes have worked. The data tells us the programmes have worked. We can look towards our PYCs or CITY programme to find solutions in schools, we do not have to look anywhere else, and the data supports our position that these programmes are in fact effective, and we want to have the police youth clubs embraced by the Ministry, and together with them to advance these initiatives in schools.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Are you then recommending that for the known troublemakers in school, and they do exist, that it is mandatory that these deviants in the school system be required to participate in the youth club mechanism so that they can be re-socialized by what you teach them at the youth club?

Ms. Lewis: We would recommend, not just for students who are facing challenges but also those who are well-socialized, because the interface between those who have challenges and those who do not would benefit those who perhaps are facing challenges.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. You see, the reason I raised it is this, my concern with the youth club is, is it that you are attracting the students who are already well-behaved?—and that the students who are badly behaved somehow are escaping the net of the discipline that the police youth club is offering.

Ms. Lewis: All records reflect that we are attracting all students, which is why we firmly believe if we were to enter schools at the primary and secondary level we will have a much greater impact with our nation's school children. If we have this programme in schools over a five and 10-year period the impact it will have on our children in 10 years' time would be amazing. The data tells us the programmes do in fact work, let us give it some proper consideration.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. And that the participation in the programme then would have to be recorded,

as in fact that you have to register in school and fill in a register so that you will keep a track of those who have participated, those who are absent, those who are delinquent, and you will be able to know who are the ones who are taking in the programme seriously and those who are not.

Ms. Lewis: What we see for our PYC, in is the same way how our for-age clubs operate on a pathfinders, operate within your normal school hours, and then after school—I know it is difficult to get kids to come or to stay back after school—what we see for the PYC is during normal school hours that the police youth clubs are allowed to operate, whether it is once a month, but it must come with the police, of course, backing these programmes, and the Ministry, but it must come during school hours, not after. And we are saying that all the challenges we are seeing now, they are manifesting themselves now in schools, we are saying, over time you will see a change among these students, the good students and the ones who are facing challenges.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. May I ask, finally, whether you have submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education with respect to integrating the police youth clubs into the normal school curriculum process?

Ms. Lewis: We are using this enquiry to do so.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Thank you very much. And may I ask Ms. Stewart—

Ms. Stewart: I think, Mr. Chairman, you may have just asked that question, but, further to that, one of the recommendations that you made was greater collaboration among Government agencies and also the implementation of the CITY programme, so the question is, if these recommendations were forwarded to the Ministries?—relevant Ministries, Education, National Security, and any relevant authority. And when can we expect these recommendations to be implemented?

Ms. Lewis: We have not forwarded those to the Ministry, we are using this forum to advance those positions. What we can do, subsequent to this session, we can do that.

Mr. Chairman: Mrs. Newallo-Hosein.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Before I ask my question, just a follow-up to Sen. Stewart, to the Ministry of Education, I am aware that at one time the social workers from the juvenile court would have gone into schools, particularly the schools that had problems with difficult students, and for some reason it had stopped, and maybe it is a recommendation that you could probably reactivate that programme. Just to let you know that we received from the Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago some causes of what might be causing bullying, cyberbullying, all which may include acts of physical aggression, and there were four causes that were at the top of list, and that is parental neglect and rejection, destructive criticism, breakdown in family structure, parental death, or sibling death, which are high risk, and, four, chaos and conflict within the homes among parents. That is just four of a number of causes, and, yet, I feel that there is not enough intervention where parents are concerned. And I know

that the Chief Education Officer had indicated that parents are concerned about getting the time off from work because they would lose income, and just a recommendation, if you could probably—in light of the fact that you want to work with Ministries—I mean it is important for interministerial committees to be set up—that you could look at parents actually accessing NIS in collaboration with, of course, their employers to be paid where they would normally not receive remuneration for absenteeism, because it is so important for parents and for family members to be involved with their children who are being difficult. Because they are not only difficult in school, you know, they are probably difficult at home as well, and, therefore, it is important for their parents, for the family to receive counselling, and it is so important that you can probably look at the Ministry of Finance proposing a programme where they can be paid while they are attending these sessions. So that is the proposal I would like to make. And to the community policing, you have indicated in your submission to us that you have, as part of your programme, some sort of spirit guidance, who provides this spiritual guidance?

Supt. Paul: Religious leaders, various religious leaders.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, and a follow up on that, before I move on to other substantive issues, I was told we can stretch the time a little bit longer than 12 o'clock because the number of issues we have are still unresolved, there are a number unresolved, but with respect to spiritual guidance, does the Ministry of Education have, as part of it curriculum, ethical training?—training that may be not related to any special religion, but with respect to the correct behaviour, proper behaviour, right and wrong, moral or immoral, just and unjust; do you have that type of subject in your curriculum?

