



8th REPORT OF THE

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON

SOCIAL SERVICES

AND

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ON ITS

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

FOURTH SESSION (2018/2019) 11TH PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

EIGHTH REPORT

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PHYSICAL AND CYBER BULLYING**

Date Laid in the HoR:

Date Laid in the Senate:

An electronic copy of this report can be found on the Parliament website:

The Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration

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THE COMMITTEE



Mr. Paul Richards
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



Mr. Rohan Sinanan
MEMBER



Ms. Khadijah Ameen
MEMBER



Ms. Allyson West
MEMBER

Committee Mandate and Establishment

- 1.1.1 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.
- 1.1.2 Motions related to this purpose were passed in the House of Representatives and Senate on November 13 and 17, 2015, respectively and thereby established, *inter alia*, the ***Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration***.
- 1.1.3 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.”

Powers of the Joint Select Committee

1.1.4 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

1.1.5 The Committee comprises the following members:

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Mr. Paul Richards ¹ | Chairman |
| 2. Mr. Esmond Forde, MP | Vice-Chairman |
| 3. Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP | Member |
| 4. Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP | Member |
| 5. Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP | Member |
| 6. Mr. Rohan Sinanan | Member |
| 7. Ms. Khadijah Ameen | Member |
| 8. Ms. Allyson West | Member |

Secretariat Support

1.1.6 The following officers were assigned to assist the Committee:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----------|
| 1. Mr. Julien Ogilvie | - | Secretary |
|-----------------------|---|-----------|

¹ Former Senator Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir served as chairman of the Committee from December 2015 to September 2018.

2. Mr. Johnson Greenidge - Assistant Secretary
3. Ms. Aaneesa Baksh - Graduate Research Assistant
4. Ms. Janelle Mills - Parliamentary Intern

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Committee Mandate and Establishment.....	4
ABBREVIATIONS	8
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	9
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	10
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.....	13
INTRODUCTION.....	16
Background.....	16
Conduct of the Inquiry.....	16
KEY ISSUES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	18
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	34
Findings	34
Recommendations	35
APPENDICES.....	42
Appendix I	43
PERSONS WHO APPEARED AND PROVIDED ORAL EVIDENCE	43
Appendix II.....	44
MINUTES OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING	44
Appendix III	51
VERBATIM NOTES OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING.....	51

ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Chief Education Officer
COSTATT	College of Science Technology and the Arts of Trinidad and Tobago
CPDD	Curriculum Planning and Development Division
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualifications
DSS	Director of School Supervision
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
LEC	Learning Enhancement Centre
MOE	Ministry of Education
MYLAT	Military-Led Academic Training programme
MYPART	Military-Led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship and Reorientation Training
MTEST	Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training
MTEST	Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training
NPTA	National Parent Teachers' Association
OJT	On-the-Job Training Programme
SEA	Secondary Entrance Assessment
SERVOL	Service Volunteered For All
SSMD	School Supervision and Management Division
SSSD	Student Support Services Division
TTUTA	Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association
UWI	University of the West Indies
UTT	University of Trinidad and Tobago
USC	University of the Southern Caribbean

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix I	43
PERSONS WHO APPEARED AND PROVIDED ORAL EVIDENCE.....	43
Appendix II	44
MINUTES OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING	44
Appendix III	51
VERBATIM NOTES OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING	51

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1.1 At its nineteenth (19th) meeting held on December 15, 2017, the Committee resolved to conduct an evaluation of the progress achieved by the relevant Ministry and associated stakeholders as it relates to the implementation of the recommendations contained in its First Report on the current level of violence among students in schools (with particular focus on physical and cyberbullying).
- 2.1.2 As such, the Committee agreed that deliberations would proceed in relation to the three (3) objectives of the Committee's First Report (listed at 3.1.2) and the response of the Ministry of Education to the findings and recommendations within said Report.
- 2.1.3 The Committee acquired both oral and written evidence based on the above. Oral evidence was received during the public hearing held with various stakeholders (*See Appendix I*) on January 31, 2018. Some of the significant issues highlighted during the public hearing were as follows:
- i. The acknowledgment of the Committee's recommendation to develop a holistic school approach which encourages collaboration between stakeholders on initiatives to reduce the incidence of violence and indiscipline in schools;
 - ii. The need for an inter-ministerial approach to address the prevalence of violence and indiscipline in schools;
 - iii. The need for greater collaboration between the MOE, the TTUTA² and the NPTA³ related to data collection on school-based violence and establishing and integrating data-driven strategies to ensure the best learning environment for students;
 - iv. The School-Based Management System as a mechanism to democratize educational institutions, create a peaceful space in which learning is enhanced and develop policies regarding school violence and indiscipline;

² Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association

³ National Parent Teacher Association

- v. All schools are mandated to develop its own discipline plan. It was reported that 444 Primary and 125 Secondary schools have developed a School Discipline Plan;
- vi. The reporting relationship between the MOE and School Disciplinary Committees and the procedure to address reports of school violence which are recorded by the School Disciplinary Committees;
- vii. The need for timely intervention for victims and perpetrators of violence in schools and the school's ability to identify remedial strategies for the rehabilitation of offending students;
- viii. The need for TTUTA to get more involved in the affairs of the household as it relates to students who are victims and perpetrators of physical and cyberbullying;
- ix. The SSSD is severely understaffed with the ratio of students to Guidance Councillors at, one (1) social worker to six-hundred (600) students;
- x. The existence of a mobile phone advocating the responsible use of mobile phones by students and a zero tolerance social media policy with regard to the inappropriate use of social media;
- xi. The need for training to be provided to students in the ethics of phone use and maintenance of a positive social media presence and the implementation of a positive reinforcement system in schools;
- xii. TUTTA suggested that the prevalence of physical and cyberbullying in schools has not changed subsequent to the Committee's First Report and highlighted concerns on the general prevalence and daily reports of physical and cyberbullying in schools;
- xiii. Over 100 vacant posts within schools which remain unfilled subsequent to interviews conducted during June and July 2017 and the Teaching Service Commission's inability to fill these vacant posts.;
- xiv. The reporting of instances of school violence against teachers to TTUTA instead of to the TIPS.

- xv. School Disciplinary Committees not functioning as mandated. The lack of communication between the NPTA and district School Disciplinary Committees and Principals and TTUTA representation during Disciplinary Committee meetings;
 - xvi. The need for the concept of ‘restorative justice’ to be considered as a means to rehabilitate perpetrators of physical and cyberbullying in schools. 40 teachers were exposed to restorative justice training;
 - xvii. The need to enhance public awareness of School-Based Management Committees and their role as it relates to physical and cyberbullying in schools
 - xviii. The extreme trauma affecting students and lack of support from parents as it relates to addressing the prevalence of school violence;
 - xix. Training provided by TTUTA to better equip its staff to address the prevalence of physical and cyberbullying as well as the support and rehabilitation of victims and perpetrators of school violence;
- 2.1.4 Based on these findings and other matters which arose during the inquiry, the Committee has proffered recommendations which it believes will address the additional issues highlighted. A summary of these recommendations follows this Executive Summary.
- 2.1.5 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 main recommendations proffered by the Committee are as follows:

- I. That positive reinforcement be implemented in schools through a tangible and intangible reward system for positive behaviour. A comprehensive policy which outlines this Positive Behaviour Reward System should be drafted by the third quarter of 2019 after consultation with the relevant stakeholders;
- II. That there be increased collaboration between the MOE, the TTUTA, the NPTA and other relevant stakeholders toward developing solutions to combat the ongoing issue of violence and indiscipline in schools. School and District Disciplinary Committees may be utilized to achieve this purpose. The Ministerial Response should indicate the specific arrangements the Ministry intend to lead as it concerns increasing the level of stakeholder collaboration in this area.
- III. That the MOE commence an awareness initiative to engage the NPTA and other relevant stakeholders in the operations of the school and district level Disciplinary Committees. This should be executed within two (2) months of the presentation of this report;
- IV. That the MOE refine its substitute teacher request system so that substitute teachers are zoned to ensure that they are assigned to schools closer to the geographical location in which they reside and can report to a school requesting a substitute teacher in a timely manner. Plans to refine the substitute teacher request system should be outlined in the Ministerial Response to this report;
- V. The MOE should develop a comprehensive rehabilitation process map for students enrolled at Learning Enhancement Centres. The process map should detail the development of students from enrollment through to reinstatement to school and developed in line with international standards. In the case that such a document exists, it should be updated as a matter of urgency and provided to the Committee as part of the Ministerial Response;
- VI. That the mobile phone usage policy be made mandatory at all schools and that usage by students be limited or restricted during school hours. Principals should be required to record and report breaches of the mobile phone usage policy.

- VII. That training be provided to students in the ethics of phone use and maintenance of a positive social media presence. This training intervention should be executed by the end of this academic year 2018/2019;
- VIII. That the MOE make representation to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs for cyber-bullying to be included as an offence in pending Cybercrime legislation; and
- IX. Introduce or improve systems to ensure that statistics on violent encounters within schools are more readily available to the Ministry of Education. To this end, a shared digital platform that is made available to ALL principals to log or register such incidents should be considered. In its response to this report, the Ministry of Education will provide the Parliament with a preliminary feasibility assessment on this recommendation.
- X. Pursuant to recommendation (II) minimizing the underreporting of violent incidents in schools should be developed. In this regard, the staff representative of TTUTA should be charged with recording instances of school violence. The data collected by the TTUTA representatives can be reconciled against the data captured by the Principal (and or the School's Management Team-including Deans).
- XI. That the concept of 'restorative justice' be utilized to inform the rehabilitation of perpetrators of physical and cyber bullying in schools.
- XII. The Ministry should also conduct a survey on the level compliance to the mobile phone usage policy across schools;
- XIII. That school support staff play a more active role in addressing the issue of violence and indiscipline in schools. The MOE may consider developing a policy to outline the following:
- a. training of school support staff to identify instances of violence in schools;
 - b. the response of school support staff when engaging with perpetrators and victims of a violent incident in school; and
 - c. methods for reporting school violence and indiscipline to authority figures;
- XIV. That National School Code of Conduct (see 4.1.2) of the MOE be revised to become unambiguous and detailed with regard to the dress code for teachers, staff and visitors in schools.

- XV. That the MOE collaborate with the MNS to recommend students to be enrolled in the MILAT and MYPART programmes as a form of rehabilitation for students categorized as children in need of supervision as defined in Section 61 of the Family and Children Division Act, 2016.
- XVI. That an implementation plan for the re-configuration of the SSSD of the MOE be designed after determining the requirements of the Division in order to adequately service the needs of schools currently under its jurisdiction.

INTRODUCTION

Background

3.1.1. The Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on the current level of violence among students in schools with particular focus on physical and cyber bullying was laid in the House of Representatives on December 07, 2016 and in the Senate on December 19, 2016.

3.1.2. The objectives of the inquiry were as follows:

- (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 engage in acts of violence.**

3.1.3. Ministerial responses were received from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to the recommendations/comments contained in the Committee's First report. The Responses were laid in the House of Representatives on December 04, 2017 and November 17, 2017 and in the Senate on April 04, 2017 and November 28, 2017, respectively.

3.1.4. The Committee was disappointed to note that based on the recommendations/comments contained in its First Report, limited progress had been made by government agencies in developing effective solutions to address the ongoing issue of violence and indiscipline in schools.

Conduct of the Inquiry

3.1.5. Prior to the commencement of the public hearing, the Committee issued invitations to stakeholders to present written submissions related to the implementation of the

recommendations/comments of the Committee's first report. The stakeholders engaged in this follow-up exercise were as follows:

- Ministry of Education;
- Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association; and
- The National Parent Teachers' Association.

3.1.6. The Committee then conducted a public hearing with these stakeholders on Wednesday January 31, 2018 (**See Appendix I for details**):

- Ministry of Education;
- Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association; and
- The National Parent Teachers' Association.

3.1.7. Subsequent to the public hearing of January 31, 2018, additional information requested was provided in writing by the Ministry of Education on March 15, 2018.

3.1.8. The **Minutes of the Meeting** during which the public hearing was held is attached as **Appendix II** and the **Verbatim Notes** as

3.1.9. **Appendix III.**

KEY ISSUES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1.1. **Table 1** below outlines the status of the implementation of recommendations stated in the Committee’s First Report on the current level of violence among students in schools (with particular focus on physical and cyber bullying) at January 2018.

