VERBATIM NOTES OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HELD (IN PUBLIC) IN THEJ. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTER, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016.

PRESENT

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir	Chairman
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	Member
Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein	Member
Mr. Hafeez Ali	Member
Miss Khadijah Ameen	Member
Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Miss Kimberly Mitchell	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Miss Shamfa Cudjoe	Member [*Excused*]
Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh	Member [*Excused*]
Miss Nadine Stewart	Member [*Excused*]

OFFICIALS - ANTI-BULLYING ASSOCIATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Ms. Yvonne Joseph	Director
Dr. Alicia Martin	Senior Serving Member

OFFICIALS - TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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

OFFICIALS – NATIONAL PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (NPTA)

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

1.40 p.m.: *Meeting resumed in public.*

Mr. Chairman: A pleasant good afternoon to every one of you. Welcome to this, the Fourth Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration. This is the Committee's second public hearing pursuant to its enquiry on the issue of violence overall in schools. This hearing is broadcast live on Parliament Channel 11, Parliament Radio 105.5 FM and the Parliament's YouTube channel, Parl*View*, P-A-R-L-V-I-E-W. So we encourage all of you outside the Parliament to take advantage of these various media, to participate in the proceedings.

Members of the viewing and listening audience can also send comments to us via email at P-A-R-L 101 at ttparliament.org or on our facebook page at facebook.com/ttparliament or on Twitter @ttparliament. I imagine in time all of these various handles will be available and be common to members of the public.

Today we have attending the hearing officials of the National Parent Teacher Association of Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association representatives and representatives from the Anti-Bullying Association

of Trinidad and Tobago. We thank you for being present with us and we look forward to the enquiry.

I wish to remind that the objectives of this particular enquiry are really basically three. First, to determine the extent to which violence is pervasive among students in primary and secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Second, to understand the line Ministries and by line Ministries we understand that there are a number of Ministries that are involved, not only the Ministry of Education, but to understand the Ministries' plans and strategies for addressing school violence and particular bullying in school. And third, to determine the effectiveness of multi-sectoral efforts and rehabilitation services targeted towards students who have displayed a tendency to be violent or to engage in acts of violence.

At the last public hearing we did have representatives of the Ministry of Education and the Community Policing Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago police force, they made submissions to us. And the submissions today were sent by the NPTA and by the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association. We also obtained a written submission from the Anti-Bullying Association last month on this subject. We have had these submissions. We have studied them and we are grateful for the time you have taken to prepare these submissions for us.

Before I open the enquiry I would like to ask members of the Committee to introduce themselves and may I start on the left.

[*Members of the Committee introduced themselves*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. May I ask the representatives from the NPTA to introduce themselves?

[*Officials of the NPTA introduced themselves*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, members of the NPTA. Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association.

[*Officials of TTUTA introduced themselves*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you members from the teachers' union, TTUTA. And now, the representatives from the Trinidad and Tobago Anti-Bullying Association.

[*Officials from TTABA introduced themselves*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. I will ask one representative from each organization to make some brief opening remarks. Please limit the opening remarks to no more than four minutes maximum, because we do want to have ample time to engage in the questioning. So can I ask Ms. Zena Ramatali of the NPTA to make her brief opening remarks for us?

Ms. Ramatali: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and other members of the Joint Select Committee. Certainly, the National Parent Teacher Association would like to thank this honourable House for inviting us to voice our concerns today. It is a red-letter day for us because it is the first time that we have been invited by the Joint Select Committee in any era to voice our concerns here.

We would like to thank you and we certainly want to remind and to bring to the fore that four of our objectives as a national association is to promote the welfare of children and young persons at home, school, church and in the community; to raise the standard of living at home and in the community; to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and young persons; and fourthly, to bring into closer relationship the home and the school so that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child.

And today we are hoping that we can come to some consensus and we look forward to dealing with the issues at hand. We are hoping that as we sit here as stakeholders, whatever is discussed and recommendations and concerns in going forward we would be able to see a society that all of us can live in. So today I am very grateful and we thank you all on behalf of the National PTA.

Mr. Chairman: A representative from the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association. Thank you, Ms. Ramatali.

Mr. Sinanan: Mr. Chairman, let me say that from a TTUTA perspective, we are indeed honoured and grateful. It is of course the first time that I am aware of, that TTUTA has been invited to appear before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament. So, certainly new ground is being broken here. But we are even more delighted that we are here to speak about the topic at hand. As we speak, as we engage in this dialogue, our children are fighting; they are hurting each other; they are hurting teachers.

Our education system is in a state of major dysfunction and we are happy to know that this issue is being treated at this level. It is not only seen as a school issue, which is something that TTUTA has been saying for a long time; that the problem may be rearing its ugly head in the school. That is only the tip of the iceberg. That is the symptom. The problem is rooted external to the school and it requires a joint effort on the part of the national community, beginning with our leaders, to treat with the problem, to do that kind of examination, that kind of in-depth examination, understanding the root of the problem, understanding how we got here and how we are going to fix it, how we are going to face the future.

The one thing that we cannot do is allow the situation to continue without some kind of intervention. In the first instance, an immediate intervention to arrest the problem and in the long-term, how do we craft an education system that will ensure that all our children can go to school and gain maximum benefit from the educational opportunities. So once again, Mr. Chairman, from a TTUTA perspective, we thank you sincerely for inviting us and soliciting the views of the teachers of Trinidad and Tobago in this very important matter.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Sinanan. May I ask Dr. Martin from the Anti-Bulling Association of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Martin: Good afternoon again. Our Association represents an effort by a member from the affected population, young Jeromy Rodriguez; an effort by him

to really do something about it. He, of course, is a member of the school population and we as professionals have rallied around him to try to lend our expertise. So we have been doing work in the area.

We are extremely grateful that we can be a part of this process as we recognize that school violence and bullying in particular needs to be addressed. So we are happy to be here and to lend our expertise because we have been doing work on the ground. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: And it is good that you agreed to appear before the Joint Select Committee. Let me say that the decision to invite individuals who have never before appeared to give testimony before Parliament was based upon the deliberation of the members of the Committee and I am grateful for all of them for their innovation in trying to get to the root of the problem. In coming committees we imagine that there will be more and more people appearing at the Parliament for the first time, since we think that it is going to be important to get to the individuals who are actually dealing with the problems on the ground, to advise us as legislators on what we could do at the level of the Parliament and at the level of the committee system to ensure that we can craft solutions.