Mr. Seecharan: Well, there are two pieces to that equation, because we have a system which operates denominational Government. Within denominational schools, generally, the perspective of that particular faith is done, but there are opportunities within there for students of other religions to participate in their own, and many schools do in fact have opportunities for that kind of interaction. In Government schools all religions are facilitated, and one of the things that we have been looking at is the issue of teaching about religion as opposed to teaching the specific tenets on an issue of indoctrination. The values part of what you mentioned is in fact built in, for example, at the primary school we have a character, a citizenship area which is built into that, so it is not directly tied into any religious perspective, but what are those values that we want all our children to have. So there is that element in the schools.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, thank you very much. Before I ask the panel for another round of questions, I want to return to the question I raised when I quoted from the Education Act, which:

Furnishes to the principal, the responsibility for the supervision of the physical safety of pupils, it is known that the principal of a school is in charge of the administration of that school.

Regardless of the position I currently hold, I cannot visit a school without the knowledge of that

principal. That principal is entirely in control of the school.

We did get a submission from the Naparima Girls' High School, and we suspect that that is one of the schools where school violence may have been minimized, you cannot eliminate it; it may have been minimized. They indicated that in their school there are things such as safe school ambassadors, peer helpers, no bullying zones, et cetera, that the school itself has organized, so that at all stages of the school system the school population is quite aware of what are the do's and "dont's" with respect to behaviour. And I want to relate that to the question I posed earlier, we are giving principals of schools, according to the law, the responsibility for the supervision of the physical safety of the pupils, what is the Ministry of Education doing to ensure that principals can discharge these functions with the correct training, with the correct resources, the correct interventions? Do you, for example, have a day where principals from all schools can interact with each other so that they can learn from each other some of the techniques they have used in their schools which can be transplanted? Are principals given the adequate amount of resources? What is the relationship between the principals of the schools and the community police department?—the relationship between the principals of the schools and social intervention workers. Given that principals have such a huge responsibility, I would really like to know, how have the Ministry prepared principals to handle the current environment of escalating school violence?

Mr. Secharan: Chair, you went across a number of areas and dimensions. I mentioned earlier the issue of leadership and governance in schools, and it is an area where we do have challenges, however, we have, and while the principal is the person in charge and has the responsibility, all schools have been asked to set up a school-based management team, or what we previously call, a middle management. So that part of the process in terms of how schools are led and managed involve some delegation and decision-making at another level, and that cuts across a number of dimension. In fact, we have started rolling out a school-based management model, which we developed in-house through the divisional school supervision involving parents, and we are in the process of finalizing the way forward with TTUTA because we need to get their involvement, and looking at schools in multiple dimensions, not just the issue of safety of schools, because what has been happening in our system, and in particular schools where there is a high incidence of indiscipline, all the energies of the school tend to focus on one dimension and we lose our core function.

12.05 p.m.

So we developed a school-based management model which puts the student at the centre, but target those areas which those schools or high performing schools follow. So, for example, teaching and learning, parental engagements, leadership and governments, that model builds it out to allow the principals of schools to more effectively manage. It is a process that we have started with principals and

therefore, it is really delegated management where everybody—

There is one issue that I want to raise and it is an area that we have had some discussion on in terms of the roles of teachers, in terms of also looking at supervision and safety and security for its students. I know legally there is an area which if you are a teacher or an adult and you have students in your presence, then there is also a responsibility or a delegated responsibility, duty of care for you also to be part of the process. So while at the school level the principal has the overall authority, the model that we are using really delegates some of that across.

We have, in fact, have been looking at training. You asked about principals meeting. We have fraternities, schools both at the primary and the secondary level are organizing fraternities where clusters of schools' principals meet with supervisors periodically once a month and where some of these, in fact, I have actually mandated my school supervisors to look at best practice. And we have started the process of identifying some of those best practices and therefore, you have principals from one fraternity who may be attending meeting at another fraternity is a share of that. So there are a number of things that are actually taking place because the issue of violence and indiscipline is not limited to any particular issue, it is really an overall approach that we are trying to do, and within that framework we will manage leadership and indiscipline in the school, but also look at what our main purpose and objective is.

Mr. Chairman: Just a follow up: do you have a structured programme where principals will meet, say once every term, to share notes with each other and to actually create action plans and how they will deal with some of the challenges that they face?