Table 1

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
<p>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 (see page 2)</p>	<p>MOE Monitoring System For Repeat Offenders: <u>A template for recording information on repeat offenders was created and piloted in the St. George East Education District.</u> As of <u>January 2017</u>, this template is being used at all Education Districts. Students so identified are referred to the Learning Enhancement Centre (LEC), these students are assessed and subject to targeted interventions.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>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 (see page 2-5)</p>	<p>MOE Intervention Strategy: <u>The MOE has developed a school based, data driven National Strategy for Promoting Discipline</u> at both the primary and secondary school levels supported at the inter-ministerial level by members of the SSSD, School Supervision and Management Division (SSMD) and the Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD). Each school is required to use guidelines provided in the National strategy as a guide to develop a data driven School Discipline Plan.</p>	<p>MOE: The school discipline plans extend to the level of the education district and at the level of the Ministry of Education. The discipline committee at the seven district levels in Trinidad and Tobago are mandated to meet and oversee disciplinary measures within each education district. At the school level, both primary and secondary schools, they are asked to meet to address their issues monthly, however, some schools have chosen to meet termly.</p>
<p>That at least one LEC be established in each Education District (see page 5)</p>	<p>MOE Establishment of LECs: LECs have been <u>established in four (4) Education Districts: Caroni, St. George East, South Eastern and Victoria.</u> In the Port of Spain District, limited services are</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
	<p>provided at the SSSD office to meet the needs of students, until a permanent venue is identified. In the North Eastern Education District the LEC functioned during the period October to November 2016 but were suspended because of challenges with the location. In St. Patrick, a venue is currently being sourced.</p>	
<p>That specific accommodation and resources be provided to assist primary school students referred to these centres. (see page 5)</p>	<p>MOE Resources for LECs: The Ministry is currently working towards proper accommodation and resources for LECs catering for secondary school students. The needs of the primary school students are met at the school level at this time.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>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. (see page 6)</p>	<p>MOE Holistic Assessment Procedure: The staffing at each LEC comprises Guidance Officers, Social Workers, Special Education Teachers, a Behavioral Specialist and a Psychologist. Each student together with their parent is engaged in the screening process, followed by an assessment. Based on the findings, the student is then referred to the Behavioral Specialist or Psychologist for further intervention if necessary. A Special Education Teacher can also refer the student for a psycho-educational assessment/evaluation to be conducted.</p>	<p>MOE: Restorative justice is part of our LECs’ approach the interventions for students, and it is a critical part of what the LEC does. Through the support of school social workers, guidance officers, clinical psychologists, behavioural specialists, and special Ed teachers, the assessments necessary are done to begin treatment and interventions, taking into regard the family backgrounds, the behaviour, the academic performance, and the academic goals for each child.</p>
<p>That a proper system for tracking the progress of students who attended an LEC be developed in order to gauge whether students require further interventions. (see page 6)</p>	<p>MOE Monitoring System for LEC Participants: The <u>process is currently under review</u>, however, the system for tracking the progress of students is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A case conference and exit interview involving the SSSD staff, the School supervisor, the parent and the student occur before returning to the school. At this interview relevant information is shared in an effort to map out the process for reintegration into the school system 	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The file for the student is sent to the SSSD staff at the school on reintegration. SSSD staff is required to follow up and provide relevant support and reinforcement. The Guidance Officer will provide support in areas of motivation, scheduling time table and life skills. The School Social Worker will provide psychosocial support and home and family intervention. • The parent and student are then invited to attend a six (6) week programme. This 'Thinking for Change Programme' is a cognitive behavioral therapy programme to support transition. 	
<p>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 LECs on a weekly basis to determine which students are not in compliance with the attendance requirement. (see page 7)</p>	<p>MOE and Community Police Engagement: The Engagement of the Community Police is part of the MoE standard operating procedure. The Community Police have been involved where necessary.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>MOE Mandatory Parental Representation at the Suspension Of the Student: <u>This is being considered in review of the Education Act.</u> The parent must be informed in order for a suspension to be effected. In the case where <u>extended suspension has been granted by the Minister of Education, it is mandatory for the parent to be present</u> at the Case Conference. The Case Conference is scheduled within <u>twenty-one (21) days</u> of the approval of the extended suspension, at which a decision is made as to the way forward for the student.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
<p>employer to hinder an employee for complying with a school’s request for an audience without justifiable cause. (see page 7)</p>	<p>The School Social Worker visits homes and makes contact with parents and also arranges and conducts parenting sessions. Schools at times also seek the assistance of the TIPS in contacting parents.</p>	
<p>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. (See Page 8)</p>	<p>MOE Annual Principals’ Conference: Principals’ conferences are held termly at each Education District and attended by both primary and Secondary school administrators. They include public (denominational and Government) and private schools. The theme of the conference is determined by a needs assessment done at the level of the Education District and involves members from the CPDD, SSSD SSMD and school security. Included in the agenda of these conferences is the sharing of best practices among principals.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>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. (see page 8)</p>	<p>MOE Mandatory Review and Evaluation of Schools by School Supervisors: A standardized template for recording the incidents of violence and indiscipline in all schools was issued by the Chief Education Officer (CEO). Principals are required to complete and submit this template to their respective School Supervisors on a monthly basis who then evaluate and recommend corrective strategies to Principals as needed. At the District level, Infraction and Suspension data are collated and analyzed on a monthly, termly and annual basis and a report submitted to the Director of School Supervision (DSS). School Supervisors are also mandated to promptly provide detailed reports to the DSS and CEO on any critical incident at schools.</p>	<p>MOE: School are mandated to create school development plan which are to be submitted to school supervisors to be viewed. The School supervisors are then to review the plans and guide the schools in the areas of the plan which need to be altered to reflect the ideal of the MOE.</p>
<p>That “the ability to effectively promote discipline in the school” be included as a</p>	<p>MOE School Based Management System: <u>There is the need for the Ministry of Education to review the instrument for assessment of the Principal and staff to</u></p>	<p>MOE: The school-based management system consists of an approach with sub-components that would</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
<p>criteria for assessing the performance of a Principal (see page 8-9)</p>	<p><u>include this area.</u> A School Based Management System has been introduced in all schools and is the medium through which school operations are viewed in order to achieve Children Value Outcomes. The Leadership and Management framework of SBM focuses on building the administrative competencies necessary for successful leadership. Principals are required to set up at schools, structures and systems to implement, monitor and assess school operations. Each school has been mandated to establish a School Discipline Committee of which the Principal is the Head. A School Discipline Plan, aligned to the National Discipline Policy, is one of the components of the School Development Planning process and can be used to assess the Principal and school personnel.</p>	<p>deal with things like discipline, and those committees would have been part of that whole governance structure. Schools are required to develop their own school development plans, and these school development plans are to be monitored and submitted to be viewed by the school supervisors.</p> <p>NPTA: Many of the members are unaware of the school-based management committees in schools, because in most instances the principal does not inform the PTA. There is no liaising between the school-based management team and the PTA to know what is going on, however, on school-based management training was conducted with the affiliated PTAs, from an official from the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>TTUTA: TTUTA while aware of what the Ministry had implemented, each school is expected to have this Discipline Committee. However, many of them do not include the staff rep at the schools, and some of them are not functional, and do not report to the general staff.</p>
<p>That the MoE engage in a series of stakeholder consultations to revise the National School Code of Conduct within</p>	<p>MOE Review of the National School Code of Conduct:</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
one (1) year of the laying of this report. (see page 13)	At the National Consultation hosted by the MoE in February 2016, initial feedback was obtained on the National School Code of Conduct. The MoE proposes to engage in focus group sessions various stakeholders to complete the review exercise.	
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. (see page 13)	<p>MOE Training for Principals and Deans: The Ministry of Education has embarked on the implementation of the School Based Management initiative at both the primary and secondary level. This strategy addresses a number of dimensions which contributes to school effectiveness and was developed based on gaps identified in schools, research and best practice including leadership, governance and integrated management. Supervisors, Principals, Vice Principals, Deans and Heads of Departments/Senior teachers in all primary and secondary schools have already been sensitized to the model and the implementation is currently being rolled out in all schools.</p> <p>Additional training based on Needs Assessments has been conducted by the Teacher and Teacher Training and Development Unit of the MoE and on-going training sessions are scheduled not only for Deans and Principals, but for Heads of Department, Vice principals and teachers.</p>	This recommendation was not further addressed.
That the MoE continue to work closely with tertiary level instructions 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. (see page 14)	<p>MOE Curriculum Planning: The Curriculum Planning and Development Division of the MOE has met with all the tertiary education providers (UWI, UTT, USC, COSTATT) on standardizing their curriculum and ensuring that it meets the requirements of the education system. In this regard, a number of bridging programmes have been conducted where gaps were identified.</p>	This recommendation was not further addressed.

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
<p>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. (see page 15)</p>	<p>MOE Teachers' Punctuality Record: The Chief Personnel Officer and TTUTA are responsible for negotiating terms and conditions of employment. The MOE is working with the Teaching Service Commission on delegated authority through the One Man Tribunal to deal with regularity and punctuality of teachers whereby the process of discipline can be expedited. The Ministry has also instituted the progressive discipline process for all members of the teaching service. Part of the Teaching Service Commission interview process includes teachers' punctuality and regularity record for the interviews for promotion.</p>	<p>MOE: MOE is working with the Teaching Service Commission with respect to looking at punctuality and regularity and treating with teachers who have exceeded the progressive discipline limit of 180 minutes. The MOE along with the Teaching Service Commission are expected to collaborate on reviewing the 180 minute limit.</p>
<p>That the Ministry facilitate a registry of NGOs, CBO, other organizations 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. (see page 15)</p>	<p>MOE Registry of External Stakeholders Involved in School Activities: Each Education District has such a registry which is lodged at the District Office. Every school is involved in one or more of the activities listed. All external stakeholders have the prior approval of the Chief Education Officer.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>MOE Assessment of the School's Curriculum: <u>Primary:</u> The primary curriculum was reviewed in 2013 following extensive data collection (formal assessment of the curriculum; stakeholder consultations, survey data from schools) on requirements for education in the 21st century. Within the new curriculum, emphasis was placed on teaching, learning and assessment that responded to</p>	<p>MOE: The MOE in the last two cycles of curriculum revision addressed the issues identified by the committee and therefore the curriculum implemented in schools right now would be an integrated type of curriculum that will consider authenticity in implementation. In the present</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
<p>inform further reforms in the existing curricula. (see page 17)</p>	<p>the individual needs of students and deliberately took into account strategies for meeting the range of learner needs.</p> <p><u>Secondary:</u> Curriculum review takes place every 3-5 years since the educational landscape and the national needs for which education attempts to prepare its future citizens also evolves. As a standard practice preceding curriculum review, analysis of current curricula, extensive research on best practices and data collection are engaged.</p> <p>A Cabinet appointed committee was set up to develop a refereed textbook on the History of Trinidad and Tobago and to review the primary school and ECCE curriculum. Recommendations from this committee will inform further changes to the curriculum.</p>	<p>school curriculum various visual and performing arts, character, citizenship, and education are being implemented. The HFLE is mandated at the primary level, and is integrated into the curriculum and at the secondary level, it is a stand-alone subject for the lower secondary level.</p>
<p>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. The implementation of timelines for analysis of exhibits and the collection of reports by Police Officers. (see page 18)</p>	<p>MOE Inclusion of a Life Skills Component in the Curriculum:</p> <p>Life Skills is a component of the Health and Family Life Education curriculum at both the primary and secondary school. This area is also addressed by the Student Support Services Division through a series of group sessions at the school level to deal with areas such as: anger management, aggression, conflict resolution, healthy lifestyles and good touch/bad touch. Seventy-five (75) SSSD officers were trained by MTEST to intensify the delivery of the Life Skills component of the Personal Development Programme. Further, a number of persons have been trained as part of a ‘train the trainer’ model and the Ministry is currently working on providing additional training for secondary school teachers.</p>	<p>MOE:</p> <p>The HFLE programme was started in 2013 and fully implemented in all primary schools. The MOE liaised with tertiary providers to ensure that the HFLE programme is included in the training for teachers employed by the MOE. There were instances of persons resisting the HFLE programme, however, the guidance curriculum ensures the delivery of the topics of anger management and conflict resolution skills which are delivered through the guidance curriculum within all the schools with HFLE trained staff.</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
<p>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. (see pages 18- 19)</p>	<p>MOE Customized Learning Environment for Children with Special Needs: The MOE supports the recommendation only for students with moderate to severe diagnosis who cannot be facilitated in the mainstream classroom.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>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. (see page 19)</p>	<p>MOE CVQs: Each secondary school has been mandated to time-table at least one CVQ subject. The SEA Placement process also takes into consideration the age and academic strength of students and places them into existing places at the SERVOL and Junior Life Centers. In 2016, one hundred and sixty-nine (169) students were placed at these institutions. Programmes include Life Skills and students have the option of writing the CSEC exams. Students also have access to the MYPART and MYLAT programmes for which parental consent is needed</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>That students displaying deviant behavior assessed by the SSSD as early as at the pre-school age. This recommendation is subject to the Ministry acquiring the necessary parental approvals. (see page 20)</p>	<p>MOE SSSD Early Assessment of ECCE: The Ministry of Education supports the recommendation for early assessment of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) students. Presently, these assessments are limited to referrals on a case by case basis. Discussions have already commenced to further this arrangement.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>MOE Facilitate Parental Interaction: Initiatives have begun in creating social media contacts in which small groups of parents (parents of similar classes) are able to receive information in a timely manner. Furtherance of the above recommendation is subject to the MoE and schools acquiring the required ICT infrastructure.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
viewing of meetings for the benefit of parents who cannot be physically present. (see page 21)		
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.(see page 21)	<p>MOE ICT Usage to Communicate with Parents: The MoE has completed a draft policy for ICT use which will inform the usage of various forms of communication including social media to communicate with parents, teachers and school administrators.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
That the Ministry of Education require each student to provide the schools with the contact information for two other relatives or references (in addition to the contact information for parents/guardians) who can be called upon to engage with school administrators and/or account for a student as the need arises. (see page 21)	<p>MOE Additional Contacts for Cases of Emergency: At registration of all students at all public ECCE Centres, primary and secondary schools, parents are currently required to provide contact information for at least two other relatives for the completion of the Student Cumulative Record Card. MOE agrees that unless otherwise stated by the court, the parent/guardian remains the legal guardian of the child. The parent should provide additional numbers for persons to contact in case of emergency and in cases of care and protection/ self-harm, student will also be required to provide the school with the contact information for two relatives or references in the “No Self Harm Contract.”</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
That the Ministry of Labour develop a policy of time-off for employees to attend PTA meetings. (see page 22)	<p>Time-Off Policy for Employees to attend PTA Meetings: MLSED: The MLSED is not in support of developing a time-off policy for employees to attend PTA meetings at the current time in light of grave challenges organizations are currently facing with regard to the economic and financial situation and a number of other pressing issues for which policy and legislative changes are required such as retrenchment and unemployment. The MLSED recommend that action on the development of a policy of</p>	<p>NPTA: From school-to-school the PTA Meeting times differ. Sometimes meetings may be convened on a Saturday Additionally, some employers do give the parents’ time off to attend. Parents may bring a letter from their place of employment for the principal or PTA President endorse it as a means of confirming attendance. However this is an ad-hoc arrangement and not utilized by all employers.</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
	<p>time-off for employees to attend PTA meetings be deferred until an appropriate time when such an issue can be fully examined and analyzed.</p> <p>MOE: The MOE support this recommendation.</p>	
<p>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. (see page 22)</p>	<p>Role Model Programme: MOE: The MOE agrees with this recommendation and further recommends a police certificate of character, references and a psychometric evaluation for these students. As outlined previously, key stakeholders are involved in extracurricular activities at all schools</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>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. (see page 22)</p>	<p>Big Brother Programme: MOE: The MOE agrees with this recommendation. Through the Student Council/ Prefect System, schools have implemented ‘Peer Buddy’, ‘Big Sister Little Sister’ and ‘Big Brother’ programmes. A Roster of Volunteers is not yet an established practice at the District level</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>The Committee strongly supports the view that community service can make a major difference for ascribing discipline to students with deviant behavioral</p>	<p>Community Service as a Form of Discipline: MOE: The MOE agrees with this recommendation which facilitates a multi-disciplinary/ inter-agency approach to practice thereby increasing a high level of accountability</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
tendencies. Such service can include service to the school itself as well as the wider community. (see page 22)	and monitoring and evaluation. This strategy was introduced in five (5) secondary schools in September 2016. It is the practice of some schools to engage students in service oriented programmes, however, this is done on a voluntary basis as students cannot be compelled to participate.	
That the relevant aspects of the Code of Conduct be properly communicated to parents and students at the time of enrolment into primary and secondary schools. Workshops should be arranged to provide verbal explanations of the meaning and implications of the various Codes of Conduct. (see page 23)	Sensitization on School Code of Conduct: MOE: This is the common practice at the registration process. Parents are also given a copy of the School's Code of Conduct. At parent-student-school conferences based on student misconduct and at other parent meetings, the school's discipline policy is discussed.	This recommendation was not further addressed.
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. (see page 23)	Establishment of Peer Counselling and Mediation Programme: MOE: The MoE has developed a manual for the establishment of a Student Council at all schools which can also be used for the establishment of a Prefect System. The criteria for the selection of holders of office are clearly identified. Training for students in the areas of mediation and peer counselling is encouraged. The promotion of student councils/prefect system in schools is one of the measures identified for inclusion as part of school discipline plans. For schools that are involved in the Resistance and Prevention Programme (RAPP), students are involved in such training.	This recommendation was not further addressed.
The Ministry should undertake a feasibility assessment to determine which antibullying initiatives have the highest potential for success and implement those initiatives after consultation. (see page 24)	Feasibility Assessment for Anti-bullying Initiatives: MOE: The Ministry of Education agrees with this recommendation. In 2014, a feasibility assessment was conducted with Student Support Services Division and	This recommendation was not further addressed.