And on that point, one of the objectives of this enquiry, of course, is not only to speak about the problem but to obtain solutions which are implementable.

A report is going to be prepared upon the conclusion of our public hearings. We may have one more hearing, we could have two but once we have concluded with the issue of school violence and bullying, a report will be prepared, taking into account the views of all the stakeholders and making suggestions to the various line Ministers on what could be done, what could be implemented at the Executive level of the State to ensure that this problem is reduced over time. We may not be able to eliminate it but we certainly would like to reduce its incidents. So that out of the deliberations will come the solutions, hopefully, which you on

the ground will be able to suggest to the Committee, that will then form part of a report to be submitted to the Parliament.

Before I open the floor for questions from the Committee members, I simply would like to raise with the NPTA the issue of Act No. 18 of 1976. We are aware in the Parliament that the National PTA of Trinidad and Tobago is governed by Act No. 18 of 1976. And if I may quote verbatim from the Act some things that Ms. Ramatali indicated to us in her early presentations, under section 3, it is stated that:

> "The aims and objects of the Trinidad and Tobago National Council of Parent-Teacher Associations are:—
>
> (a) to promote the welfare of children and young persons at home, school, church and in the community;"

That is a very huge responsibility, to promote it. I would not ask the question yet but when we come around for my turn to ask the question, I would like you to respond to the question I would raise now as to what is your relationship with the Ministry of Education, which will allow you to discharge this part of your mandate 3(a): to promote the welfare of—because by law this is what you are required to do.

To members of the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association, we quote from the Education Act. The school system is governed by the Education Act, Chap. 39:01. Again, I quote from section 27:

> "Subject to this Act and the Regulations, Principals of schools shall be responsible for the day to day management of their school including—
>
> (a) the supervision of the physical safety of pupils;"

—past legislators deemed it fit to put as (a) under the PTA Act:

> "3(a) to promote the welfare of children and young persons at home, school, church..."

In the Education Act, the past legislators, they have (b), (c), (d) and other things, but they said the first function of the principal of a school is the supervision of the physical safety of the pupils. So for TUTTA, when my time comes to ask the question, please consider that I would want to ask you whether, in your view, the schools are adequately resourced—the school authorities are adequately resourced, according to the Act, to discharge its responsibility, to protect the safety. I do not have an Act before me with respect to the Anti-Bullying Association. I suspect such an Act may come before us but we will have questions to pose to the Anti-Bullying Association as we proceed.

That is the opening remarks from the Chairman, the opening salvo, and I would like to invite my colleagues on the left to pose their questions. Sen. Ameen, would you like to go first? MP Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. To the President of TUTTA, in your submission you indicated the notion of "no child being left behind" must not be just a cliché but something that informs the foundation on which we stand as teachers. Can you tell me, when you speak of leaving no child behind what do you propose in this time?

Mr. Sinanan: When we speak of no child being left behind or ensuring that every child is able to go to school, and not just go to school but be able to take advantage of the schooling opportunity, meaning the child must be able to access a rich and diverse curriculum that will cater to his or her diverse needs, a curriculum that could connect with their reality, a curriculum that can stimulate their imagination.

The school must be resourced such that such wide and diverse curriculum can be imparted. The school must be resourced such that the support services that are required for those who are coming to school with diminished social capital, because we know that all students are not starting at the same place, that there are

systems in place to compensate for those who are coming with diminished social capital and, therefore, all children will be able to go to school and take advantage of the schooling opportunity. There will be no question of failure, because in the modern era education is not about ensuring that some pass and some fail. It is about ensuring that each child is given the opportunity to realize his or her maximum human potential.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Sinanan, if you do not mind, I understand all that you are saying but in reality that does not happen. To further reiterate on a point that you just made about the diminished social capital, there are children who come to school without books as a result of that social diminished capital and yet when they come into the schools, the teachers, if they do not have books, they are sometimes put out of the class or they are told that they are wasting time. So how do you deal with situations such as this? How is a teacher expected to deal with a situation such as this?

Then you spoke about earlier in your document that there is—your efforts to reach your charges, regardless of pressures exerted upon us, meaning teachers, by the authorities and wider society to maintain the status quo. What pressures do you perceive to be that are exerted upon teachers by the authorities? What are those pressures, so that we can understand exactly what is happening in the school and to the teachers? Those are two questions.

Mr. Sinanan: The first question, the Ministry of Education over the years has been providing students with textbooks. There is a textbook rental programme. So all children should be in possession of basic textbooks. Some parents are required to purchase some books, the supplementary resource textbooks, parents may be required to purchase, but by and large the major textbooks are provided by the Ministry of Education.

What we have, very often, happening is some children, despite having the

books they do not come to school with the books. You would have students who tell you, when you ask them why, they would tell you the books are too heavy; a simple blunt answer like that. So that, sometimes teachers would adopt different methodologies in treating with students who will come to school without books, even though they were assigned textbooks, because when students register at both primary and secondary school arrangements would be put in place by the school principal, working in tandem with the teachers, to ensure that they have their textbooks. So that is something that is dealt with at an internal level. Different schools may have different approaches to treating with that problem. I am not aware that students are necessarily put out of classrooms because they do not have textbooks per se. If that is in fact the case, then that is an issue that the school principal, the administration of the school, would have to treat with.

On the second issue of ensuring that all our children can take advantage of the schooling opportunity and the pressures that are placed on teachers, to a large extent we have a system where the curriculum, the delivery of the academic curriculum, takes priority over the education of the child as a human being. So that as a teacher my performance is judged based on the number of students that I can get to pass the exam, not the number of good, decent human beings that would graduate from the school. The emphasis is placed on how much work, what part of the curriculum that I can cover in a given time frame. My performance is assessed against those standards. And that places teachers under enormous pressure to teach the curriculum, teach the subject, rather than teaching the child.

I would have and TTUTA would have been saying this repeatedly at the last round of National Consultations on Education. We would have been calling for a radical overhaul of our whole approach to education, beginning with a national dialogue that would focus on the nature and purpose of education. We have to answer some fundamental questions. What is the nature and purpose of education?

Why are we educating people? What is our definition of an educated person? Who or what is an educated person? We have been operating with an antiquated colonial system that we have adapted to suit our needs, coming from a European factory model. Dr. Mahabir would know exactly what I am talking about. And it is our opinion that we have adapted it as far as it can go.