Mr. Seecharan: One of the requirements for all schools is to have what we call a school improvement plan or a school development plan. Again, when we were looking at issues at the school we recognized that there were gaps in that planning process and therefore, we have been working with principals in terms of helping them to develop that plan, identifying core areas.

In fact, one of the gaps that we noticed was that in developing the plan, principals did not often use the data that was available to inform the planner. That is one of the areas that we are focusing, not only in terms of treating violence and indiscipline, but also with the school development plan.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. And a final follow up now to the community policing department and that is: is the community police department developing a very close working relationship with the principals and teachers of all schools within their jurisdiction? So that the moment a principal or a teacher calls the Community Police cell phone or email that we have a potential problem brewing, you are able to respond to their concerns in a timely fashion.

Mr. Paul: Yes, Sir. Exactly that is the status with the Community Policing and schools' supervisors, principals as the case may be.

Mr. Chair, if you could just allow me to add further? I want to suggest on behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service that our two interventions, CITY which is Caring Intervention for Troubled Youths, and our police youth clubs are tremendous success. And I will say with the police youth clubs, I just want to elaborate, we have some success stories. Some of our success stories are, Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy MP for Tobago East, Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Could you suggest five success stories? Mrs. Webster-Roy is a success story?

Mr. Paul: Also, we have Miss Nadine Stewart here. I think she is somewhere here today, a former youth club member. Presently you are among us. Thank you very much. We have several doctors, attorneys, engineers, police officers, business personnel who have emanated from the police youth clubs.

Mr. Chairman: And we would want them to continue and we would want all the deviants out there to know that the community police service is looking at them. And we want all the law-abiding students to know that they can call the Community Police when they see a gang fight going on and there will be a rapid response. Can I get that assurance?

Mr. Paul: Of course, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Very well.

Mr. Paul: Especially earlier when we were looking for role models, we have the ideal role models right here.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Thank you. Well we have one MP, Newallo-Hosein, who wishes to make an intervention at this point.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Just coming back to the school-based management. Is this school-based management model that you have here in Trinidad designed after any model practised outside of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Seecharan: We would have been looking at models around the world and what we have done is taken from the best, but actually customize it to ours—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hybrid?

Mr. Seecharan: Well not even hybrid. It is home grown because it was developed—I mean, we looked in terms of developing the model, we actually started where we identified there was a problem in our system and therefore, we started searching for an appropriate mechanism to deal with that. In doing so we looked at the effective school research and looked at what effective schools were doing across the world. And even there are schools here in Trinidad that have some of those embedded in it. So that the model we have is not replicated anywhere else, but in fact take elements, you would find common elements. So it is really home grown as I said. It took us about a year and half, almost two years to develop and we are still in the process as we go forward we find—

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, CEO. I thought we could have gone on a little bit further, but there is a sitting of the House this afternoon and we do need to allow the Members of the House of Representatives to prepare themselves for that sitting. So in the four minutes or so that we have left I will ask members of the Committee to raise their final questions before we close. Sen. Hafeez Ali.

Mr. Ali: Well I will ask a selfish question first. Where in Barataria is the youth club? Because I see Barataria as one of the clubs here. Just now. And at the high level of incidents in the minor—the assault by beating—yeah—Ms. Lewis said I would have a decrease in minor, but I am watching from 2014 it moved to 154, then in 2015 to 143. And if it is—this is for both sides now—that the success stories that the police youth club is talking about, would it not be prudent to ask the Ministry of Education for it to be mandatory for those deviant students to be admitted into the police youth clubs?

Mr. Paul: Sir, with reference to address from the club, in that area with have the El Socorro/Aranguetz Police Youth Club, we are based at the San Juan Police Station. And in the case of the El Socorro Police Youth Club that is based at the Barataria/El Socorro Police Station. So “is two clubs” eh.

Ms. Lewis: If I may also add as well, Chair? With respect to the statement of the member, the figures that we would have submitted indicate that for minor crime the total from 2015 was 51 and 2014 was 69. For minor offences the total we have would be 143 for 2015 and 154 for 2014.

Mr. Chairman: We can send those in writing and we will reevaluate them in the interest— Sen. Stewart, your last question.

Ms. Stewart: Final question to the Ministry of Education. The school environment can influence the likelihood of violence. What steps have been taken to improve school consecutiveness and the overall school environment?

Ms. Macintyre: DPS Mckellar, could you answer?

Mr. Mckellar: Good afternoon to the Chair and the member who posed the question, Senator. The Ministry has always been and remains committed to providing a safe and secured environment for teachers and students and all other persons ancillary who occupy the school plant. Of course, there are a number of strategies and mechanisms that the Ministry has used and continues to use to create this safe and secure environment because it is at the heart, the bedrock of facilitating the delivery of the curriculum.