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
	<p>Citizen Security programme. No new feasibility study was done in 2016, but the anti-bullying initiatives with the highest potential for success included whole-school sensitization to prevention and targeted programmes to at risks students in areas of emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, programmes involving reward and positive reinforcement and treatment groups (therapeutic</p>	
<p>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. (see page 24)</p>	<p>Cybercrime Legislation include Provisions for Cyber bullying: MOE: On February 07, 2017 the Ministry of Education met with the Ministry of National Security to discuss the issue of online pornography and other cyber offences that impact negatively on students at schools. It should be noted that all electronic devices that the MOE supplies to schools have been outfitted with firewalls and other protective mechanisms that prevent student access to certain sites. Currently, data involving the engagement of minors in online sexual activity is being collected by the Ministry of National Security.</p>	<p>MOE: After the initial meeting of the MOE with the Inter-Ministerial Committee in 2017 the committee has not met since. The MOE ICT in Education cyber-bullying policy gives overarching strategic guidelines and schools are given that leeway to make their operational policies at their level. For example, there are some schools that would confiscate the cell phones when students enter in the morning and return it to them in the afternoon. Other schools may use other means and strategies that may be the purview of the school in terms of keeping in line with the Ministry’s policy but having their own operational policies at the school level.</p>
<p>That the MoE continue to liaise closely with the TIPS to assist Teachers, Deans and Schools Administrators in detecting gang activity and to sensitize them on the Anti-gang Act and the school environment. (see page 24)</p>	<p>Sensitization on the Anti-Gang Act: MOE: This engagement already exists with the Ministry of National Security in collaboration MoE, The TIPS, through PADF has trained more than two hundred and fifty (250) MoE staff in Social Crime Prevention (Resistance and Prevention Programme). Principals are mandated to inform the police of infractions committed</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
	by students that are criminal in nature e.g. possession of drugs, weapons and engaging in sexual activity. The TTPS continues to maintain a close working relationship with schools.	
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. (see page 25)	<p>Whistle-Blower Mechanism: MOE: At primary and secondary schools, students report such matters to the class teacher and Dean respectively. However, students are encouraged to report incidents to members of staff, inclusive of members of the SSSD, with whom they are comfortable. The staff member to whom the incident was reported then reports to the principal. Where the 'whistle-blower' is a victim, a police report is made and the CATT contacted. The TTPS are also informed as to reports of criminal activity. If necessary, the principal issues Suspension / Request for Extended Suspension. The parent must be informed in order for a Suspension to be effected, however, the physical presence is not necessary if it can be verified that the parent was informed.</p>	This recommendation was not further addressed.
Special-needs students should be identified and offered the necessary remedial assistance. (see page 25)	<p>Special Needs Students: MOE: Special-needs students are currently referred to the SSSD where officers make the necessary assessment and interventions and if required, the cases are referred to external agencies.</p>	This recommendation was not further addressed.
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	<p>Recruitment of Guidance Counsellors and Social Workers: MOE: The MOE is working towards increasing the number of officers at the SSSD.</p>	<p>MOE: With regard to social workers, the ratio would be approximately 1:600 with an expansion of 50% more social workers needed for the ideal ratio of 1:250. The MOE begun interviews for school social workers in January 2018, as at January 31, 2018 the staff in terms of Social Workers,</p>

Recommendations of First Report of the JSC	Ministerial Responses received in 2017	Post-inquiry written and oral submissions
<p>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 (1:250). This was the ideal size as indicated by experienced field workers. (see page 26)</p>		<p>Guidance Counsellors and some Special-Ed teachers are on a month-to-month contract.</p>
<p>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. (see page 26)</p>	<p>Foundation to Finish Programme: MOE: The MOE agrees with this recommendation. This programme which began in June 2015 in the Caroni Education District has also been rolled out in all seven (7) Education Districts</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>As far as possible, the parent(s) of students 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 exists, particularly as it concerns the home in which the child resides. (see page 26)</p>	<p>Counselling for Parents of Suspended Students: MOE: MOE agrees with this recommendation. Each of the two hundred and four (204) parents of the Caroni, Victoria, North Eastern and St. George East Education Districts who had a child attending one of the Learning Enhancement Centre has been exposed to the Parenting In Education workshops, home visits and counselling sessions.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not further addressed.</p>
<p>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. (see page 27)</p>	<p>Recruitment to Fill Vacancies: MOE: The MOE agrees with the recommendation and dialogue has already begun with the Human Resource Department of the MoE for filling the existing vacancies in the positions of Guidance Officer and Social Worker. Additionally, the MoE will dialogue with the Human Resource Department to consider the feasibility and budgeting for additional staff to meet the intended outcomes of students.</p>	<p>MOE: The MOE begun interviews for school social workers in January 2018, as at January 31, 2018 the staff in terms of Social Workers, Guidance Counsellors and some Special-Ed teachers are on a month-to-month contract.</p>

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

4.1.2. Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee's findings are as follows:

- i. The SSSD of the MOE is severely understaffed with a ratio of officers to students standing at 1:600. As such, there is a need for the MOE to continue to work assiduously to build the human resource capacity of this Division so as to move closer to the ideal ratio of 1:300.
- ii. Given the current financial constraints, the Ministry must challenge its management team to engender innovation in undertaking their objectives. Proper performance management systems may also assist in ensuring that employee output is adequate given the significant demand for student support services.
- iii. The Committee agrees that the concept of 'restorative justice' is critical to the rehabilitation and reintegration process of student perpetrators enrolled at the Learning Enhancement Centres. The Ministry must apply innovative methods of achieving the desired changes in behavioural patterns among high-risk or deviant youth.
- iv. It was noted with concern that while the MOE maintains a zero tolerance policy with regard to the inappropriate use of social media in schools, the mobile phone policy for schools implemented by the Ministry is at the discretion of each school's Principal. As a result, there is no uniformed implementation of the mobile phone policy across schools in the country. This may be an area for continued dialogue with denomination boards and other stakeholders with the aim of achieving a consensus on a standard approach to applying this policy;
- v. The Committee noted the concerns of the NPTA with regard to the lack of a clear dress code for Teachers in schools and acknowledges that there may be a causal link between inappropriate attire among Teachers and forms of indiscipline in schools. For example, verbal and physical abuse of female teachers by students. The National School Code of Conduct indicates the following requirements with regard to Teachers' attire:
 - a. *Persons should always be clean and well-groomed.*

- B.** Introduce or improve systems to ensure that statistics on violent encounters within schools are more readily available to the Ministry of Education. To this end, a shared digital platform that is made available to ALL principals to log or register such incidents should be considered. In its response to this report, the Ministry of Education will provide the Parliament with a preliminary feasibility assessment on this recommendation.
- C.** Pursuant to recommendation (B) minimizing the underreporting of violent incidents in schools should be developed. In this regard, the staff representative of TTUTA should be charged with recording instances of school violence. The data collected by the TTUTA representatives can be reconciled against the data captured by the Principal (and or the School's Management Team-including Deans).
- D.** That there be increased collaboration between the MOE, the TTUTA, the NPTA and other relevant stakeholders toward developing solutions to combat the ongoing issue of violence and indiscipline in schools. School and District Disciplinary Committees may be utilized to achieve this purpose. The Ministerial Response should indicate the specific arrangements the Ministry intend to lead as it concerns increasing the level of stakeholder collaboration in this area.
- E.** That the MOE commence an awareness initiative to engage the NPTA and other relevant stakeholders in the operations of the school and district level Disciplinary Committees. This should be executed within two (2) months of the presentation of this report;
- F.** That the MOE refine its substitute teacher request system so that substitute teachers are zoned to ensure that they are assigned to schools closer to the geographical location in which they reside and can report to a school requesting a substitute teacher in a timely manner. Plans to refine the substitute teacher request system should be outlined in the Ministerial Response to this report;
- G.** That the concept of 'restorative justice' be utilized to inform the rehabilitation of perpetrators of physical and cyber bullying in schools.

- H. The MOE should develop a comprehensive rehabilitation process map for students enrolled at Learning Enhancement Centres. The process map should detail the development of students from enrollment through to reinstatement to school and developed in line with international standards. In the case that such a document exists, it should be updated as a matter of urgency and provided to the Committee as part of the Ministerial Response;
- I. That the mobile phone usage policy be made mandatory at all schools and that usage by students be limited or restricted during school hours. Principals should be required to record and report breaches of the mobile phone usage policy.
- J. The Ministry should also conduct a survey on the level compliance to the mobile phone usage policy across schools;
- K. That an implementation plan for the re-configuration of the SSSD of the MOE be designed after determining the requirements of the Division in order to adequately service the needs of schools currently under its jurisdiction.
- L. That training be provided to students in the ethics of phone use and maintenance of a positive social media presence. This training intervention should be executed by the end of this academic year 2018/2019;
- M. That school support staff play a more active role in addressing the issue of violence and indiscipline in schools. The MOE may consider developing a policy to outline the following:
 - a. training of school support staff to identify instances of violence in schools;
 - b. the response of school support staff when engaging with perpetrators and victims of a violent incident in school; and
 - c. methods for reporting school violence and indiscipline to authority figures;

- N. That National School Code of Conduct (see 4.1.2) of the MOE be revised to become unambiguous and detailed with regard to the dress code for teachers, staff and visitors in schools.
- O. That the MOE make representation to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs for cyber-bullying to be included as an offence in pending Cybercrime legislation; and
- P. That the MOE collaborate with the MNS to recommend students to be enrolled in the MILAT and MYPART programmes as a form of rehabilitation for students categorized as children in need of supervision as defined in Section 61 of the Family and Children Division Act, 2016.
- Q. In the Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry is asked to update the Parliament on the following:
- i. The number of teachers exposed to restorative justice training during the period January 2018 to April 2019;
 - ii. The number of vacant School Supervisor positions as at April 2019;
 - iii. The number of special needs students who were assessed and referred from January 2017 to date;
 - iv. With respect to Social Workers, Guidance Counsellors and Special-Ed teachers:
 - a. The total number of persons employed in each of these positions as at January 2017;
 - b. The total number of persons employed in each of these positions as at April 2019;
 - c. How many of these officers indicate at (ii) above are serving on a month-to-month employment contract;

- d. What are the different contractual periods offered to officers occupying these positions and the number of officers serving in accordance with each contractual period?

- v. With respect to the adequacy of human resources within the SSSD;
 - a. What is the total or established staff complement of the SSSD;
 - b. How many vacant positions exist in the SSSD as at April 2019;
 - c. How long have unfilled positions been vacant?
 - d. What has been done to fill vacant positions?
 - e. How many School Psychologists are employed with the division as at April 2019?
 - f. How many students have been assessed from January 2016 to April 2019

- vi. How much Special Needs grants have been disbursed between 2010-2018 (year by year)

- vii. What is the assessment data showing as the prevalence trends of Special needs categories as assessed by School Psychologists and assessment professionals from 2010-2018?

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

Mr. Paul Richards
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. Khadijah Ameen
Member

Mr. Rohan Sinanan
Member

Ms. Allyson West
Member

April 03, 2019

APPENDICES

Appendix I

PERSONS WHO APPEARED AND PROVIDED ORAL EVIDENCE

Name of Official	Portfolio	Organization
Public Hearing Held on January 31, 2018		
<p>Mrs. Lenor Baptiste - Simmons</p> <p>Mr. John Roopchan</p> <p>Mr. John Thompson</p> <p>Ms. Darlene Smith</p> <p>Mrs. Theresa Neblett - Skinner</p> <p>Mr. Gerald Phillip</p> <p>Mrs. Leticia Rodriguez-Cupid</p> <p>Ms. Avril Rahim</p>	<p>Permanent Secretary</p> <p>Chief Education Officer (Ag.)</p> <p>Director of School Supervision</p> <p>Guidance Officer II</p> <p>Curriculum Coordinator</p> <p>Curriculum Officer/Lead, ICT in Education</p> <p>Special Education Coordinator</p> <p>Director, Legal</p>	<p>Ministry of Education (MOE)</p>
<p>Mr. Lysnley A. Doodhai</p> <p>Ms. Kyrila Robertson</p> <p>Mr. Fitzroy Daniel</p>	<p>President</p> <p>2nd Vice-President</p> <p>General Secretary</p>	<p>Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA)</p>
<p>Mrs. Raffiena Ali-Boodoosingh</p> <p>Mr. Clarence Mendoza</p> <p>Mr. Shawn Campbell</p>	<p>National President</p> <p>National 1st Vice-President</p> <p>National Education Officer</p>	<p>The National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA)</p>

Appendix II

MINUTES OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING

EXCERPT OF MINUTES OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HELD IN THE A.N.R. ROBINSON MEETING ROOM (WEST), LEVEL 9, AND THE A.N.R. ROBINSON MEETING ROOM (EAST), LEVEL 9, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2018

PRESENT

Members

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Chairman
Mr. Esmond Forde, MP	Vice-Chairman
Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine, MP	Member
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP	Member
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP	Member
Ms. Allyson West	Member
Ms. Khadijah Ameen	Member

Secretariat

Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Simone Yallery	Legal Officer I
Ms. Vahini Jainarine	Legal Officer I
Ms. Ashaki Alexis	Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member
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A Follow-up Public Hearing on the Committee's First Report re: the current level of violence among students in schools

4.1 The meeting resumed in public at 10:35 a.m. in the A.N.R. Robinson Meeting Room (East), Level 9.

4.2 The following persons joined the meeting:

Ministry of Education

Ms. Lenore Baptiste-Simmons	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mr. John Roopchan	Chief Education Officer (Ag.)
Mr. John Thompson	Director of School Supervision Management (Ag.)
Ms. Avril Rahim	Director, Legal
Ms. Darlene Smith	Guidance Officer II Student Support Services Division
Mrs. Leticia Rodriguez-Cupid	Coordinator of Special Education
Mr. Gerald Phillip	Information and Communication Technology
Mrs. Theresa Neblett-Skinner	Curriculum Coordinator

Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association

Mr. Lysley A. Doodhai	President
Ms. Kyrle Robertson	2 nd Vice-President
Mr. Fitzroy Daniel	General Secretary

National Parent Teacher Association

Mrs. Raffiena Ali-Boodoosingh	President NPTA
Mr. Clarence Mendoza	1 st Vice President NPTA
Mr. Shawn Campbell	National Education Officer NPTA

- 4.3 The Chairman welcomed the officials and introductions were exchanged.
- 4.4 The Chairman informed those concerned of the objectives of the inquiry.
- 4.5 Detailed below are the issues/concerns raised and the responses which were proffered during the hearing:

i. Opening remarks of the MoE re: the response to the Committee's First Report

- a. The School-Based Management system was identified as a mechanism that may be utilised to democratize school management and create peaceful spaces in which learning is enhanced and students are aware of learning outcomes. This model primarily focuses on engaging stakeholders at all levels within the school system. The MoE noted that this type of stakeholder collaboration was a focal point in the Committee's First Report toward reducing the incidence of violence and indiscipline in schools;

ii. *The need to fill vacant posts in the MoE*

- b. President, TTUTA advised that the filling of vacant posts in the MoE is a major prerequisite for reducing the incidence of violence and indiscipline in schools. The Association underscored that are hundreds of vacant posts that have not been filled by the TSC⁴ since interviews were conducted in June to July 2017. These includes critical middle management posts in both Primary and Secondary schools. In particular, many critical "Dean" positions remain vacant in Secondary schools. Filling of vacancies can improve the monitoring and supervision of students and reduce violence;
- c. The MoE submitted that "Dean" positions have been advertised and will be subsequently filled. Estimated dates could not be provided.
- a. It was noted that many Teachers are employed on one month contracts;

iii. *The need for the collection of statistics regarding violence in schools*

- a. President, TTUTA indicated that according to the flow of reports received by the Association, the level of violence in schools remains high but has stabilized since the Committee's Report was laid;
- b. TTUTA did not possess empirical data to support its findings. It was noted that TTUTA's findings were limited in scope as reports received were limited to instances which involved Teachers;
- c. Chief Education Officer (CEO) advised that principals are mandated to record instances of violence and to submit same to the office of the CEO through school supervisors;
- d. There is a need for greater collaboration between the MoE, the TTUTA and the NPTA as it relates to data collection with respect to school-based violence

iv. *School-Based Discipline Committees and District Disciplinary Committees*

- a. CEO informed the Committee of the establishment of school-based discipline committees in all schools which are mandated to meet monthly or termly to

⁴ Teaching Service Commission

address their specific disciplinary matters. These committees are led by the line School Supervisor;

- b. All schools are mandated to develop a discipline plan. It was reported that 444 Primary and 125 Secondary schools have developed a School Discipline Plan;
- c. If a matter cannot be dealt with at the school level, there exists seven (7) District Disciplinary Committees which are established to oversee disciplinary matters within each Education District;
- d. These initiatives are a part of the governance structure of the MoE School-Based Management system whereby schools are encouraged collaborate in developing strategies;
- e. TTUTA stated that it is aware of the disciplinary system established by the MoE. However, in many cases Teacher representatives are not included on school-based discipline committees and many committees are not functional. Teachers have complained about a lack of feedback on matters from these committees;
- f. NPTA indicated that many of its members are unaware of the school-based discipline committees as Principals fail to inform PTAs of their existence. There is also a breakdown of communication between these committees and the PTA. The NPTA is not aware of the District Disciplinary Committees.