Our notion of education is certification. We define educated people as people who are certified, who have been successful at examinations and not necessarily our ability to produce good, decent, productive human beings who can add value to their lives and the lives of people around them, who can live in harmony with each other, who can be our neighbours, who can share this space with us, who the State does not have to take care of.

So that when we look at the role of the teacher in that construct, we are under a lot of pressure to teach to the test, to teach to the examination. And in the process, we leave large numbers of children behind and we deny them the opportunity to develop into good, decent human beings.

Mr. Chairman: May I ask you to cease here? We will come back to this because this is a very important point; the children who are left behind because we have a suspicion that these children who are perhaps not coping well with the curriculum may be finding other mechanisms as per your submissions to gain some attention to themselves.

I would want to then suppress that answer for the moment and ask colleague to pose a question to any member of the panel.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Pleasant good afternoon to the panel again. The Ministry of Education indicated that there is a National School Code of Conduct that students are introduced to on entry, and this code of conduct includes a discipline matrix, a circle of time and safety by design, different strategies, to assist the students. My question is, how is this code of conduct implemented or enforced? How are

students made aware of this code of conduct? How are parents made aware of this code of conduct? And how does it function in schools? Does it function across the entire school body, or is it possible in some schools and not in other schools? How is this code of conduct, this national code of conduct implemented and enforced in the schools? The Parent Teacher, TTUTA or the Anti-Bullying person can answer.

Mr. Sinanan: Let me say that the Ministry of Education does have a National School Code of Conduct that was developed under, I think, Minister Le Gendre. Input would have been had from a wide cross section of stakeholders, including TTUTA and the NPTA, et cetera. All schools are expected to abide by that code of conduct. They are also expected to adapt that code of conduct to their peculiar circumstances. So each school is expected to have what we also call a discipline matrix. That is a list of infractions and the consequences for students committing any of those infractions, first offence, second offence, third offence, et cetera.

Upon entry into schools, principals are required, via instructions from the Ministry of Education, to make copies of that document available to parents. So parents are fully cognizant of what is expected of them and their child while they are at the school and there are always, of course, other opportunities for parents to question, for example, through PTA meetings and meetings that would be called by the school authorities with parents; parent/teacher conferences, et cetera. So if parents are not clear about the provisions contained in that code of conduct and/or the discipline matrix they have ample opportunity to seek clarification from school authorities.

The problem we have is that, in terms of enforcement, very often the consequences that are defined there are not enough to treat with the offence. I would give you an example. Children may commit a particular offence. One of the consequences is that the teacher will speak to you and seek an audience with the child's parent. A note will be sent home and the parent, of course, having

received the note, will supposedly place a significant amount of priority and report to the school, having been summoned to the school to discuss a problem with the child. The problem, very often is that you do not get the parent to come in. You may have to send a second note and a third note and very often nobody shows up.

2.10 p.m.

So, in terms of enforcing the discipline matrix and the code of conduct, those are some of the challenges that we face in the school system. How do you then get the child to conform to the code of conduct? Of course, that code is based on certain assumptions. That code assumes that the parent really and truly understands what is contained there. Very often they may not, and they are afraid to ask. They are intimidated by school authorities.

In addition to that, the code assumes that the child is coming prepared to access schooling with a certain background. All curriculum that we deliver in school would be based on certain assumptions. Let us take secondary schools. When a child enters secondary school, it is assumed that the child has a basic understanding of—well, the child has a basic level of numeracy and literacy; the child has a concept of limits of behaviour; the child has a concept of discipline; the child understands there are rules that you must abide by and if you do not there are negative consequences. It assumes that the child's basic needs are being met. So that all those assumptions that we make about schooling, what happens when those assumptions are wrong?—which is the fundamental premise of our education system. It is assuming certain things. So that we need now to look at those assumptions that we make.

What happens if the child is socialized in a particular way at home—they can do whatever they want and there are no consequences? The child would obviously bring that behaviour to school. That is what the child is accustomed to.

If the child can be rude and disrespectful to adults and persons in authority, in the homes and in the community because that is how the child was socialized and brought up, you cannot expect the child to suddenly come in school and behave in a different manner. However, the school environment and the delivery, the successful delivery of an academic curriculum requires such, because that is the assumption upon which the curriculum is based. So that from an enforcement perspective it becomes a problem. That discipline matrix—

Mr. Chairman: Could I just stop you here? I think we understand that issue very well, but what does the NPTA have to say about that? Because according to your charter, you have a mandate to ensure that there is parental involvement in the education and the socialization of the child. Are you involved in any meaningful way in this process to ensure that parents in every single school in this country are involved in active PTAs so that teachers and parents come to know each other together with the principals?

Ms. Ramatali: Sir, I want to state and I would like to speak the truth and nothing but the truth today. Many of our administrators across the country are averse to having PTAs. As a matter of fact, there are schools in San Fernando where the principals have put out the PTA and refused to have parents on the school compound.

Mr. Chairman: Could you repeat that? I find that a little bit amazing. You are saying that there are schools which refuse to have PTAs?

Ms. Ramatali: Yes Sir, and that is one of—you know, when you read out our Act of Parliament, I am so happy that you did that because a lot of administrators in the country they only talk parental involvement; they talk it, but they do not mean it and they try as best as possible whenever parents speak out on issues—I am not saying the parents are not without fault—but whenever a parent speaks out and whenever we speak on issues affecting our children, we are told that they do not

want a PTA in the school.

I listened Sir, two weeks ago I think it was, when the Ministry of Education was here and the question was asked, how many PTAs are in schools, and he said the Ministry does not have a policy encouraging schools to join the NPTA. I am saying that is where our problem starts, because there is no policy in place. We have the Act of Parliament, but principals can say that they do not want a PTA in the school. So, this document I have here in my hand [*Document in hand*] this National School Code of Conduct, not every parent has seen this Sir. We created a parent manual, and in that manual we photocopied pages of this pertaining to parental involvement and the responsibility of the parents and we distributed that across the country. Now, we have some serious problems.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Ramatali. Two weeks ago when the Ministry addressed us they indicated something to the contrary that it was Ministry's policy—we do have the verbatim notes—to have a PTA in every school. So you are saying that that is not so.