We have been using levels of connectivity in that schools are connected, networked with each other with the Ministry of Education head office via an Internet email. So we do have that mechanism in place whereby if there are incidents that take place within the school, they can report same via email to the Ministry and other relevant agencies. Of course, telephone, fax and other electronic media are available.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We will take it up further. Retired General MP Ancil Antoine, last question.

Brig. Antoine: Given the recent suspension of classes in one of our secondary schools, have gangs been identified operating in our schools? And if so, are these gangs affiliated to gangs in the community? And I want to piggyback on the questions from Naparima Girls' High School in their submission: what measures have been taken both by the Ministry of Education and the Police Service to treat with gangs in the schools, if they exist?

Mr. Seecharan: Chair, the issue of gangs in school is one that presents some challenge to us. So while we in the school personnel may identify groups of students, it is difficult for us within the school environment to connect with particular gangs and therefore, in terms of making that concrete linkage we would need support from, I guess, the police service. In terms of treatment of—who may be members of gangs. And this is one of the things we have been talking about. We have our standard approach to treating with instances of deviance in the schools which we will deal with including the persons who have been suspected of gang activity. However, in terms of—and one of the strategies that we have been using—we have been working with other agencies and particularly with the TTPS.

So that, for example, the school that you referred to, we have strategies that we have worked which was done within our personnel at the school, but we are also working with the TTPS in terms of having patrols. And also, some initiatives that they have outlined in terms of dealing with students both within the school in terms of some of the programmes they are running, but also with students when they are out of school.

What, for example, you may not know is in the said school that we had that incident, there were patrols where at the beginning of school, at the end of school, during lunch time where students who congregate in particular locations were encouraged to go home. So that we are actually looking at strengthening our interagency collaboration, inter-Ministerial collaboration as part of our strategy. But in terms of the identification of getting concrete evidence with respect to gangs, we are challenged—the Ministry. While we may recognize that there are groups of students with opposing sides, it is difficult for us outside of treating with specific acts or incidents that take place.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We are way past our 12.15 cut off time, but I would like as we close to ask the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Education and the Asst. Commissioner of Police, Community Relations, Mrs. Enez Joseph, to make some brief closing remarks before I wrap up today's proceedings.

Mrs. Joseph: I would just like to say that I think it was clear that, from today's proceedings, that it is definitely a complex issue, and to add to that I do believe that cultural change can happen albeit at a slower rate to social change. It does, however, require the recognition and acceptance of the issue and both an integrated and in-depth approach which begins with each one of us.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Asst. Commissioner of Police.

Member: Ms. Lewis, will give our closing remarks, please.

Ms. Lewis: Thank you, Chair. Like the PS at the Ministry of Education, we are very pleased to have been invited here today. We are well aware of the problem which we face in our nation's schools. And so therefore, as a police service, we are more than willing to collaborate with other stakeholders to end violence in schools. We believe, from a policing perspective, we do have a solution and we will hope that after today that those solutions are given due consideration and we are able to advance forward. We thank you for having us here.

Mr. Chairman: And I wish to thank members of the Committee for participating in this Joint Select Committee for participating in this very critical proceedings. This is the first public hearing, as I said before, of the Joint Select Committee on Public Administration and Social Services. And this, of course, is the first topic that we have chosen to investigate. I would like to thank members of the Committee for their active participation. I want to thank all those who made submissions to us. I want to thank you members of the police service and the members of the Ministry of Education for being here to edify us and the general population on the various issues involved. To members of the public gallery and the media and to our listening audience, I also wish to thank them for their interest in this particular subject.

This is not the last word. This is only the beginning of our investigation into this problem. It is hoped that we shall invite you again, after we have had the views of other stakeholders on this matter, in particular, parents and psychologists, et cetera, Anti-Bullying Association, maybe even some students who have been bullies and are being bullied. We want to get to the root of this problem so that we can generate solutions. It is our hope that we will be able to minimize this unacceptable level of behaviour that we are witnessing so that students can focus their attention on quadratic equations and balancing complex chemical formulae.

So that I want to thank you all for being here and to indicate that, most likely, you will be invited. We appreciate your presence and your input and the conversation has started. Thank you all and therefore at 12.21 I would like to bring this meeting, first meeting of our JSC, to a close. Thank you.

12.21 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*

**Verbatim Notes of public hearings
held on **March 16, April 20th and 29th**
2016**

To be inserted