v. *Strategies for the rehabilitation of offending students;*

- a. MoE indicated that a holistic approach is utilized to guide the assessment, treatment and interventions required for the rehabilitation of offending students enrolled at Learning Enhancement Centres (LECs);
- b. It was noted that the concept of 'restorative justice' is a critical part of the rehabilitation process;
- c. The SSSD utilises the "Parent in Education Programme" to invite guardians to participate in the rehabilitation of students. The reluctance of parents to participate as noted in some Districts. SSSD Officers conduct home visits to encourage parent participation;
- d. A high level of admittance to the LECs in the North-Eastern district was noted with concern;
- e. Notwithstanding the current initiatives, the MoE recognizes that there is a need for an inter-ministerial approach to address the prevalence of violence

and indiscipline in schools and the need for timely intervention for victims and perpetrators of violence in schools;

vi. *The ratio of students to Guidance Councillors.*

- b. TTUTA submitted that notwithstanding the many initiatives undertaken by the SSSD, the Unit is severely understaffed to deal with the volume of reports of serious indiscipline and the implementation of training for teachers on restorative justice;
- c. Currently, one (1) social worker is assigned to approximately six-hundred (600) students. Officers may be responsible for a range 1-3 or 1-6 schools depending on the size of the Educational District;
- d. The MoE has made attempts to fill vacant positions as it relates to Guidance Councillors and Social Workers.

vii. *A mobile phone and social media policy*

- a. A mobile phone and social media policy was formulated for the education sector and has been implemented in schools which advocates the responsible use of mobile phones and maintenance of a positive Social Media image by students;
- b. A zero tolerance approach has been adopted with regard to the inappropriate use of social media;
- c. The NPTA submitted various reasons why students should be in possession of a mobile phone in today's school environment;

viii. *Curriculum development as a means of preventing violence and indiscipline*

- a. The MoE indicated that there is an integration of modules on Visual and Performance Art, Character and Citizenship Education and Health and Family Life into the Primary and Secondary school curriculum;
- b. The Guidance curriculum is utilized in schools to promote anger management, ethics, appropriate behaviour and morality in schools;
- c. It was noted that a review of the Primary School curriculum was conducted in 2013;
- d. A positive reinforcement system in schools is an ongoing initiative. This is done through tangible and intangible reward systems e.g. being selected as class prefect;

ix. Absenteeism among Teachers

- a. The issue of absenteeism among Teachers was noted as an obstacle to the monitoring and supervision of students and reduction of violence.
- b. There is a need to better monitor Teacher punctuality and attendance. Substitute teachers are utilised to address the issue of teacher absenteeism in the interim. The use of substitute teachers has proven somewhat ineffective in bolstering the monitoring and supervision of students;

Recommendations proffered during the Public Hearing

4.6 The following recommendations emanated from the discussions:

- i. That stakeholders take decisive action to collect statistical data on school violence;
- ii. That there be greater collaboration between the Ministry of Education, the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association, the National Parent Teacher Association and other relevant stakeholders as it relates to addressing the ongoing issue of violence and indiscipline in schools;
- iii. That the concept of restorative justice be utilized as a mechanism for the rehabilitation of perpetrators of physical and cyberbullying in schools;
- iv. That all relevant stakeholders are engaged by district School Disciplinary Committees regarding violence in schools;
- v. That the use of mobile phones by students be limited or restricted during school hours;
- vi. That consideration be given to the inclusion of modules on Anger Management, Ethics, Appropriate Behaviour and Morality in the national curriculum. Furthermore, that counselling with components on Visual and Performance Art as well as Health and Family Life be utilized to assist in the reduction of violence amongst students;
- vii. That school support staff play a more active role in addressing the issue of violence and indiscipline in schools.

ADJOURNMENT

5.1 Closing remarks were made by the Permanent Secretary – Ministry of Education, President – TTUTA and President - NPTA.

5.2 The Chairman thanked Members and gave closing statements.

5.3 The meeting was adjourned at 12:42 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

February 20, 2018

Appendix III

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING

EXCERPT OF VERBATIM NOTES OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HELD IN THE A.N.R. ROBINSON MEETING ROOM (WEST), LEVEL 9, (IN CAMERA), AND THE A.N.R. ROBINSON MEETING ROOM (EAST), LEVEL 9, (IN PUBLIC), OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2018 AT 9.36 A.M.

PRESENT

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Chairman
Mr. Esmond Forde	Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein	Member
Miss Khadijah Ameen	Member
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith	Member
Miss Allyson West	Member
Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member
Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine	Member
Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Assistant Secretary
Miss Simone Yallery	Legal Officer I

ABSENT

Mr. Rohan Sinanan	Member [<i>Excused</i>]
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10.30 a.m.: *Meeting suspended.*

10.35 a.m.: *Meeting resumed.*

OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Ms. Lenore Baptiste-Simmons	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
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Mr. John Roopchan	Chief Education Officer (Ag.)
Mr. John Thompson	Director of School Supervision Management (Ag.)
Ms. Avril Rahim	Director, Legal
Ms. Darlene Smith	Guidance Officer II Student Support Services Division
Mrs. Leticia Rodriguez-Cupid	Coordinator of Special Education
Mr. Gerald Phillip	Information and Communication Technology
Mrs. Theresa Neblett-Skinner	Curriculum Coordinator

**OFFICIALS OF TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

Mr. Lysley A. Doodhai	President
Ms. Kyrle Robertson	2 nd Vice-President
Mr. Fitzroy Daniel	General Secretary

**OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL
PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION**

Mrs. Raffiena Ali-Boodoosingh	President NPTA
Mr. Clarence Mendoza	1 st Vice President NPTA
Mr. Shawn Campbell	National Education Officer NPTA

Mr. Chairman: Good morning, everyone. Good morning to all citizens listening on the various media. Welcome to this the 20th meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration, and as a background to this meeting, persons may be aware that this particular Committee had, at its very first enquiry, the issue of violence among students in our schools. We consider this to be of deep concern because schools we know are meant to be places where we learn and we are supposed to be focusing our energies on Physics, Chemistry, Math, Biology and History but yet we have seen on the media, social media, main stream media, instances where children are engaging in violent actions.

And also, we have not focused too much attention on the cyber aspect, the violence which occurs with the use of social media. We have seen the more determined type of violence and we have seen girl-on-girl violence, boy-on-boy violence, we have seen groups and we undertook a detailed

public enquiry as to what the causes may be and what some of the solutions are, which could be implemented within our school system so that such instances can be lessened over time.

This morning, we are here to examine the responses of the Ministry of Education as a follow-up to our public enquiry, as a follow-up to the report that we presented. We are here to determine what, if any measures have been implemented so far, we have a number of stakeholders with us to give us a progress report on where we are, with respect to addressing this worrisome problem in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

At this time I would ask the representatives of the various organizations to introduce themselves, so we will know who are here with us to advise the Committee on what is really happening in this troublesome area in our society. I can start with—I understand the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education is here. May I ask the honourable Permanent Secretary to introduce herself first and then we go on.

[Introductions made]

10.40 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: And we do have representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association. May I have introductions from TTUTA?

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much officials. I will at this point ask members of the Committee to introduce themselves before we begin our full enquiry, and may I start with my right.

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, MP Jennings-Smith, and I am Dhanayshar Mahabir, Chairman of the Committee, Independent Senator. May I ask when you are responding to please activate your microphone and when you are finished to please deactivate, that is for recording purposes.

At this time I would ask representatives from the three major—a representative from the three agencies to address us briefly, a brief, hopefully two-minute opening remarks, and may I start with the Ministry of Education.

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: Once again a pleasant good morning. On behalf of the Ministry of Education we would like to express thanks for the invitation to participate at this post enquiry follow up meeting, on the first report into the current level of violence among students in schools with particular focus on physical and cyber-bullying.

The team, we met and we reviewed the recommendations and follow-up questions. And we

recognized that the Committee is focusing mainly on the need for the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a whole-school approach which encourages several actors and stakeholders to collaborate, to reduce the incidence of violence and indiscipline.

The school-based management model is one such mechanism that we have identified to democratize our institutions and to create peaceful spaces in which learning is enhanced and students would know outcomes are achieved. This model primarily focuses on engaging in stakeholders and actors at all levels within the school community, that is, our administrators, middle managers, teachers, non-teaching staff, students, parents and the general community.

We feel that these actors are suitably placed to comprehend the school's context and are charged with assessing, designing and implementing data driven strategies to ensure the best learning environment possible. They are in fact the first beneficiaries of these peaceful learning environments, and the wider society is the ultimate beneficiary. Further, the Ministry continues to partner with its key stakeholders to develop creative and workable solutions aimed at promoting peace in our nation's schools. I thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. A representative from TTUTA, Mr. Doodhai.

Mr. Doodhai: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Good morning again to all members of the Committee. Firstly, let me say a heartfelt thank you to the Committee for inviting the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association to this sitting of the JSC. TTUTA remains deeply concerned about the level of school violence and cyber-bullying that continues to take place in our schools. Up to this week, there were reports in the media with respect to incidents of school violence that would have translated onto the streets of our country.

The Ministry of Education has been claiming that there has been a decrease with respect to the incidence of school violence in our nation's schools. While we are not here to dispute any statistics from the Ministry of Education, TTUTA believes that even one instance of school violence in our nation's schools is too many. We believe that there could be more measures that can be put in place with respect to addressing school violence. One of the critical things that we see that needs to be done in schools is the filling of some of the vacant posts. There are hundreds of vacant posts that have not been filled by the Teaching Service Commission, and more critically these posts at what we refer to as the middle management posts in the secondary schools and also the primary schools, but more so in the secondary schools where the critical posts of Deans have not been filled. There are hundreds of vacancies. We know for a fact, on this side, from the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association, that as far back as June and July of last year, interviews were conducted.

However, not one of these positions have been filled to this point in time.

So, we would want to zero in on that particular aspect with respect to the filling of vacancies, because that is where some control can be exercised in the school setting with respect to monitoring and supervision of students, to possibly prevent this plague of school violence from taking place.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Doodhai, we will come back to some of those. And the representative from the NPTA, National Parent Teachers Association.

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: Chairman, today it is a distinct opportunity for the NPTA to stand before this august Joint Select Committee to represent our parent community, and to advocate for our children's best interest in the education process. The education process for all of our young people is a journey leading to a quality nation for the future of our nation lies in the book bags of our children, according to our first Prime Minister, the late Dr. Eric Williams.

For this to materialize we have to take an optimistic, realistic and practical view; each stakeholder's passion, integrity and commitment to the process, so that in the end all of our future leaders, the children of this nation, would achieve their maximum potential, be culturally and socially adjusted, happy, healthy and mature, and develop positive, moral and ethical values. I am certain that the recommendations outlined by this Joint Select Committee, coupled with stakeholders' partnership, the business of education in Trinidad and Tobago will journey on a successful path.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much representative from the NTPA, Ms. Boodoosingh. As Chairman I would take the opportunity to pose the first question for edification, and afterwards Sen. Ameen will start the questioning on behalf of the Committee. My question is really to Mr. Doodhai, and the question is this: Whenever I see school violence I just see it on the media. I am not in the school system itself. Your teachers are on the front lines. Over the last year, have they been reporting to your organization an increase in instances of school violence? A decrease? Or in your opinion, has there been a stabilization of instances of violence amongst our school age population, say over the last year 2017? I am trying to get the trend here, is it that it is escalating or has it stabilized?

Mr. Doodhai: I would say, Mr. Chairman, based on reports that have been coming to the association from our members that the incidence of school violence continues in our nation's schools.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so it has not stabilized. It seems to be on the rise then? Or it has remained is same? It is a persistent problem?

Mr. Doodhai: I would say it has remained the same.

Mr. Chairman: Right, very well. So, may I recommend that you collect statistics, that your teachers,

once they have seen an instance can report to your organization, so that we have data, hard data to go by to know whether in certain schools there is an increase or a decrease in instances? I think without data we can only speculate. Is it that your teachers are encouraged, your members are encouraged to report to the organization when they have witnessed some of these violent instances in their classrooms? You see, you are in the first line.

Mr. Doodhai: Mr. Chairman, most times members would report to the association when the members of staff are directly affected. So, if something happens in a school where it does not affect the teachers with respect to their safety, it may not come to our attention, but when it impacts negatively on them they will bring it to our attention for our attempts to redress the situation.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, and you have seen, say on a year-to-year basis, that the reports to your organization have stabilized? Is it that you are getting a fall in reports, a rise in reports, or it has basically stabilized?

Mr. Doodhai: I would say it has stabilized.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Thank you very much. A follow up from MP Esmond Forde.

Mr. Forde: Morning again, to the TTUTA representative, I am getting from you in terms of the question posed by the Chairman, in that you all do not have hard evidence, statistics before you that you could present to the Committee. I am hearing that your membership submits information, teachers report cases, but hard evidence that could be on document to say, well look, at this particular school, this particular day X took place, at that particular school Y took place. You all do not have those statistics?

Mr. Doodhai: We do not have empirical data if that is what you are asking, what we have, we have reports that come to the association on a day-to-day basis with respect to—

Mr. Forde: But Mr. Doodhai, I think from, you know, the organization where you sit I think this is definitely, you need empirical evidence in order to justify the case. Because you made in your opening remark that decrease in violence in school has not taken place, and you were sort of stating that the Ministry of Education is saying one thing, you are saying something else, and I hope that when we come to the Ministry of Education they would have evidence to say, listen, this is what has been happening 2005, 2015, 2016, 2017, and as we are going forward. Right? You made a strong statement, and I am saying you must be able to justify what you have said in order to let the Committee know, well, listen, this is the information, and you are combating what Ministry of Education is saying. I am of the opinion, you all need to work together; TTUTA, NPTA, Ministry of Education in order to ensure that this serious thing that we are dealing with has to be reduced, has to come to an end.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, MP Forde. A follow up before I come to you Senator, to the Ministry of Education. Are principals mandated to record instances of violence in their schools? A response from the Ministry of Education: Are they mandated to collect that statistics?

Mr. Roopchan: Good morning again, Chair. Principals have been mandated to collect such information, and to submit through school supervision to the office of the CEO.

Mr. Chairman: Have you been collecting that data?

Mr. Roopchan: We have collected. We have some data for the last year.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. And I will request then that you submit the information to the Secretariat because that would be valuable to guide the work of the Committee, and we would also share that information with the public as well.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Mr. Chair—

Mr. Chairman: A follow up on this one?

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, right.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I want to know whether that data collected is public data? And when I say public data, is that data available to TTUTA?

Mr. Roopchan: It can be made available to TTUTA.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Was there ever an instance where they made a request for data and it was refused?

Mr. Roopchan: I cannot recall.

Mr. Chairman: I will ask Sen. Ameen to ask her direct question. These were all preliminaries. These were just setting the stage. Now, the real questions are coming. *[Laughter]*

Miss Ameen: Thank you very much. I know, Mr. Chairman, it may seem as though we are beginning in the middle, but this is in fact a post-enquiry follow up on a previous meeting that we had concerning the current level of violence in schools amongst students, and today I think it is important for us to look at the element of violence against teachers and staff as well. What I want to ask is a more general or holistic question in terms of an indication from the Minister in the Parliament in response to a question in the Lower House in this month of January 2018, when the Minister was asked to indicate the actions initiated by the Ministry to curtail, well, bullying in secondary school, and his response dealt with violence on a whole, and he indicated that the Ministry has developed a national strategy for addressing students' indiscipline in schools. My question to you is: Has this national policy been

documented and what are some of the key components of this national strategy?

Mr. Roopchan: The information I have, member, is that we have in all schools the establishment of school discipline plans, but it does not stop there. We have discipline plans that extend at the level of the education district and at the level of the Ministry of Education as well. So, the school discipline plans—the discipline committee, sorry, at the district levels there would be seven of them here in Trinidad and Tobago, and they are mandated to meet and oversee disciplinary measures within each education district. At the school level, the schools, both primary and secondary schools, they are asked to meet on a regular basis. We recommend monthly, but some schools have chosen termly, and they have been meeting to address their issues.

Miss Ameen: And in terms of your stakeholder involvement, what is the component of these disciplinary committees, are your stakeholder involved? Like TTUTA for instance?