We are at the crossroads here in the hearings because when we write our report—I find it amazing that there is no policy with respect to active parental involvement, particularly in relation to now (d) and (e) of your governing Act; and (d) says in addition to 3(a), you are supposed to under 3(d):

> "(d) to bring into closer relationship the home and the school so that parents and teachers may co-operate intelligently in the training of the child;
>
> (e) to develop between educators, parents and the general public such united efforts as would secure for every child the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, cultural and spiritual education;"

So, my reading of your governing Act is that you do have a mandate to ensure that there is always a close relationship between the school and the home, the parent,

the teacher and the administrators.

So that coming out of today's enquiry, I think we now know there may be a flaw in how, in fact, we are involving parents in the overall strategy of school violence—not only education, because I take it that Mr. Sinanan is indicating we do need an overhaul of the education system, but while we are overhauling there are some problems we can solve immediately to ensure that there is greater parental involvement.

Before I pose it to other members of the Committee, do you think from your perspective that a PTA, an active PTA in every school will go a significant way in the short period in stemming the incidence of school violence?

Ms. Ramatali: Sir, I certainly agree with that, but I would like to say, a structured PTA. Not a principal-controlled PTA, a structured PTA where the NPTA is involved where we can empower our parents and explain to them their role and function. The problem is not that the Ministry does not have any documents or policy to state in the encouragement of parental involvement. What the Ministry's policy does not state is that schools should join us. They give the schools the option. So what principals actually do is that they use that to their own advantage to state whether they want the PTA on board to raise funds, to give them money, because all they are interested in is just fund raising, not parental involvement, parental empowerment and education 100 per cent; and that is the truth.

Mr. Chairman: Before I open the floor to members of the Committee, nowhere in your governing Act did I see that you had a responsibility to raise funds for schools. I would ask Sen. Ameen and then I would ask Hafeez Ali, because we are now in some interesting domain.

Miss Ameen: Yes, indeed. Two things: the question posed by the Chairman of the Committee to the NPTA, I want to pose that question to TTUTA in terms of whether you feel that having PTAs, efficient, well-run PTAs in schools will make a

difference. I want to hear TTUTA's view on it.

Secondly, I note in your report, your critical requirements for school education transformation, and you speak specifically about school leadership. I believe in empowerment, I believe in training. The requirements, the social requirements, the social skills required by teachers now are very, very different to what was required a decade ago.

Apart from the Ministry's training of teachers, has TTUTA put forward any proposed training programme or engaged its members in training that will equip them to handle the challenges pertaining to school violence by engaging organizations like the Anti-bullying Association and others—other people who are trained in mediation and so on— to empower your own members? I am speaking separate from the Ministry's training of their teachers, but you training and empowering your own members. So those are two questions if you would.

Mr. Sinanan: Let me hope I remember all that you asked me to address.

Mr. Chairman: We have not included the anti-bullying representatives, so if you feel you would like to intervene and add to the responses of members, even if a question has not been posed directly to you, please so do.

Mr. Sinanan: All right. In the first instance, TTUTA is very clear: the involvement of parents is critical to the success of children. The literature is replete with examples, numerous studies done globally, which would show you that if parents are meaningfully engaged and involved in their children's education their children will become successful. The extent to which parents get engaged in their children's education, of course, is the big question. Some parents are more involved and engaged than others.

I have worked in four separate government secondary schools, and in each one we had a PTA. But I can tell you, for example, where you had a student population of 1,800 students—I used to work in two separate junior secondary

schools and it used to be 900 per shift, so 1,800 total student population—if we called a PTA meeting, if you get 100 parents you get plenty. That is putting it bluntly. So that the question is begged again, the extent to which parents are involved, the extent to which they would respond to invitations to come to the school.

Of course, there is also literature that will teach teachers and school authorities how to better engage parents in the process, whether it is through a PTA as a formal organization or a parent body. I am aware that there are some schools that may not have a PTA, but there is a parent grouping that works with the school. They may have a different name for it, but I think all schools in Trinidad and Tobago have some kind of arrangement, recognizing the fact that the parent is part and parcel of the process and must be included in the process.

The other issue you alluded to is the issue of teacher training and teacher preparation. We have gone on record as saying that we need to revamp our approach to teacher preparation, teacher training, that we are still operating under the old notions and old approaches, our old understanding of education. The child that we had before us 25, 30 years ago is certainly not the child that appears before us now, given especially the advances in communication technologies.

The children now are a lot more aware of their rights. They are more inclined to challenge authority as they would have when you were going to school, for example. So that we need now to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to meet the current realities, the current paradigm, and that is something we need to work on. We need to work with, in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, UWI School of Education, UTT, USC, et cetera. We need to ensure that our teachers are adequately trained, prepared to enter the classroom and having entered the classroom recognizing the changing dynamic and the changing paradigm of education—education is certainly not a static thing—you need to continuously

retrain, upgrade and put your teachers through that programme of continuous professional development, so that they can be abreast, they can keep abreast of the changing needs of the child.

In terms of what TTUTA is doing, of course, our primary mandate is to secure good terms and conditions of employment for teachers, to ensure that we work in safe and secure schools, et cetera, to ensure that we get a good remuneration package. That is our primary mandate being a union. Of course, because we see our mandate in a much broader perspective, we are focused. In fact, our fundamental philosophical principle is promoting the cause of education, and if you promote the cause of education, inadvertently you will be advancing the cause of the teacher.

Mr. Chairman: Could I intervene here? Before the Anti-bullying Association comes in, we were told in our previous hearing that there is a problem with teacher absenteeism and teacher lateness, and that the absentee teacher and the late teacher leave the classroom under-supervised, and an unsupervised or under-supervised classroom can result in a greater level of deviant behaviour. What is TTUTA's position with respect to absentee teachers and late teachers? Do you have a solution you could offer the Committee?

Miss Ameen: Mr. Chairman, if you would allow me, perhaps the fundamental answer to the question that I asked may have escaped me from Mr. Sinanan. I did not quite get from the president as to whether TTUTA has plans or if you have made any attempts to train and empower your own members in areas such as mediation, utilizing consultants and other NGOs, other stakeholders within the country to share with your own members separate from the Ministry. So, if you could just share with me, specifically, has TTUTA had any programmes to empower its members or do you have any plans to have any such programmes?

Mr. Sinanan: Well, I was about to get to that, but the Chairman interjected.

Mr. Chairman: And please answer the Chairman's question too.

Mr. Sinanan: Yes, I know Mr. Chairman. I expected that you would be posing one of those questions to me. TTUTA has mounted a number of training programmes given its limited resources and its limited capabilities. We believe in teachers training teachers, sharing knowledge. You would appreciate that among the teaching pool there is a substantial amount of grey matter because you have highly qualified teachers in the system who have lots of ideas that they share with each other, so that you get that kind of professional collaboration. On an annual basis we mount several programmes but, of course, that is not enough; that is only scratching the surface. We can only do so much. The employer has a responsibility to ensure that its employees are continuously exposed to professional development opportunities so that they can upskill themselves, they can keep abreast of the current needs of the children.

Mr. Chairman, to answer your question, I would first need a definition of what is teacher absenteeism.

Mr. Chairman: We are not playing semantics here. We are saying we know that teachers do have 14 days sick and 14 days occasional. How many members of your organization actually exhaust that? If that is their right to so do, is there any plan in place by the authorities to replace a teacher when the teacher is on one of those 28 days or if a teacher is on sick leave?

When it comes to minutes late, the Ministry indicated that 100 teachers were over 1,000 minutes late. So we do have teachers coming in late. We understand as well that people can be late for a number of reasons. We do not know if these 100 teachers are concentrated in one area, but it seems to be that late-coming is a problem as well. The issue before us is the fact that classes with absent teachers and late teachers will be unsupervised, and the direct question is simply this: to what extent does the unsupervised class contribute to a high incidence of deviant

behaviour? And you would ask me to explain what deviant means, I mean behaviour that is not normal, violent behaviour, behaviour that is not consistent and conducive to learning.

Mr. Sinanan: First of all, let me say, Mr. Chairman, it was never my intention to play semantics. I ask that question deliberately because we can have different circumstances under which the teacher is not present in the school or in the classroom. In some instances, the teacher may be legitimately out of the classroom. The teacher may be in another part of the school engaged in some other activity.

Mr. Chairman: Understood but, does it contribute? That is the question. Does it contribute to the type of behaviour that we are addressing, violent behaviour, behaviour that is inconsistent with a productive school environment?

Mr. Sinanan: Yes, it does contribute if systems are not in place to treat with it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Right, then a solution. The Committee has to get solutions.

Mr. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Do you think from your angle that a solution where a substitute teacher is readily available to be placed in a classroom, the moment the principal is aware that the teacher is late or absent, will contribute to an amelioration of the problem?

Mr. Sinanan: That system has been tried. In fact, it is in place. There are some challenges associated with ensuring that it works. In the primary system it is easier to find a substitute teacher to replace someone. I think the period is a minimum of 10 days. So that if the teacher is going to be out of the classroom for one or two days then you would not get a substitute teacher to, you know, deputize.

In the secondary system it is not very easy to maintain a pool of substitute teachers from which you can draw upon, because you will appreciate you do not

get hundreds of people just with their name on a list waiting to be called to school A for two weeks here and then another school B in the other part of the country for another two weeks. So, there are challenges therein in implementing such a system, but the system is actually in place.

You spoke about teachers not being away from the classroom for legitimate reasons as well as being sent by the Ministry of Education for training courses, et cetera, all of that does contribute. So, as a principal—and by the way, I am a secondary school principal, so I am quite aware. I have to live with these realities that teachers take their day off. They have legitimate reasons. It is a term and condition of employment. All right? So as a principal, there is nothing I can do if a teacher decides to take a day off to engage in legitimate business, which might I add if you are living in Penal and Palo Seco and what have you, and you have to go to the Ministry to make a change to your salary arrangements, you have to take a day—you have to get a job letter, for example—go to the Ministry, order the job letter and then go back the next week, because you have to come back in one week's time to collect it. So those are some realities that you have to live with. As a principal you are now faced with this situation for whatever good reason, very legitimate reason, the teacher is not in school.

Mr. Chairman: It is a problem we need to address. Very well.

Mr. Sinanan: That is right.

Miss Ameen: Well, I was just going to ask, because I think when we talk about teacher absenteeism, we are not speaking about those legitimate days off that teachers take. The fact is that there are teachers who become so frustrated and fed up of the school system, they are fed up and frustrated in dealing with difficult classes that they absent themselves, particularly when they have to go to a class that is very troublesome, they just simply miss that period. They have some business to go and it is out of their own frustration.

So, when we speak about absenteeism and late, we are not talking about legitimate cases where they take a day off as they are entitled to—their 14 days' sick leave and casual leave and so on. We have to deal with the reality. I know that a part of your mandate, TTUTA, is to represent teachers and partly to defend the teachers as well, but if we are to get to the bottom of the problem, we must be real about it. I know that there are several instances where teachers deliberately miss class and miss school because of the challenges, because they are not equipped to deal with the challenges that come forward. They are not equipped emotionally because they have their own families and other issues as well. Sometimes teachers themselves are victims of bullying. They go to a class—up to yesterday, there was a newspaper report on a school in Rio Claro where a teacher was beaten by students and it is not the first instance. We have seen in other countries, you see on social media where teachers cannot teach, because they are bullied by the classroom, because they cannot deal with the behaviour of the children. So that is really what I think we want to get at.

Mr. Chairman: Could I ask the Anti-bullying Association people now to come in, because not only are students being bullied but we understand teacher too are facing violent acts. So, could we get the position of the Anti-bullying Association? Remember we want to craft solutions, we want to solve this problem.

Dr. Martin: So, with regard to some of the things that were said before, in terms of using bullying as an example of the violence, when you look at the environment you have to look at teachers and principals, you have to look at bystanders, you have to look at victims, you have to look at perpetrators and you have to look at the family. Treating with the school environment, teachers and principals: to what extent are teachers sensitized to deal with the situation of bullying? I think that is what she was talking about. There needs to be specialized training to deal with these issues, I think whether it is TTUTA or the Ministry of Education that is one

of the recommendations, that you have specialized training to help to empower teachers to deal with those issues. So when something happens, does a student know who to go to? Do they feel empowered to go to the teacher because the teacher knows what to do? What is the protocol? So in terms of the code of conduct, there would need to be a revision of the code of conduct.

Mr. Chairman: Just to clarify. You are recommending that teachers in Trinidad and Tobago be subject to a level of training that would enable them, not only to teach physics, but how to handle a difficult child in the class, a disruptive child or a violent child. So you are recommending particular courses for teachers to be able to handle a potential troublemaker in the classroom. Very well.

Dr. Martin: As well as an instance of bullying.