Mr. Roopchan: We have recommended that the various stakeholders be engaged, including the student body and the student councils in the schools.

Miss Ameen: But are they in fact now members of those disciplinary committees?

Mr. Roopchan: I would think so.

Miss Ameen: Maybe if we could get a response from TTUTA—

Mr. Chairman: But also, when was this national strategy implemented? And I place it back to Sen. Ameen, when was it actually implemented, and was it documented? Because I have not seen any documentation.

Mr. Roopchan: Chair, all this has dovetailed from our school-based management approach where schools are being encouraged to be part and parcel of developing strategies to address challenges that may emerge. What we have in the school-based management is that various sub-components of that approach would have been dealing with things like discipline, and those committees would have been part of that whole governance structure.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: TTUTA, I would like to ask TTUTA and NPTA specifically, if you are aware of this discipline matrix and the discipline plan?

Mr. Chairman: Is this a follow up?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, this is a follow up question, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Is TTUTA aware of this?

Ms. Robertson: Good morning, member. While we are aware of what the Ministry had put in place, what we can say is that my colleague over there indicated that each school is expected to have this committee. What we know is that many of them do not include the staff rep at the schools, and some

of them are not functional, and, case in point, do not report to the general staff. We had one such school this morning where I expect a School Supervisor II is visiting that school to investigate a matter of abuse by a student to a teacher, and several other issues, and the staff complaint is that they have not been getting any feedback from administration at the school, nor are the two reps there involved in that committee that should be set up.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I just want to come back to the original question. Are you aware of the matrix, the discipline matrix? Do you know how it functions? Do you know who is involved? Do you know what the plan entails? Are you aware of it? Do you know? Can you tell me at the back of your hand this is what it is, a, b, c, d, e, f, g?

Mr. Daniel: Good morning again, specifically Mrs. Hosein. I know from school to school you have a discipline matrix, and these discipline matrices, yes they are implemented on a school-to-school basis, but you have management problem in the school. That is how it is implemented. Because, I can recall going to a secondary school back in 2000, we had a document which was a system for implementing as school-based matrix. However, it was never properly implemented. It was just there, and sometimes you would question the principal as to whether this is the approach or not, but most times it is. They had some schools and it is documented, yes.

[Miss A. West raises hand]

Mr. Chairman: A follow up?

Miss West: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: A follow up from Allyson West, and after Allyson West we will have—we are generating some interest—Brig. Ancil Antoine, and after Brig. Ancil Antoine we will have Mrs. Jennings-Smith. Who has to answer before the PTA, after which I will follow with Sen. West.

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: The National PTA we would touch base with our affiliated PTAs. What I can tell you in our meetings, we realize that many of our members are unaware of the school-based management committees in schools, because most times the principal does not inform the PTA, and also if there is a parent representative on the PTA, most times the principal chooses that parent. So, there is no liaising between the school-based management team and the PTA to know what is going on. And we have done training with our affiliated PTAs on school-based management, from an official from the Ministry of Education so our parents would be aware of it.

But PTAs that are not affiliated to us, we would not know what is really going on, but we do know that sometimes even the local school board, which is another arm that helps with the

improvement of the schools, and they would strategize and partner with discipline plans and so on, we know for a fact that sometimes we have two parent representative on the local school board and one on the school-based management committee, and sometimes they are unaware that the PTA elects these representatives and not the principal.

So sometimes the communications break down to know what is really going on in the school, because even with the discipline plan, it should be a stakeholder conversation, so everyone knows what is going on. Right?

Mr. Chairman: We have a response by NPFA, but we do have a follow up from Minister West. A follow up.

Miss West: Thank you, Chair. To the Ministry of Education rep: I get the sense that you instruct the teachers through the school-based management system to design and implement this disciplinary policy, but do you have a system of checks and balances so you follow up, you ensure uniformity, you ensure that the design of the policy is adequate for the needs? And that the principals or whoever is implementing are actually doing what they are supposed to do?

Mr. Roopchan: The system that the Ministry of Education has in place is where schools are required to develop their own school development plans, and these school development plans are to be monitored—is to be submitted and to be viewed by the school supervisors. So, yes, we have that mandate that they prepare the school development plans, and we know that some schools are more advanced in where they are in the process obviously. But our school supervisors are the ones who will have the first view of it and to guide them in terms of having something that we see as workable.

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: At the level of the Ministry and under the office of the CEO, we have an officer who has been designated, and that person is responsible for the whole school-based management roll out, and a strategy had been developed, and that has been documented. Well, that officer along with the district officers have been rolling out the plans to schools. We have those SBM teams—this is the information that comes to me, because we were looking at it and we were looking at the model, and that is how it is rolled out. At this point we would have had in Trinidad the 444 primary schools and the 125 secondary schools presenting their school development plans, which would have been developed, as far as I am aware, and I have the team of persons who would have been part of that exercise. So, this is it. And all of the plans are looked at, at the level of the Ministry to ensure the compliance, as well as at the district level.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you very much. Brig. Antoine has not been with us for—he has to come in after Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP, and then again we come back, and we are still on the

principal point raised by Sen. Ameen. So, we have a number of follow ups coming up.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Yes, good morning again. I am dealing with the Ministry's written response in term of disciplinary committees. You said that there are seven disciplinary committees in each district, and there are disciplinary committees in the primary and secondary schools. I want to find out, what is the reporting relationship? So a disciplinary committee in a primary school, let us say in Laventille or let us say down in Siparia, has a disciplinary problem, what is the reporting relationship? It goes up to who in the Ministry of Education? And how does the Ministry of Education respond to this? And how does it bring it back to the school through the principal, through the PTA, through the TTUTA to deal with that disciplinary matter? What is the process that you are undertaking to deal with a disciplinary matter from one of your disciplinary committees?

Mr. Thompson: Thank you very much for your question, member. The oversight of the school is the responsibility of the line school supervisor, so that when a disciplinary issue emerges which cannot be addressed at the level of the school through the school supervisor, and principal reporting to the school supervisor, it comes to the level of the district where the inter-divisional disciplinary committee would review the issue and provide to the school guidance in addressing the issue, or, if necessary refer it further so that the situation can be addressed. So, essentially the line of reporting, and the line of oversight is provided through school supervision.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: And how is this information disseminated to TTUTA and to the PTA, if it is a matter involving a teacher or a student in terms of absence, in terms of discipline?

Mr. Thompson: Through the stakeholder engagement meetings which take place generally, either at the level of the district or at the strategic level, depending on the level of severity. At the level of the district, most districts will meet with their stakeholders, the district, for example, with TTUTA the district field officer would have that engagement, generally monthly, and if there is not resolution at that level, it would then go up to the strategic level where it is addressed. So, there is that ongoing interaction and coordination.

Maj. Gen. Antoine: Because we have both TTUTA and the PTA present, is this your experience? What is your experience in terms of these matters? If I could get a feedback from you all, please?

Mr. Daniel: While I agree that there may be some interaction, but most times it is at the back end of the issue. So, in terms of the planning, the whole strategic planning, we would hear, yes, there are systems in place, but we come in at the back end when there is an issue at the school then we are involved. Then it means that we have to treat with the issue.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. We will get the PTA, and afterwards I do have to get MP Jennings-Smith, and then we come back to Deputy Speaker. [*Laughs*] It will come back to you, Deputy Speaker, but MP Jennings—the PTA then MP Jennings-Smith. A response from the PTA.

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: Member, as far as I know there is no district committee made up of stakeholders that oversee the discipline plans or the discipline matrix in schools. And very ironic I had that in my notes to recommend today that we do have a committee like that in each district so that, you know, we can curb the violence in schools. Because as far as I know, there is no committee like that in the district. We do not meet monthly or weekly. The NPTA does not receive any information from the district level with reference to violence or indiscipline in the schools.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, and to TTUTA I would recommend, if you could also send recommendations to the Committee so that your own involvement can be enhanced in this very important exercise, so we would get the recommendations from your organization as well as to the NPTA. I will ask MP Jennings-Smith to come in at this time.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I will ask the PTA as it is the last. Can you tell me how formalized are your groups of PTAs? And tell me how many groups of PTAs you have in Trinidad and Tobago operationalized? How formalized are these groups?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: We have approximately 300 PTAs affiliated to us, and right now this new executive is on a drive to increase our membership. But we are very structured because the NPTA at the base we have the units, and the units will form the regions which are, you know, in sync with the education districts. So, we have eight regions, and then from that we have the central executive, the general council, and then conference of delegates. We do meet our units and regions on a monthly basis, so that at our meetings we will receive information about schools, what is happening in the schools, how parents are affected, what is happening with our children. As you would see, right now this new executive, we are mentoring a child right now. Mr. Mendoza is acting as big brother to that child, because that child is undergoing extreme trauma in the school, not attending school, so we are trying to help wherever we can help.

We touch base with the schools. So, right now we have a school where we are attending, a teacher is absent for months, because the teacher is a reserve army officer, just gets a letter and goes out and there is no replacement for the teacher, and the teacher is in a Standard 4 class. So, we have been on the ground, and we have been listening and we are trying to help wherever possible.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: So, I can safely say that most of your PTAs they have at least 50 parents attending meetings regularly every time meetings are called?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: Well, it will fluctuate, because you have small schools, we have medium sized schools, we have big schools. I am just trying to establish, you know sometimes you make claims that the PTA is not in the mix but then when you go to the schools, maybe you do not have the parents' interest in terms of being consistently present at PTA meetings. And now I am coming to the other point, and this is going to the Ministry. Now, the Minister said that, his reply, it is data driven, and I want to ask you all, this programme, did you develop this programme from any best practice internationally? Because when you talk about punishment, it could be either retributive or restorative. And I know when we are dealing with children you are dealing with young minds which could be tamed to a different way, and what we are having in society, what we are turning out is a lot of anger, hatred, and stuff like that. I did not hear the word "restorative" justice or conferencing in the school system, but I am seeing a programme which is data-led, data-driven, and I want to know something more. What influenced this particular programme?

Mr. Roopchan: If I may say, member, I know a lot of research has gone into the preparation and implementation of this initiative. I do not have the actual data before me, but I know a lot of research went into it in terms of examining best practices, as you asked, and in terms of doing the research itself to work with data on the ground. But I cannot say that I can provide you with anything more at this point in time.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: You see, Mr. Chairman, you talk about districts and district supervisors, what guides the district supervisors when they are liaising with those districts with respect to dealing with discipline and maintaining discipline, and dealing with violence in school? What guides them? And it is not spelt out here. What I need to know is what guides them? How do they advise? And coming from my colleague across the floor, he spoke about how do you implement? How do you operationalize? What guides? Like, for example, long time a child commits an offence or whatever and a teacher would say, "Well, licks for you", or they would say, "I'll call in your parent", or they would say, "Listen, we need to talk to you for a period of time." Well, licks is nothing that we talk about again. That is a long time thing. So, now we talk about restorative justice, we talk about conferencing with children, and we talk about retributive where you all say dismissal from school and stuff like that. But what guides the ultimate action?

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: Yes, Mrs. Jennings-Smith, hon. member. Now, the school-based management is—we look at a holistic approach, in that it is about the curriculum, it is about peace, but it is also about looking at your school development plans which looks even at your academic

performance. It assesses where the school is at, and whatever the gaps are in terms of filling, that is what the school will be—the school has to identify remedial strategies. Now, with respect to the restorative justice, I am going to ask Ms. Darlene Smith, who is from the school Student Support Services to provide you with some additional information with respect to how it all comes together.

Ms. Smith: Good morning, member. Within the Ministry of Education, as our PS stated, we do take a holistic approach about our interventions regarding violence. From the reports that we would have submitted to you, restorative justice is part of our learning enhancement centres approach in our interventions that we do with students, and it is a critical part of what we do. Because, as you know, we must and we do recognize that students can change, behaviours can be modified, and through the support of our school social workers, guidance officers, our clinical psychologists, behavioural specialists, and special ed teachers, we do the assessments necessary to beginning treatment and interventions, taking into regard the family backgrounds, the behaviour, the academic performance, and more importantly, the academic goals for each child.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Chairman, so there is a role for the parents and the parent teacher body. Can you safely say here that you are satisfied with the responses you get from the parents and the parent/teachers body?

Ms. Smith: While we work with the parents we do not necessarily interact with the NPTA. We do collaborate at various—I have in the past worked with the NPTA in doing training for some of their staff, and there are various units. On Saturdays a person rarely attended an executed training sessions. What we do in essence, they would be more interacting through our parenting education programmes with parents, to help to do the necessary support while we do the rehabilitation and interventions with all students.

Mr. Chairman: I need to intervene, and the question is: Do you get the full cooperation of parents when they are requested to come to the committee and comply with certain guidelines and advice that you give? Or is it that you find reluctance from parents, or guardians, care givers to participate in the programmes?

Ms. Smith: It has been a mixed approach. What we recognize is that in some districts, we get the parents support while in some other areas and some communities there is some resistance. However, when that occurs we do the second step, which is home-to-home visits, and we do go out and try to seek and find the parents where necessary. That is critical in terms of our intervention. In our strategic approach to treating with violence and indiscipline in schools, we recognize that it is a five-pronged approach whereby while we may be working with parents, society, community, relational individuals,

but we recognize it is also an inter-ministerial approach required to addressing and treating with violence and indiscipline in schools.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to come in with his follow up.

Mr. Forde: And this is a follow up on the discussion that went prior to my colleague MP Jennings-Smith. In terms of the relationship and the communication process between the three bodies represented here today, I am sitting here and I am of the opinion that the relationship and the communication with regard to the topic on discussion—right, we are discussing violence and bullying in schools—I am of the impression, and you all will be given the opportunity each to say whether my opinion is wrong or whether it is factual. I am thinking that the relationship with regard to this particular topic and the communication process is poor among the three bodies represented here today. All right?

I make a couple jottings, NPFTA mentioned “touched base”. I think if we really try to look at when we say “touch base”, you know, it does not happen regularly. TTUTA mentioned, “Well, we sometimes. Well, we sometimes.” “While I agree,” TTUTA again. “As far as I know”, NPFTA mentioned that. Those are not definitive statements in terms of the communication process that is taking place for a very important topic like this. So, with regard to, in the particular order, NPFTA first, TTUTA second, the Ministry of Education third.

Sorry to put you all in the spot but I need to be clear. How is the relationship process and communication process with regard to school violence among the body? So, NPFTA, how would you relate the relationship and the communication process with regard to school violence?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: We will be aware of the instances of violence in schools if our parents call us and inform us and sometimes it is only when it reaches the media we would know about it. However, we do have meetings with the Minister of Education and his staff at least once a term.

Mr. Forde: That is a general meeting or is it on violence alone?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: No, a general meeting. But, you know, we would ask for information on the violence and indiscipline, and just at our last meeting in January we had with the hon. Minister Garcia, he informed us that suspensions have been on the decrease. So, if that is an indication that the indiscipline and violence is decreasing in the schools.

Mr. Forde: Are you of the opinion that a critical thing like this should have a separate and apart meeting, like a meeting on violence in schools? Are you of that opinion?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: Yes, I am of that opinion.

Mr. Forde: Thank you. TTUTA?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: Because what we believe is that all stakeholders have to come together to discuss that and to bring remedy to it.

Mr. Forde: TTUTA, how would you relate to communication relationship, with violence—eh, I am not talking about anything else—in schools?

Mr. Doodhai: I would say the relationship is not very good with respect to this particular issue. While we meet on other issues and other areas with respect to violence and indiscipline, most times when the discussion takes place is after something has happened and we are trying to remedy a situation in a particular school.

Mr. Forde: But with regard to the strategic plan that you all talked about and so on, you all are not part of that process and so on?

Mr. Doodhai: No, Sir.

Mr. Forde: Right. Ministry of Education, how would you rate against—same answer.