Mr. Chairman: When I say a troublemaker, I am being very all- encompassing. He is someone who is making noise, he is someone who is violent, disruptive and harming other children and threatening the teacher and so on. So we do need specialized training in that field for teachers.

Dr. Martin: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, very well.

Dr. Martin: Also, something I think you mentioned at some previous time, I think that the school body can be empowered as well to treat with behavioural infringement within the school environment. So, to what extent are we utilizing prefects? Are student bodies—yes we need an effective PTA—but how strong is the student body? So I think that that is an area that can be addressed as well.

Mr. Chairman: Could you elaborate on that with respect to the use of prefects, because that is the old system, prefects, head boys. The individuals in the school where there is a hierarchical order to maintain structures. You are saying that schools do not currently have that?

Dr. Martin: Okay, I would use bullying as an example, of course. So what is the

purpose of the student body? How many schools actually have a functioning student body? What do prefects do? Do they only tap you on your back if you come late or if you wear the wrong colour socks? Are they themselves empowered to identify an instance of bullying? Is there protocol? Who do they go to? Does a student feel that it is okay, it is effective to take an issue to another student? Because they can be guardians themselves, and they could be trained to be guardians as well. So I think that the student body needs to be empowered.

Mr. Chairman: And would you recommend training as well for prefects?

Dr. Martin: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: So that the older prefects can mentor the younger ones and ensure that. Do you think that when you have late teachers, senior prefects can simply fill in to the classes to supervise for 15 minutes or so?

Dr. Martin: One of our general recommendations from our document was to have mentoring programmes within the school system. Now, that would involve obviously bringing professionals within the environment, but it can also involve using role model students from within that school environment. They may or may not be prefects, so they can be used in that way as well.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. I understand the NPTA would also like to come in at this point. I did not realize this position was going to generate so much interest.

Ms. Ramatali: I just want to go back to the point on the parents. Many parents cannot visit the schools, they cannot. They are single parents, they would lose their jobs; and we have been clamouring for years, either through some policy or legislation to give parents time off to attend to matters pertaining to their children. Employers must give time off without losing remuneration, and that is something we hope that could be considered as one of our recommendations.

Mr. Chairman: NPTA, could I make a counter recommendation? Have you all given consideration to having your PTA meetings on a Saturday morning so that

employers would be exempt and people can attend their work and so on and simply have the school available on a Saturday morning from 9.00 to 11.00?

Ms. Ramatali: Sir, we do have PTA meetings on Saturday mornings. We have training. As a matter of fact, this Saturday morning we have scheduled meetings, training for our members. So, we do have meetings on Saturday mornings, but that is something that could be considered. We have been saying that for a number of years.

Mr. Chairman: Could we recommend then the last Saturday in every month, let it be PTA day so that no parent can say, "I have to work, my employer is not giving me time." You see, I understand what Mr. Sinanan is saying. We need an overhaul of the system, but what the Committee is trying to get are solvable problems in the interim, things that we could solve. While we are looking at the broad picture we want to fix the problems, and since you have indicated that there is no PTA in every school now, I think it is important to have a PTA, but let us make it possible for parents. It would mean that teachers would have to give up some time, principals too, on a Saturday morning to attend to the business of the school.

2.40 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: So how does the PTA feel about that?—a Saturday morning for two hours, getting everyone together to ensure that we can have PTA meetings on a monthly basis—on a fixed day, the last Saturday in the month is PTA day. Come on.

Mr. Nedd: Mr. Chairman, while that is quite acceptable, there are other instances where parents are asked to visit schools. The teacher may want to talk about the same deviant behaviour, and so on, that cannot be done on a Saturday morning. And there have been instances where—

Mr. Chairman: But we understand that, Mr. Nedd, we understand that. What we are talking about is changing the culture of education in the country. This is in keeping with Mr. Sinanan's position, we have to start somewhere, and if we now are saying that parental involvement is lacking we need to find a mechanism to ensure that the moment a child turns four and is entering the school system the parents are involved and they make it into a habit. So that once it becomes a habit that you have to be participating in their education, we know we can use the weekends, but I understand fully well that the teacher may want to speak to a child on a number of issues during the week, that is a one-off thing. But I think a recommendation to the PTA really is, let us make it easy for parents; we are going to place a requirement on teachers and principals to use a portion of their weekends, but I think if you give that some consideration, I imagine, you might get the momentum going to have more parental involvement in the country.

Miss Ameen: Is that a practical thing that the NPTA could consider?—to have a standard day, for example, the last Saturday of every month where all schools, once they are aware, could say, okay, this is PTA day, so that you will have a fixed—is that something practical?

Mr. Chairman: A short response—

Ms. Ramatali: Ma'am, you have children in different schools, we have regional meetings; I think that will be difficult. But I just want to say that, coming back to the question on teacher absenteeism, now we are recommending, once again, ongoing training for teachers who cannot cope, training in classroom management. Now, my colleague here, the General Secretary, recently visited some schools in her district and there were teachers in the staffroom and nothing in the classroom, so what do you say about that? So we need training for teachers who cannot cope, teachers who do not know how to deal with the 21st Century teenagers, as Mr. Sinanan says. It is not long-ago children we are dealing with. So that one of the

major contributing factors, besides parenting, lack of parenting, training, and involvement at home, and looking after your children in nurturing them, one of the problems is that the homes are failing and then when they come to schools, the schools are now failing. So we are failing our children.

Mr. Chairman: So the schools must now succeed. And I will ask Sen. Hafeez Ali to come in, he has not been given an opportunity for the longest while. My apologies, Senator.

Mr. Ali: I am going to take the 15 minutes—[*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: Right. The floor is all yours, Sen. Hafeez.

Mr. Ali: Yes, my understanding of this whole thing is, being a parent myself, the problem starts from home, and just transferring the blame onto the school system, that would not work. So my first question, I have a list of most of the schools that we have here and the type of behaviour they documented and the amount of suspensions for 2014 and 2015—first of all to the President of the NPTA, how many schools the PTA is involved with?

Ms. Ramatali: We have about 300, and out of the 300 we have those that are financial, those that are not coming to meetings, so we have to be continually pulling teeth to get those schools, you know, to come out to our different meetings across the country.

Mr. Ali: And we have about five or six districts here that have some startling numbers here, like, for example, Chaguanas North with 277 suspensions, Barataria South, which is close to me, with almost 300 suspensions, is the PTA involved in those schools directly?—and all the others as well. And what impact is the PTA having, particularly with the parents of those students who are being suspended?

Mrs. Taylor-Ryan: Good afternoon, I would like to speak to those schools in Caroni, and, based on my experience, that particular school that you called, they are not affiliated to us. They used to be, years down the road, so we are certainly

out of touch. Our next mission, though, after the last visit with the Minister and the National President to that school, we are now in the process of—Caroni region that is—meeting with the principal to set up a PTA there. The parents are not involved and we realize that those schools that are not affiliated or connected to us in any way that, you know, it is mayhem and confusion right across the board.

Mr. Ali: So it seems now like we have to legislate for everything. We have to make it mandatory that a school have a PTA, and an active one so.

Mr. Chairman: But, Mr.Hafeez, on the last occasion the Ministry of Education did indicate that it was a policy of Government to have a PTA in every school. So when we come to our report we will be raising that particular issue, and we thank the members in the public hearing for indicating to us that what was indicated may not always be the case.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Chair, just a follow-up on what the Senator is saying.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Senator, continue. We have kept the Senator, and afterwards you would come.

Mr. Ali: I would take my 15 minutes. Mr. Sinanan, you spoke about those letters you would be sending out where the child has to be disciplined in the sense for the parents to come in, and they do not show at all. In the event that they do not show at all, what happens next?—the child stays in the class and continues being disruptive to the rest of the students, or are they removed? What happens?

Mr. Sinanan: As a principal, we cannot remove the child from the school unless the child really poses a threat to the safety and security of other students and other persons on the compound. So, if, for example, the child has to be suspended, the child has committed an infraction that warrants suspension, and we are guided by the Ministry of Education in terms of what infractions warrant suspension, all, of course, we can only suspend a child for a maximum of one week, all right, seven days. But assuming the parent does not come to school, the parent has to sign that

suspension notice, and receive it. If the parent does not come, unfortunately, we cannot put the child out of the school, so what do you do? You have to now be creative. You have to come up with all kinds of innovative approaches to treating with such a situation. In my own experience, and many of my colleagues would have done this, is we work now with the community police. So you enlist the assistance of the police, you call the community police who would, in the normal scheme of things, would have a good working relationship with the school, familiar with the school, regular visitor to the school, talking to the students, et cetera. So you ask the community police to take a letter to the parent and use, you know, whatever influence they can exert to get the parent to come in school so that the suspension notice can actually take effect.

Mr. Ali: That is a long answer but it still did not answer my question in the sense that, does the child still stay in the class being disruptive?

Mr. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Ali: And, finally, to the Anti-Bullying Association of Trinidad and Tobago, I see you all have a lot of recommendations here, and we have two organizations here which deal with education, as well as the Ministry of Education, do you all work directly with them in trying to implement some of these recommendations? And which schools do you all try to implement some of these things?

Dr. Martin: So we have been to approximately 34 schools, most of them within the southern part of the country. Naturally, we are not funded so we work within our means. So we would have been going to those schools doing basically lectures and following up on some incidents that would have happened within the schools. However, we think that within the curriculum there should be specialized areas to deal with issues like anger management, conflict resolution, mediation. We think that we can assist in those areas where children are exposed to those either through workshops, or particular periods within the day, as in actually inserting it within

the curriculum. So we have been doing some work but it is limited because of our resources, and we hope that we could work with the Ministry of Education in that regard, because it is a developmental thing, of course.

Mr. Ali: Well, it is good to hear that you are willing to work with the Ministry of Education but it has to be more holistic than that, in that you have to work with all the organizations to get these things instituted. Because what I have been gathering from all the meetings we are having, everyone is insulated by themselves, and trying to attack the problem by themselves, rather than a collective way. So we have to move away from that attitude and work together as a holistic body—Ministry, union, the NPTA, as well as the Anti-Bullying Association, to move this problem forward.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can answer that and then afterwards we would come back to MP Christine Newallo-Hosein.

Dr. Martin: To answer the question, we are willing to work with all bodies. We have worked with the Ministry of Gender, different Ministries, even the community police; we have done work for them as well, but with regard to going into a school system, of course, you know you have to go through a certain process. You have to be authorized to do so; so, in that regard, we would need the Ministry of Education first. That is my answer.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. I think that really what it is Anti-Bullying is asking for is the recognition by the Ministry as opposed to just working with them, Senator. But to continue in a matter that you had raised, Senator, to the NPTA, do you have any statistics whereby the schools that do not have a PTA show whether there is an increase or decrease in deviant behaviour?

Ms. Ramatali: Well, not immediately, but from collecting our own data. The schools where we have well-structured PTAs, those are schools that do not have the kind indiscipline that we are seeing, most of them.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, could I interject, could you send us, the Committee, the list of schools that you have with what you consider to be well-structured and well-functioning PTAs?

Ms. Ramatali: Certainly.

Mr. Chairman: Because we do have the statistics on the schools which are experiencing more violent behaviour than most, so we would like to just compare the data to determine the effect, what the effect is of having a PTA in the school.

Ms. Ramatali: Certainly, we will do that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you also.

Mr. Chairman: Right, and Sen. Hafeez Ali has also asked for the statistics from the Anti-Bullying Association—the schools in which you do have an intervention programme, if you can let us have the names of those schools and we can compare that with our own list of schools which are really not performing well with respect to violent behaviour.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Also, to Ms. Ramatali, you spoke of in your paper that you are involved in the Citizen Security Programme that we were asked to conduct, can you tell me if it is a suitable rehabilitative option for young persons, including school students who display violent tendencies?

Ms. Ramatali: Certainly, I will let Ms. Ryan—

Mrs. Taylor-Ryan: Yeah, most certainly. We were asked to engage in a programme for 14 months in two high-risk areas, and for three months in another area, certainly high-risk as well. So we went into the community, so before we did anything we walked in the community, met the people who lived in the community, and we walked with the persons in the community. So we met the parents and we invited them to send their children to the programme.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Therefore, you would recommend that it continues?