Mr. Roopchan: Vice-Chair, I would say that at the level of the school, all stakeholders, as we are aware, are engaged. The PTA at the school would be engaged. They have been mandated to be part of the discipline committees. The total TTUTA representatives, we expect them to be part of it, but we note that at the district level, the district committee as it presently stands is involving Ministry officials. And we take the recommendation that was made some time earlier that perhaps we should engage the stakeholders at that level.

Mr. Forde: Just now, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: One last follow up before we go to MP Newallo-Hosein.

Mr. Forde: And again, as mentioned by NPTA and also TTUTA, “They know after the fact.” Let us say, it is aired in the media, or unless a parent tells them. Again, from where I sit, I was of the belief, or I would want to think that again something as critical as this that they would be notified accordingly, that they will be part of the discussion—members of TTUTA, you all are teachers?

Ms. Robertson: Yes, Sir, we are.

Mr. Forde: Right, and NPTA you all are not necessarily teachers?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: No, we are not.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Right. And I am thinking, there must be some collaboration. You know, I mean, we are hearing about school violence every day. I mean, you read the papers, I think, you know—

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, member. We now get the drift that there is a need for closer collaboration, and we have gotten it today that the stakeholders need to communicate, and communication is easy, electronic communication. There is no good reason why all stakeholders cannot be kept abreast of development, untoward developments, favourable developments. We will come back to the question, yes. After Mr. Doodhai has made his contribution, MP Newallo-Hosein has to get in again on a follow up before we go back to the question posed by Sen. Ameen. So, Mr. Doodhai.

Mr. Doodhai: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to make a short contribution based on the question asked by Mrs. Jennings-Smith with respect to restorative justice. The representative of the Ministry of Education, Ms. Smith, Guidance Officer II, would have spoken about the involvement of the Student Support Services Division with respect to the use of restorative justice with respect to violence and indiscipline in schools.

From our side we would want to submit that the Student Support Services Division is understaffed to deal with the current numbers of issues that are coming to the fore, and therefore if—well, of course we will want to call for a beefing up in terms of the numbers of the Student Support Services Division. Failing that, we believe that training should be given to teachers with respect to restorative justice, because they are the first line persons in contact with the students and they are the ones who can implement or use the tool of restorative justice. And I just wanted to point out that TTUTA would have recognized the importance of restorative justice, and we would have partnered with the American Federation of Teachers in June of 2017, where they would have come to Trinidad and we would have exposed 40 of our teachers, five from each of the eight educational districts to restorative justice, and they were asked to go back to their schools and expose their fellow members of staff to what would have been shared with them at that particular two-day training.

Mr. Chairman: We would come back to that, and I myself have some concerns with teacher training and so on. So, many of your teachers are going to be females, I would imagine who would have to be in the presence of some of these violent acts, and I am concerned about the welfare and what that can have with respect to entry into the teaching service. Is violence and the incidence of violence a deterrent to getting high quality persons to enter the teaching service? So, some of those issues will come subsequently, but I want to ask MP Newallo-Hosein to pose her follow up before I go back to Sen. Ameen.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. In concurring with MP Forde, I would like to say that

there is definite disconnect, as we could see. And my question goes back to what Mr. Thompson has said earlier, indicating that the principal would write to the school supervisor advising that there is a problem, so a physical report comes in. Is there any law or policy that prohibits the supervisor, the principal from in fact copying the report to TTUTA to indicate that this problem is being submitted to the Ministry of Education, so that everyone is on the same page and that they can have some follow up action so that there is no disconnect? Is there any policy prohibiting the principal from copying that report? That is the first question.

Ms. Rahim: Hon. member, thank you. There may be issues of confidentiality arising, so even if the report may not be copied, certainly some form of notification can be done so as to inform TTUTA and so on. Perhaps not so much the content or copying of the primary report, until we know like what kind of information would be in it and that sort of thing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: TTUTA can you advise if there has been any indication that a principal cannot or a teacher cannot advise you of certain things that take place in the schools that may affect their own ability to execute their performance of their duties efficiently and effectively?

Mr. Daniel: Member, we are unaware any of such legislation that prevents a principal from sharing that information.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: TTUTA, do you receive any reports from teachers stating that they experienced fear, and that they are intimidated in the execution of their duties, and if you do, how do you deal with those reports?

Ms. Robertson: Member, that is almost a weekly report that comes to the IR department. At times we would advise the teachers to go through the proper procedure, which is to have—we would send out field officers or a district executive to have conferencing with the principals of those schools, and when we cannot address it at that level, certainly we then attempt to speak with the DSS or the CEO, or somebody to have those matters addressed. There are a number of reports that involve teachers having to make reports to the police station that we also come by regularly.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Are these reports able to give you enough data to determine what is happening within the schools? Because, I mean, this comes as empirical evidence as far as I aware. If a teacher brings a complaint of something that is happening and they have to actually make a report to the police, does this not supply you with the empirical evidence to provide data to indicate that you need to speak to the Ministry as to how we go forward? I mean, yes you made a point that you need to put in more deans, you need to fill the positions which amount to hundreds, but it is not just a matter of filling the positions, it is also how do you proceed with how you manage discipline. How

do you go with restorative justice? Because you could have persons in there, but if you do not have a proper matrix, how do you implement the procedures that are necessary to bring down the level of violence and bullying in the schools?

Ms. Robertson: Okay member, I am going to have to say, while we have the information I do not think we have probably collated it and put it together, but it is something that we certainly can work on with the reports and the files that we do have in our industrial relations department of TTUTA.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Mr. Chair, am—

Mr. Chairman: And the last follow up before we go back. Last, last follow up.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Yes. And I want the go back to the whole restorative justice approach because it is called conferencing. It is something that is a school conferencing, community conferencing, and it is known to be a highly effectively process. Now, listen to Mr. Doodhai, It seems to me as though we were on that dry track some time ago and persons were actually trained, but somewhere along the line it may be seemingly, it was never followed up and measured.

Because we talk evidence-based, and we talk data, and we talk all these nice words, but if we had process, did we put it in place? Did we measure it to see if it could have been successful? Because we are talking about changing a whole culture that seems to be invaded our school system. This whole hate, anger. How do we control hate and anger amongst students? And this is a programme which has been tested and tried in other countries like Australia which is a peaceful nation. And, have we tested it, so we could say now that 100 students engaged in that process in these schools, and what has happened since then to now? Was it successful?

So we could maybe change the strategy and say it cannot work here, and change it and say, we will do something else. I want to know if that actually happened and we remove ourselves from, because seemingly we done not have enough teachers. We do not have enough deans. We do not have the people in the schools to even initiate that conferencing process with the students. So, I need to get some answers on that.

Mr. Chairman: Permanent Secretary, yes.

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: On a point of clarification. Now, in the Ministry of Education you have posts that are vacant. For example, you would listen and you would hear acting and acting. They are vacant with bodies. Yes? So that you have in the school systems—now, I did not walk with the data with respect to deans, and heads of departments, and senior teachers. But we have persons who are actually performing the duties, and we know that as Mr. Doodhai indicated that we had the interviews

conducted through the TSC, Teaching Service Commission. But it is not that all of the positions would be vacant, because I know that for a fact.

The thing about it, I did not walk with the information to tell you how many deans that would discipline, that we have in our schools, but there are positions that are vacant with bodies, but if you look on the establishment you would see vacant because they are not substantive holders. The positions have been advertised and they will be subsequently filled. But we have persons because you are older teachers and you have who would know that we have teachers who are in those positions. So, on a point of clarification before you move ahead, and that it is that we do not have persons. It is that in the government systems you have persons who are in the positions but they are not the substantive holders, so you write, "with bodies". All right? Vacant with bodies and vacant without bodies.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Chairman, I have not gotten the answer. I am asking you to tell me how many people—

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: No, no, I just wanted to point out. Okay, but Ms. Smith will respond.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. I need to move on, and we have had a long round, we would come back—yes, we would come back to some of these follow up issues, but I would like to get back to Sen. Ameen for her to raise another substantive question.

Miss Ameen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it is safe for us to conclude this round, that there is a deficiency in the policy with regard to the whole school-based management approach and engagement of stakeholders, because it seems that the stakeholder participation is an ad-hoc engagement. It does not seem that—I have not gotten a definitive answer, but it does not seem to be a part of the policy that the specific stakeholders are involved. For instance, that they comprised committees, and there are recommendations for, for instance, who should sit on committees. And I want to recommend that these stakeholders be named and that they comprise the committees. So, for example, you have your regional district discipline committee, the school-based management teams, if there are committees there that it must be mandatory for, for example, TTUTA to have a representative on these committees, National PTA and any other significant stakeholders who are identified.

Mr. Chairman, my next issue actually has to do with what was mentioned by the Permanent Secretary, and this Committee is actually in the process of considering a proposal for an enquiry on the state of contract employment in the public service. Because of that same complaint that you made in terms of vacancies. In our initial enquiry into school-based violence we had a number of guidance

counsellors, deans, and other persons involved in the counselling aspect of schools, and we recognized that there is a significant shortage. The ratio of the number of students to guidance counsellors, for example, they are significantly overburdened. We had sometimes one person dealing with three and four large secondary schools, populations ranging between 700 and 1500. Where the ratio ought to be about 300:1. Can we have from your—perhaps begin with the Permanent Secretary to indicate to us, what is the prevalence of the shortage of staff to deal with discipline problems in schools? And I mean in a preventative manner as well, in terms of provides counselling and so on. Your system with guidance counsellors, and all the other positions, if you can name them and indicate to us the challenges with the staffing to begin with as well as the resources?

Mr. Chairman: The response is the deficit that you have staff. It is a deficit of staff. A staff deficit, yes.

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: The deficit I would ask the officers from the Student Support Services to provide. But what I know is that we have been making a lot of attempts to fill the positions, and we have advertised, and we would have received quite a lot of applications for both Guidance Counsellors, which would have been the contract. There is a difference between the contract and the established positions. Which would have been the Guidance Counsellors and the School Social Workers, and we were processing and doing the shortlisting. Well, we have made representation to the DPA with respect to the filling of the established positions. But in terms of the discipline, I would ask—

Mr. Chairman: PS, you are working.

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: Yes, we are working, but I am just—do you require the information now?

Mr. Chairman: Not now, we can get it in writing.

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: So you can get it in writing? But during our initial enquiry a recommendation was offered that there ought to be a ratio of, I think, 250 students to one social worker. What I would like to know is, how close are you to satisfying that particular ration? That seems to have been to consensus from the ancillary support staff with respect to efficiently solving the problem. That was a short-term recommendation. It seemed to be something that was necessary. It addresses the concern of Mr. Doodhai, that there seems to be deficit in certain critical areas. Are you close to the 1:250 or are you far from it? How many more staff members do you need to get to that optimum ratio from the people in the know from the back?

11.40 a.m.

Ms. Smith: Chairman, we would have begun interviews for our school social workers last week, so

at this point in time our staff in terms of social workers and Guidance Counsellors and some of our special ed teachers are on month-to-month contract.

Mr. Chairman: Optimally, the ratio we were told is one for 250 maximum. Could you give us an indication of what the current ratio is in the school system in Trinidad and Tobago?

Ms. Smith: With regard to social workers it would be approximately 1:6. Sorry, 1:600.

Mr. Chairman: So we basically need to expand the population by about 50 per cent to get to the 1:300?

Ms. Smith: That would be correct.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. This is critical information because these were recommendations that we made about a year ago and we are not seeing much traction, but I will ask Minister West to come in. Is there a follow-up, a burning follow-up?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I just want to enquire. You said 1:600, right? How many—what is the population in one school? And the population in the school, meaning, how many students and how many deans or counsellors are assigned to how many number of schools? In other words, is it that one dean per school or is it that the deans or the counsellors or the psychologists are roving?

Miss Ameen: Social workers.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The social workers, are they roving?

Ms. Smith: Member, in the secondary schools we have some officers, one per secondary school, but the vast majority, for example, in the primary they are roving so they address a cluster of schools. So it is approximately 1:3 schools or 1:6 schools as I indicated earlier based on the size of the district and the shortfall and staffing in some of our districts. So it varies in number. With respect to deans I will let the DSS answer that question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So therefore, the earlier answer where you indicated that there is 1:600—

Ms. Smith: That is general in terms if you look at the total population of students in the schools.

Mr. Chairman: A very important statistic. It means that the establishment ought to recruit about 50 per cent more than what it currently has. So I would now ask Minister West and I want to emphasize she is not with the Ministry of Education. Minister West is with the Ministry of Finance.

Miss West: Thank you, Chair. I just want to change gears a little bit and look at the issue of cyber-bullying. In the report that I read, it seemed that the Ministry's focus was in respect of control of the availability and use of cell phones. So if that is correct, can you give me some detail on what your policy is with respect to cell phones? And secondly, have you gone or are you going beyond that to deal with legislation if that is necessary setting policies and guidelines in respect of cyber-bullying?

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: Mr. Phillip will respond to that question. Mr. Phillip.

Mr. Phillip: Member, the Ministry of Education does have a mobile cell phone policy, but it also has a policy that speaks to cyber-bullying, a policy that speaks to responsible use and a policy that speaks to students with general maintenance of integrity and the preservation of a digital footprint when using social media and the Internet.

In particular, the cell phone policy is one that allows or facilitates teachers to maximize the use of these devices for teaching and learning. The Ministry sees these devices as imperative for keeping step with technology and for maximizing the power and potential of these devices.

In particular though, we stress responsible use especially when it leads to or references discipline and violence. So the three-pronged approach as identified in our policy speaks to—first off, ensuring that students maintain an identity that is observable when using the Internet and that they in turn have open relationships with their peers and teachers in a manner that can be tracked and followed in an official manner.

So we have in our policy then, in our social media policy conditions that speak to teachers, administrators having clear and finite guidelines that determine how they interact with students, such that principals and administrators might be aware of the sites that are being perused on the social media platforms that they are using and that parents as well are privy to what is being exposed or how students are being exposed to those particular social media.

We also speak to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago and the policy stresses, first off, a zero-tolerance approach to any infraction in terms of areas and instances where students and/or teachers may utilize this media that would contravene the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. So having said that then, the policy and a copy of the policy was made available to the panel. The policy goes to finite detail in a strategic way and allows schools in turn to operationalize those policies according to their various environments.

Mr. Chairman: A follow-up question on that and that is with respect to cyber-bullying, because these electronic devices are the basic media which would be used to engage in that kind of activity. If a student is—if it has been determined that a student has engaged in cyber-bullying of another student, do you have a policy with respect to by removing his cell phone or ensuring that he does not have this device in school. Do you have a policy for that particular problem?

Mr. Phillip: Chairman, we speak to that issue strategically and the policy goes quite clear in speaking, first off, to zero tolerance to any infraction and adherent to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. But it

allows operational policies to be developed at the level of the school. So while the Ministry's ICT in Education cyber-bullying policy gives overarching strategic guidelines, schools are given that leeway to make their operational policies at their level. As in a case and an example there are some schools that would take away or confiscate the cell phones when students enter in the morning and give it back to them in the afternoon. There are other schools that use other means, other strategies and that may be the purview of the school in terms of keeping in line with the Ministry's policy but having their own operational policies at the school level.

Miss West: A follow-up on that, Chair. You said that the policy contemplates adherence to the law, the existing laws of Trinidad and Tobago. Has the Ministry done an assessment of whether the existing laws are adequate for the purpose of control of the issues and whether you should be making recommendations for change of those laws.

Mr. Phillip: Member, there has been in February of last year, 2017, officers of the Ministry met with the police service and an inter-ministerial team that sought to further the discussion on cybercrime and by extension cyber-bullying, not in the schools only, but in the community at large. That particular approach has been ongoing although that particular committee has not yet met since that initial meeting. But we have been liaising with our own legal department at the Ministry and we have factored in the existing laws as we know it to ensure that the principals and administrators are guided by those laws as they encourage and facilitate the use of digital devices in schools.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much. I want to have a follow-up with TUTTA on that issue and I do not want to get sidetracked, but cyber-bullying is part of the problem as well. Have your teachers reported to you that the use of these electronic devices in schools is really disrupting the teaching process in any significant way?

Mr. Doodhai: Mr. Chairman, the reports that we have had from our members do in fact support what you are saying, that the use of these devices have a negative impact on the teaching-learning process and it does in fact disrupt the process.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. And if you have any recommendation to make to the Committee, please do so, could be as was indicated prior that the devices are placed in a secure place in the morning, given back in the afternoon and they are not held on the person during the classroom hours, yes.

Ms. Robertson: Mr. Chairman, while the phones and other electronic devices create problems sometimes during the school day, it does not really start all the time at the school, because there is no control that the teacher has when the child is at home. Because much of the physical violence stems from the cyber-bullying that starts sometimes months before and that happens when the children are

at home a number of times—well, the after-school hours, which teachers have no control.

There is also a concern, some schools as the gentleman indicated, teachers collect these phones. Sometimes we have an issue with that because there have been times when teachers have been made liable and have to replace phones for students because students come and complain that something is missing or it is not working and now you may not know because a teacher might just collect a phone that may actually come in dead, but it may be an attempt to get that person to have a new device.

Now, we are not saying that the phones should not be allowed in the schools, because there are also reports of where phones have been used positively to help enhance a particular lesson or so at the school. So we would in fact look at the—

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much for that intervention and maybe then the solution would have to be that cyber-bullying has to be made into a crime. Cyber-bullying, if it is made into a criminal offence and we can track the IP addresses of the cyber-bully, then a criminal offence has been committed and that particular offender can be made to answer for his infraction of the law. But MP Jennings-Smith, you had a follow-up.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I just want to say I agree with the 2nd Vice-President, because it is a message that is sent through your phones. Cyber-bullying, it happens anytime. and when you give back the students the phone they could receive a threat. What I am going to ask is, what is the school doing to initiate a programme to say that it is intolerable and unacceptable in the schools? And you know, something that happens in this country is that, when people do things and the consequences of their action. How do we deal with them? Is there a consequence to the students' action what they did? I believe maybe they would be handed over to the police because it could be investigated and I think it is an issue, a burning issue worldwide and very challenging in coming up with strategies.

Mr. Chairman: We would have to be looking at whether cyber-bullying as a criminal offence is punishable or should be made to be punishable and that individuals, whatever their age who engage in this type of action would be committing a criminal offence. We have to be looking at that. What is the response of the Ministry or the stakeholders on this particular issue since this seems now to be perhaps one of the triggers and the generators of what we are seeing. You see it is not a surprise to me that the incidence of school violence is correlated with the rise of the use of electronic devices. I am not saying that it is causing it, but it is correlated. And since it is correlated there may very well be, from my perspective, the need to look at criminalizing the abuse of the technology. Yes, MP

Newallo-Hosein.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Just before I continue with my question, I just wanted to ask the NPTA on how do you as a body look at cyber-bullying and what are your suggestions as to how do you circumvent this type of behaviour?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: We have discussed the use of cell phones in school. We have asked our parents, why is it necessary for you to give your child a phone to go to school, especially a very expensive phone with all the features on it? Most times they would indicate, well, I want to know where my child is, especially when school is dismissed, because of the violence in society and the social ills. We discussed it and we did discuss this with the Minister of Education also, that I do not see the necessity of the child using the phone for education purpose in the schools.

So what we suggested is that we look for a phone that is just able to call. Not all the fancy features and that will diminish the cyber-bullying. A very simple phone, and we say okay, let us get a provider for the phone and the parents buy that particular phone because it is a complex situation that we need to look for a solution and it is an added responsibility when these children have the phones with all the features.

It is an added responsibility for the teachers in school to be looking at the students and the use of the phone and most times they would not use it during class time. And we know that teachers, although they have duty of care, we have teachers who, you know, choose not to exercise duty of care in the schools, especially at lunchtime. So we are saying, is it necessary for the children to have these phones in the school? And if it is necessary why not just have a simple phone and the student should also be thought cell phone etiquette.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Well, just to—I am looking at your colleagues' heads and they are indicating that it is not going to work; and it is not going to work because of course cyber-bullying does not start and end at school. There is a point that was raised earlier by MP Jennings-Smith about the anger and the hate and I will add unforgiveness. And the reason why I am stating that is because of the fact that a lot of this type of bullying takes place because there is a lot of anger, a lot of hate and a lot of unforgiveness and it does not stem from school, it stems from the home. And this is why I think it is important for the NPTA to become more involved in what happens at home. Not just what takes place in school, because what happens in school is just a manifestation of what takes place at the home.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Could I follow up with maybe a solution because I think that is a very valuable question? Where the home fails, the state institution—called the school—may have to compensate

and I am simply wondering whether in terms of the curriculum, you see, in our last hearing we did recommend that we focus on things like multiple intelligences, we are not going to only emphasize the physics, chemistry, maths, but creativity, the arts, talents and so on so that the outlets are there for students of different intelligences to exploit.

And from the perspective of the Ministry of Education, do you have as a matter of education policy courses in interpersonal relations, courses in anger management, or modules with respect to ethics, proper behaviour, etiquette, courtesies. Do you have that as part of the curriculum so that students who may not be exposed to it at home are exposed to it in the school environment? Is it well established or is it in its nascent stages? Religious instructions or if it is a non-denominational school, will instructions in ethics, proper behaviour, morality, courtesies—

Mr. Roopchan: Yes, Chair. The Ministry of Education in our last two cycles of curriculum revision we have seen it fit to address those said issues and therefore our curriculum that we have implemented in schools right now would have been an integrated type of curriculum that will consider authenticity in implementation. You would be aware that in the past we had curricula that were, shall I say, disjointed, that we implemented different subjects separately and then we hope that people would bring it together. But, we have an authentic way of implementing curriculum now where we are not emphasizing those borders, but we are making it blurred and therefore we teach by using context, situations for problem solving, situations that would involve all the intelligences of the students.

So what we are actually doing in the present school curriculum we are implementing the various visual and performing arts, character, citizenship, education. We also have Health and Family Life Education in the system and it is mandated at the primary level, it is integrated into the curriculum and at the secondary level we have it as a stand-alone subject for the lower secondary level.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So you can give the Committee the assurance that in every primary school in Trinidad and Tobago the teachers are mandated to offer certain modules on Health and Family Life Education, from when?—Standard 1, is it Infants 1 or Standard—

Mr. Roopchan: From Infants.

Mr. Chairman: From Infants they are taught that. Since when you have initiated this particular programme?

Mr. Roopchan: The last revision of curricula—well, we started in 2013 I think when we did the primary curriculum review and that curriculum should be fully implemented at all levels at the primary school at this time. So it has been there.

Mr. Chairman: And teachers have been trained, you have training material prepared so that teachers can refer to them as they discharge that particular mandate?

Mr. Roopchan: We have so done. We have also liaised with the tertiary providers to ensure that they have made that part of their Character and Health and Family Life Education, that it is also addressed in the training of teachers who we will employ.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Chair, if I do recall, I remember when we had the initial enquiry there were concerns as to the health and life factor and that a number of schools had opposed teaching it and that opposition came also from some parents, and I want to know where we have reached in regard to that?

Ms. Smith: May I just add something? While we have some persons in resisting the HFLE programme I must say that the guidance curriculum ensures the delivery of all the topics that you just listed, the anger management, the conflict resolution skills which are delivered through the guidance curriculum within all the schools where we do have the staff.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, just a follow-up, especially to our colleague there. A teacher has delivered and I am trying to get the operationality of this programme. She has delivered the courses but she is finding that there are a couple of children in her classroom who are continuing to misbehave, they are not absorbing the information. But if there are no school guidance officers who will then provide the additional support, is it then that having the curriculum change alone is going to be inadequate without the school guidance support? I wanted to get your perspective on that.

Ms. Smith: Okay, thank you for that Chairman. So while we may not—the instances if we do not have a resident guidance officer all principals are fully aware that they make the deferrals to the district officer, which is the Guidance Officer II or SSSD, the multidisciplinary team whereby we will send personnel to either do group work with a particular group of students who may not be reforming or may be giving some issues or problems, we do send the personnel to work and support the schools.

Mr. Chairman: When? The question is, is it going to be a month from today because in changing behaviour I think as soon as the infraction is committed you ought to alert the student that something wrong has happened and he ought to change his way. If you were to seek to amend a month later he may have forgotten what he or she did wrong and so I think clearly there is a gap. We do need to have, from what I am seeing now, a closer association between the teachers who are trained in family life education and the students who may not be absorbing the lectures with assistance from the school guidance officers. And unless we get that ratio right I think we are going to have persisting problems.

Miss West: Chair, a follow-up. A comment made by the President of the NPTA. You indicated that one of the things that is needed is a telephone etiquette training. I am wondering on whose shoulders you place that responsibility. Because I find that more and more we are asking our teachers to parent children and I want to know what role the NPTA sees in moving away from that trend and getting the parents to parent their children more.

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: Okay, how we see it is that if parents are trained on the cell phone etiquette then they can transfer that knowledge to their children. Also, it could be done in the school through different programmes. For example, you have the student councils in schools and then you would have, I am sure you would have periods in school where you would—like the home room period where you talk on different topics, you can bring it in there.

Miss West: You have not answered my question as to what is the role of the NPTA in finding the solution, what do you see your role as?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: Well, we see our role as training the parents, finding some way to train the parents, get them together. As I told you all, we have our structure, units, region, right? And we bring them together and we do a training with them, so that we would know what behaviour is expected with the children, with their cell phones at the schools.

Miss West: Okay, and I am assuming that the people who come voluntarily to your meetings are parents who are already engaged. Do you have a plan for parents who are not engaged?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: Okay, well, how I look at it, you know, we are talking about negatives, indiscipline and violence. But if we look at the proactive way we see the symptoms and we try to correct it before it gets out of hand. So I am saying that not all our parents are able to come in the school between half past eight and three, because of work. So they may be able to come later. And the parent conferencing is important. Teacher and parent conferencing is important if you want to see a change in behaviour and you want to make a difference with the children's behaviour. And why not, why can we not adopt a programme where you use the after-school hours and you do what we call a parent academy?

So you have the parents who, the children who are identified with the gaps or with certain values that they need improvement. You get these parents on evenings, you know, establish something like a parent academy where you can talk, conference, advise, counsel the parents so that they can help their children. And I think that will help a lot in improving the behaviour of the children because sometimes you have to think out of the box and you have to meet the parents at their

convenience to.

Mr. Chairman: Just a follow-up. In our last enquiry, during the last enquiry—[*Crosstalk*—]—could you take off the mike?

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: Sorry.

Mr. Chairman: We did encounter a problem where parents could not, during school hours, visit the schools because many of them are employed. And that the recommendation was made that the Ministry of Education make representation with the employers of Trinidad and Tobago to provide the necessary hour during the work week, or alternatively to have meetings on a Saturday so that the parents can be represented. Has that been followed up on so that you meet on a Saturday or at least you get time off from work to attend PTA meetings?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: In conversing with parents I know from school to school it differs. Sometimes if the need is to have a meeting on a Saturday I know some PTAs call their meetings on a Saturday. I know some employers do give the parents time off. They have the letter—the principal or the PTA President would sign it, stamp it, but it is ad hoc, it is not something like a rule for all.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, very well. It is something we would be looking at, yes. MP Jennings-Smith.

Mrs. Jennings-Smith: I want to conclude on some issues and I want to go back to Mr. Doodhai describing the situation at school as a plague, right? And when you talk about plague you talk about public health approach, and when you talk about public health approach you talk about all the stakeholders being involved. I mean, this is no easy solution and I really want to express my support to you all because I know it is really a difficult task because you have different stakeholders.

And listening to some discussions this morning I felt that maybe we do not have any problems in Trinidad, because I am hearing all the solutions and all the answers and all the quiet responses to the varying issues that we face, because we face criminality at school level now and different instruments used. We talk about the cyber-bullying, we talk about the phones, we talk about violence, hand violence, we talk about fighting, we talk about safe environment for teachers at school and I just want to ask and recommend that we seek the help of restorative justice expertise. There are practitioners in Trinidad and Tobago who from time to time come within my view too and within my discussions and I feel there is the need to take it, because we are now forging a movement, a movement to maintain peace and serenity and harmony for the learning in our school environment and, Mr. Chairman, I just want to conclude with that piece of information and to encourage you all to keep working hard because it is a lot of problems within our system.

Mr. Chairman: A brief response from the Ministry of Education, because that refers to policy?

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: As the hon. member has indicated that there is a need to generate peace and she had indicated that the Ministry of Education would like, again, probably would have engaged in using this particular methodology, but it is just that, probably we moved away from it without even analyzing the data to see whether or not it was actually working in our system. So I am thinking it is, I mean, once we have all our teams on board we have the training in terms of the SSSD, I think it is a good way that we can consider and move forward.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. In order to rehabilitate the bully, because he has problems, and in order to counsel he or she who has been bullied we do need the trained support staff in the school system and the Committee has learnt that they are not there in the numbers which would be necessary to make the difference.

So MP Antoine has to come in. Do you want to come in?

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: All right, but let us give—colleagues just a brief intervention, it is 12.11 p.m. and this session can go on, but I have to terminate at 12.30 p.m. So in terms of time management I will ask colleague Brig. Antoine to pose his question. Is it a follow-up, Sen. Ameen? After Brig. Antoine has posed his substantive question a follow-up from Sen. Ameen, then it is going to be a substantive question from Deputy Speaker Forde. And we will come back to the left. And I have not asked any of my questions yet. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Morning, again. The Minister of Education in his response on the 12th of January in the House of Representatives says that the Ministry will be developing a positive reinforcement procedure which would focus on rewarding desired behaviour displayed by students and serve to promote the recurrence of the same. You are looking at a tangible and intangible reward system.

Could the Ministry explain how this positive reinforcement arrangement would work and the time frame for its implementation and what are the tangible and intangible rewards being offered to students for this desirable conduct?

Mr. Roopchan: Member, in dealing with situations like that we have been mandating our principals to provide the positive reinforcement for students who are showing that they are conforming and they are showing signs of improving. In the school system we know that there are opportunities that students who have been deviant and have shown signs of realigning themselves, so to speak, that they are given opportunities to serve as class prefects, as mentors, and so forth. That is just one instance

of where we can have that positive reinforcement. We have put together a team involving supervision and curriculum to explore other ways in which we can address this.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Are they on board with this positive reinforcement procedure being adopted by the Ministry of Education?

Mr. Roopchan: Not totally there. Member, what I can say though is that within recent time our engagement with our stakeholders has been very intense and I think that it is a good sign.

Mr. Thompson: Tomorrow.

Mr. Roopchan: In fact we are meeting with them tomorrow. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: Could we get a response from TUTTA?

Mr. Forde: They now plan that there. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: A response from TUTTA as to whether their engagement is very intense as indicated by Mr. Roopchan, the Chief Education Officer. Is that so, is that not so or is it wishful thinking?

Mr. Doodhai: The engagement is intense in certain aspects, but with respect to the issue that was raised by Mr. Antoine there has been no engagement in that regard.

Mr. Chairman: It will be intense then in short order. Very well.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: And is there a time frame for the implementation, Ministry of Education?

Mr. Roopchan: We are optimistic that we will have this thing in the not-too-distant future, but again we will have to—it will be contingent on our engagement with stakeholders.

Mr. Chairman: Sen. Ameen, your follow-up.

Miss Ameen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All of the initiatives discussed would really be ineffective if we do not have the adequate staff to implement. Earlier there was an indication that advertisements have gone out for contract positions, for School Social Workers and Guidance Counsellors. My question is whether the positions to be filled or the number of contracts being offered, if that will then create a full complement; the full complement that is required as well as, what is your time frame, when should these people be, when are the interviews, the deadline for interviews, when would those people be hired?

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: Hon. Member, with respect to the numbers it would be, the positions are fixed, the numbers are normally Cabinet approved. So the numbers are fixed. But with respect to the process we have shortlisted—the interviews have started for the School Social Workers last week and we have scheduled for the Guidance Counsellors, it would be around March or April of 2018. So we are probably looking at June. I know it seems long but this—you know how the process works because we had about 437 applications and 652. So we have shortlisted and we are down to the

numbers that at least meet the criteria.

Miss Ameen: But will that fill your requirement for the number of School Social Workers and the guidance—

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: What I am saying is I did not look at it in terms of what was asked, in terms of the optimal ratio. What I know, it would be fixed against the positions that we have in terms of the Cabinet. So I did not look at—I would be honest, I need to provide you with that. I think we decided that we would have, but I did not look at it from that angle. I just looked at it in terms of the positions that we have as Cabinet approved. So it means that if we need additional we would have go back to Cabinet but we would have had a merit list from which we can then draw from, from the interviews that we have.

Miss Ameen: All right. Well, Mr. Chairman, through you, I want to ask if the Committee could be provided with the optimal number of School Social Workers as well as Guidance Counsellors required in the schools so then we can look at filling that gap.

Mr. Chairman: But I understand that we have that information from the last hearing, that information came. What we were seeking to enquire today is how close are we to the optimum and we are told that we are very far. But the Permanent Secretary has indicated that the interviews are ongoing so we should revisit come September because for the next academic year, 2018/2019, it is then the hope of the Committee that the ratio would be enhanced for the next academic year because there is going to be a period of time necessary to recruit and retain the particular staff. I will now ask Deputy Speaker to pose one of his substantive questions.

Mr. Forde: With regard to the Ministerial response you would have received from the Ministry of Education, and to tie it in with a statement made in his opening remarks, Mr. Doodhai, with regard to vacant posts and there being a lot of vacancies and then also tying in the Permanent Secretary, Ms. Baptiste-Simmons' statement that vacant posts with bodies. With regard to attendance and punctuality of the teachers in schools, what role will that play with regard to violence in schools? It probably "come in" too late.

Mr. Chairman: The absentee teachers, late teachers, do you have a programme for substituting teachers when the teachers are absent? So this is a query that we would like to pose at this time.

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: There is a substitute system and it is computerized from the schools. I tested it about two months ago to see if it was actually working. So we have a substitute, whether it is working efficiently I will have to ask the DSS. But I tested it myself when a school contacted me

with respect to the need of substitute teachers. I went online and tried and told her what to do.

With respect to punctuality, the Ministry of Education is working along with the Teaching Service Commission with respect to looking at punctuality and regularity and treating with teachers who we have felt above, you know, because I think the progressive discipline commences at 180 minutes late and we are looking at that along with the Teaching Service Commission.

Mr. Forde: Is it possible that we can—I know you may not have the information now, but could the Committee be provided with the statistics in terms of, again, attendance, punctuality, in some of the various, same districts you all would have identified; the same districts you all have identified. If it is that we can get some statistics in terms of the attendance and punctuality as we go along, because again, if again there are no teachers present it means that the children could have a field day.

Mr. Chairman: Basically, it is the seeking of statistics which maybe could correlate the teacher absenteeism, teacher lateness with school violence. So if we can get data on school districts with high instances of violence, is it that it is correlated with high instances of teacher absenteeism we would be able to see maybe there is a solution there. But out of curiosity, does the Ministry of Education have a website where someone who wishes to get any information on protocols and procedures to be followed by teachers and pupils for anything, including becoming a substitute teacher, is readily available on your website or do you have a website?

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: www.moe.gov.tt.

Mr. Chairman: So if I want to be a substitute teacher, can I go on that website and find information on how to apply to be one?

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: Yes. Okay. I believe because I think most of the information is present there, but I would like the opportunity to double-check for that specific one, but I know that most of the information, applications, registration, everything is online.

Mr. Chairman: And just out of curiosity again, if a student has had to miss classes because she was pregnant and gave birth to a child and has to be reintegrated into the school, can the parent of that child or the child go on to the Ministry's website to find out the protocol that has to be followed so that reintegration is going to be easy and facilitated?

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: Ms. Smith will respond.

Ms. Smith: The information regarding reintegration to schools will not really be available on the website. However, any parent given, following pregnancy can return to the school principal and given our protocols, should be and would be allowed back into the school. If that principal for any reason is resistant, that parent can seek assistance from the district management team which may be

comprised of the Guidance Officer II, Senior School Social Worker and/or School Supervisors and we will ensure that that child is placed in a school upon case conferencing with the parent and the school.

Mr. Chairman: And again, is it that the parent who may perhaps have a problem with getting this child reintegrated can communicate electronically via the email address of the School Supervisor so that the actual communication process can be made easier? Do you have the email contact for the school supervisor in case of any problems or the School Social Worker or the school official who is responsible for navigating his way through the bureaucracy?

Mr. Thompson: Chair, that interface takes place at the Education District Office. At this time, the electronic interface is not available.

Mr. Chairman: May I recommend then that you do make electronic interface since all the students are using computers for cyber-bullying, or many of them, we can use the computers for ease of communication too. And so it should be used for the positive purposes. So I would recommend that ease of communication be facilitated. Minister West, you have a follow-up?

Miss West: Yes, just quickly. I am interested in finding out what TUTTA sees its role in addressing the issue of absenteeism and tardiness among its members.

Ms. Robertson: Member West, we continue to ensure that our teachers are guided, that their regular attendance and their punctuality at the schools is of course of importance to the proper functioning of the school and development. So we continue to remind our members—I know our colleagues on the other side do not readily believe this, but we do admonish them at times when they come before us and they are made aware and we do remind them through our study circles and other things that TUTTA has to reach its members that they must be regular and punctual at the job site because it not only creates problems with the students but with their own colleagues because it adds additional stress and pressure to the teacher who might have found themselves to school on time.

But before I finish, while the PS has said that interviews and so have started for some student support services what is not being said is that some of the persons who are now on the month-to-month contracts have had to reapply for their very positions and this creates a sort of discord and discomfort among the members of student support services. And those are some of the many problems that we have with the persons who apply.

Student Support Services Division, as far as we are aware to date, does not have an actual head and she also made the point that while there are vacancies with bodies that too creates a problem

within the management of the school, because if I am sitting performing the duties and in some instances not even being remunerated for that, then my ability to function where I may be a head or a dean and also still be attached to many classes, my class load has not been reduced to fill those positions, then I can aptly do that and we have a number of members who have come to us complaining about being in such a position.

So yes, there are bodies acting or performing the duties at the schools but they are not being able to adequately do so because they are still holding classes that they have to attend to outside of what a dean or a head should have in order to really do their job properly. And in terms of the teachers, the ones to respond when a teacher is absent that programme—substitute teachers—that is ineffective. I know the PS would have to double-check, but as a teacher who would have tried to utilize that at a school, especially the geography of where some of them come from, while they should have bases and especially the primary school level you do not get the benefit of having a substitute teacher come to you in apt time.

So in most times and if you look at how our schools are built you cannot get a substitute teacher before lunchtime, especially if your school is in Blanchisseuse or in Toco. I am just calling—those at the remote areas, but even right in the main frame areas you are not getting somebody to respond to your school and we already have many schools that are understaffed by maternity and otherwise.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Robertson, I am running out of time. It is 12.27 p.m. I know the NPTA has one short intervention, please a short intervention. I will ask my colleague Mr. Forde to raise his last question before and Miss West you have a question?

Miss West: No.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, very well. Okay, NPTA.

Mr. Mendoza: Chairman, members, my whole thing—I am hearing of absenteeism and punctuality but I am really not hearing anything about our teachers on the dress code. I know teachers do not have a dress code and when I say teachers, I am speaking in particular to our female teachers that our boys are now targeting. I am saying that because I have been around a lot of schools where our teachers are being targeted by our students, our senior students in secondary schools and we are not hearing about that. Teachers are being touched inappropriately and teachers are leaving the classroom and are now sitting in the staffroom because of that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. I leave that for the teachers union, TUTTA, to address with their members so that if there are matters with respect to dress and so on I think that would be a

matter that I would leave for you to address. But MP Forde.

Mr. Forde: With regard to, as we are on NPTA, you mentioned that you have roughly 300 active PTAs and some of the schools are not affiliated. How is that possible that you cannot be affiliated? Is it not an automatic process? Is it not a compulsory process that once you have a PTA you automatically fall within the NPTA?

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: No. You have to affiliate and pay a subscription fee every year to be a member. So not all PTAs are affiliated to us.

Mr. Forde: And then my last question, Mr. Chairman, the Learning Enhancement Centres is grouped into educational districts—Caroni, St. George East, South-eastern and Victoria. South-eastern would consist of what area to be exact?

Ms. Smith: Rio Claro, Princes Town, Mayaro.

Mr. Forde: And I am seeing the number of students who are assessed based on the document that you all provided were 200 students. Is it as a result of the density of schools in the area or is it that it is a lot of repeat offenders there, that 200 figure that students that would have accessed these services?

Ms. Smith: Deputy Chair, the reason for the high numbers in South-eastern was because the first Learning Enhancement Centre began in South-eastern. For the year 2015, the actually LEC began in April of 2015 and that district was the only operational LEC in the country.

Mr. Forde: So students from throughout Trinidad went there?

Ms. Smith: No, no, Sir.

Mr. Forde: That is not the interpretation.

Ms. Smith: In 2015, so the LEC is a district base. So that the first, the reason that the documentation, we would have provided the figures would have seen that high number was because it included the original onset from 2015 to present and it is not because it is all students went to the South-eastern district.

Mr. Chairman: And colleagues it is 12.31 p.m. I am a minute and 21 seconds over my allotted time. I will have to close. But before I close, please permit the Chairman of the Committee to have the last word. What I have gleaned from today's meeting is that there is supposed to be a disciplining committee in all schools but there is inadequate communication amongst the stakeholders. We hope that the stakeholders will work together. The PTA, the TUTTA, the Ministry of Education, the school administration and the social workers, that is a critical element will work together to have the disciplinary committee functioning and functional.

We were told that what was recommended in our report that critical ratio of 1:250 students at the outer limit is around maybe 1:600. So there is a huge gap there with respect to the kind of support that we need in the school system for students who have a need for emotional support—that is, those who are being bullied and those who are the perpetrators; both would need to be guided in a timely manner. I know we were told that the students eventually seek the guidance but there is such a thing as a timely intervention so that the problem does not get out of hand.

So we will be looking at how efficient and how successful you are with respect, over the next few months, to getting up to that ratio. It came up that cyber-bullying may very well be the initial source and the trigger for actual physical fights and physical bullying. We would need to be looking at criminalizing bullying at the cyber level, that once it is a criminal offence it means that the devices that we have so critical now for communication will not be used for activities which are injurious to societies.

We did not focus at all on the issue that we raised on multiple intelligences. This is for the Ministry of Education and the curriculum officers. We now know that students come to the school systems with a range of talents but the schools in general in Trinidad and Tobago have focused on the training that most of us have had—Physics, Maths, Chemistry, Algebra. But there is a need for students who are not talented in physics to be exposed to creativity and to different types of programmes which would make use of their skills because we were told by the people in the know that if they are frustrated in their mathematics class they may want to find another outlet to become a superstar which would be an improper outlet.

So we would want to be looking to see what the curriculum reform exercise in the school is. I am very happy to hear that family life education is being taught by schools, teachers from Infant 1 level in the schools so we await to see what programme—I am sure it will have a beneficial impact, but it will take time as the cohort that comes through the system. We have discussed at length a number of matters but really the need for communication among the stakeholders in my mind is critical. Everywhere we see problems it is because the parts are not meshing together and the activities and the actions of one sector, say the Ministry of Education, may not be implemented at the school level for many reasons. We would be monitoring the situation, we would be looking at it carefully, aimed at a solution which would lessen the instances.

MP Jennings-Smith spoke about restorative, the question is we need to be changing our mind as to how do we get young people to change their behaviour, anger management. I suspect family life education will deal with some of these issues so we await to see the outcome. Education as we know

is one of those time-consuming processes. It is not one year in and out. It takes five years or seven years in the primary school, it may take another five years in the secondary school, so we would be subjecting the students to this type of treatment, family life education, courtesies and so on. I do not know if you have courses now in civics, it used to—when I was in primary school way back when we had courses in civics, understanding who the Minister of Health was and so on. We were taught these things, we were taught about how to function in society, how the society was structured. I am hoping that we get back to that and our students are anchored from Infants 1 in being part of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as productive citizens.

Before I close I will ask the representatives of the organizations who have been here with us to give us brief closing remarks. I will ask the PTA to give us a few seconds of closing remarks, then I will ask the TTUTA and I will give the Ministry of Education the final word. PTA.

Mrs. Ali-Boodoosingh: Chairman, we have realized that we have a different kind of child in the school now. The profile of the child is different. It is a 21st Century child and so we are living in a dynamic society and education is not business as usual. We have to think out of the box. Sometimes it is very complex and intricate to deal with the students and of course we need to have that communication between all stakeholders so that we can put all hands on deck and solve the problems in schools so that our students, our children, would not be denied their basic right of education.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you PTA. TTUTA.

Mr. Doodhai: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think what came out here this morning, if we did not know it before, is that there is a need for greater collaboration and communication between the various stakeholders if we are to address this issue of violence and indiscipline in the school. So I hope that going forward that there can be this greater collaboration and communication between the Ministry of Education, the NPTA and TTUTA. I just want to say, before I conclude, that from our side here we would be submitting some recommendations to the Secretary of the Committee with respect to addressing issues with school violence and indiscipline.

Mr. Chairman: And to facilitate the communication, may I recommend you exchange email addresses. Email is free, I like it, it is cheap and it is instantaneous and you can communicate effectively in that way. Thank you very much. The Ministry of Education.

Mrs. Baptiste-Simmons: Yes, it has indeed been a pleasure. The team, we recognize, as was said earlier, that we need to collaborate and when we collaborate it must not be as you say on paper, but that we actually ensure that we are creating peaceful spaces in our learning environment and it means

that the Ministry of Education in engaging our teachers, we also have to engage with TTUTA. In engaging our parents we need to engage with NPTA.

As we move forward we would like to let you know that in terms of multiple intelligences we have been looking at that. If you go through the *Guardian* of today you would see a young lady by the name of Judith Crichlow a graphic artist. She was one of our graduates from our schools. We are seeing fashion, persons coming up with fashion design, we are seeing persons coming out with PE, Physical Education, kinesiology. I am trying to remember the various areas.

So we have in terms of the curriculum reform we are seeing where students, their multiple intelligences are being considered and we are offering—one of the things that you said is ensuring that our children are actually engaged in the learning process that our teachers are present and they are there, that the School Social Workers are there, that the whole team that is required to ensure that our children are in the learning environments and that we can achieved the learning outcome for Trinidad and Tobago, that it is done. I think that is the message that the Ministry of Education would like to take away from this meeting today.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Permanent Secretary and a final word from the Chair. I cannot function without data and it would be very good if the stakeholders can collect information so that we could compare the instances of violence in 2018 or in 2019 on a school-by-school basis. And if we are able to use the data to see how the trend is behaving, hopefully it should be downward, we would know that the interventions are working. Without the data we will not know if the interventions that we recommend are successful or not.

So we need much more data and it should be possible for TTUTA to assist because teachers are in the frontline, they should be able to record and report to the head office on a weekly basis the instances they have seen and therefore on a yearly basis we ought to know how schools are performing with respect to these violent instances and maybe instances also of cyber-bullying.

I want to at this point to thank all our officials for being here. I want to thank of course members of the Committee of our Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration for participating in this very critical discussion. I want to thank members of the media who have been covering us and to all of our viewers and listeners in the public on Parliament Channel and on the YouTube, *ParlView*. I want to say thank you for being here with us and usually we get recommendations also from members of the public who have expertise we invite you, if you have any comment to make on the proceedings this morning please submit to the Secretariat so that our recommendations will be informed by as many stakeholders as possible. At this point in time I want

to bring this meeting to a close. This meeting at 12.42 p.m., 12 minutes overtime, is now adjourned I would say good afternoon and thank you.

12.42 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*