Mrs. Taylor-Ryan: I will recommend that because that is where you meet the

parents that you think who will have children who will give trouble in schools. So one of the things we have to do is stop waiting for them to come to us and get into the community and meet them and you will find they are nice and friendly, and just willing for you to assist their children.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Well, you know, as you are saying this, I am reading the report from TTUTA, who had indicated that, you know, the first step in the process of being prepared to make an investment, in that of a child, is that you need to truly know the students before you, their home environment and their community, and so the thing about it I am asking, is this in fact a reality? And how is this achieved? I would think that you would achieve this through the NPTA, and if the NPTA is not in all the schools, and if you are not engaging them, if we are working in our own silos, then this here, what it is you are speaking of, will not in fact be effective. So I think that there needs to be a greater collaboration, and, more than likely, my final question would be to the Anti-Bullying, you have indicated one proposal here, and that is the Anti-Bullying Anonymous Reporting Club, how do you propose that this club would function?

Ms. Joseph: Good day. Basically, it is like a reporting system, something happens, the environment might be a very hostile one so children may not feel the confidence to just go and say, so to identify themself as a witness, as a potential witness for fear of being beaten up later on, or threatened, or whatever. So you simply observe and you make a report. If there is need to make an immediate intervention, you do the same, but that is just to get like collective statistics to know the level at which we are dealing violence in that particular school.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Understanding how whistle-blowers are dealt with, although it is anonymous, how do you propose that the child, or whoever it is doing the actual reporting will know that the person they are reporting to is in fact trusted?—and that, if necessary, because you cannot just go to any court system

with evidence without someone showing themselves to be in fact a valid witness. How do you propose that we would go forward with the entire programme?—because I would think that you would have thought it through from beginning to end. I am not saying—it is not a bad programme, in fact, it is very good, but how do you propose to deal with it in light of the fact that there are so many instances of persons being attacked or injured because of coming forward with information?

Ms. Joseph: That would also depend on the severity of the incident. It may not even have to reach to the judicial system whereas it could stop with the community police, it could stop with mediation intervention at that level. So if it does go beyond that, and has to go beyond that, well then we would definitely have to do what needs be. But, regarding in the school environment, something of that nature happening in the school environment, the real intention is not to create more conflict but to try to resolve it as best as we could, and contain it and resolve it in the school, within the school system, instead of, you know, the external body, like the judicial system. It is children we are dealing with, so, you know, as minimum as we could try to avoid them reaching to that stage, we do.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thanks. TTUTA, if you could explain to me, you indicated that neglecting underachieving students has played a key role in producing higher levels of deviance and indiscipline in our schools. This is in fact an inference that higher levels of deviance and indiscipline are in fact caused by neglected underachieving students—do you have any statistics to base this evaluation?

Mr. Sinanan: No. At present I cannot furnish you with statistical data that will substantiate that position, but that is a position that the literature actually alludes to. The point that was made by Miss Ameen earlier ties into what you were just talking about. The issue of ensuring that certain children are not left behind, they are not neglected, is a critical factor here. We have to ensure that as teachers we

know our learners. If we do not know them we will not be able to cater to their unique needs, but the problem is when you have so many learners to know and so little time to do that, and especially those at-risk students, you need to spend a lot of time knowing them, knowing who they are, their background, where they come from, what kind of homes they come from, et cetera; that requires a lot of time.

And, on the other hand, you have an academic curriculum to deliver, so you have to make some hard choices as a teacher, and when you factor into the equation that in some school types the majority of students are at-risk students—and I am using these terms, Mr. Chairman, very loosely—the majority of students, sometimes 70, 80 per cent of them are at-risk students, they require personalized attention. They require teachers, and they are literally crying out for somebody, "Please hear me. Understand my reality. Listen to my cry." All right? When we do not do that from the primary school, because we are obsessed with preparing students to pass the SEA, national test, CXC, et cetera, the human in the equation is neglected, and that is where we begin to go wrong as teachers, but we cannot. That is why I said we need to ensure that there is the requisite support systems put in place especially in schools where you have large numbers of marginalized at-risk students, because you have to find some way of meeting them, treating with them. There are many schools where there is a PTA, but there are different levels of functionality of these PTAs. So in some schools you would get 50, 60, 70 per cent of the parents actively involved in the PTA, whereas in some schools there is a PTA but 10 per cent.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Sinanan, you have raised a very, very important point, because while you do not have the statistics to support the assertion, would you say that the majority of students who are violent and who are troublemakers—and I am not talking about cyberbullying just yet, we would have to deal with that subsequently—but the majority of students who are displaying violent tendencies,

fighting and being disruptive, are those who are having difficulty with their school assignments, with reading, writing and their academic work?

Mr. Sinanan: These are the students who need more attention.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Thank you very much. That is a matter we would have to look at. And, again, Mr. Sinanan, I will pass on to the Chair just now, I see MP Antoine looking on, but there is a question I needed to pose to you in your capacity as the TTUTA rep, and then a second one in your capacity as a school principal.

As a TTUTA rep, take the following situation, a Form 3 teacher is teaching her classroom and a fight suddenly breaks out in the classroom—I was told it is not unlikely—and she is 90 pounds, and the two young men, or the two girls are in a violent mode, could you indicate to me what does the teacher do at that point? Is there a system across the schools in Trinidad and Tobago where that particular teacher can immediately summon somebody to come and help him or her dissipate this particular fracas in the classroom? Do you get assistance from the school? Is there a dean of discipline? Can you call the police and will the community police siren come screaming almost immediately so that this particular unpleasant situation can be dissipated in short shrift?

Mr. Sinanan: You have described a reality that takes place on a daily basis in the nation's classrooms. Different schools would have different systems to treat with such realities; of course, the office is where the teacher normally will appeal to. The teacher may be trying to part the altercation herself or himself, in the meantime you would send another student to the office to summon help. Hopefully the vice-principal or principal, or a dean is available, remember deans also have teaching duties so they may also be in a classroom at the time. Now we have school safety officers, so that they can also be summoned, but those two or three precious minutes that you may take to do that you can just imagine in a

highly charged atmosphere in the classroom a lot of damage can take place. So that, to a large extent, you have to be able to survive on your own in the classroom.

Mr. Chairman: I raise this issue because it does have repercussions for the future development of Trinidad and Tobago, because if the teaching service is now a dangerous profession then brilliant people will not consider the teaching service as first career of choice, and the entire society is going to be undermined. So, I just want to raise a follow-up question, in that situation do you get prompt assistance from the police?—either community police or regular police in your school district? Do you, as principals, have a hotline with the police—cell phone line, "Please come", and within, say 10 minutes, a police vehicle will come to the school to show a presence? Is that normal or is that abnormal?

Mr. Sinanan: 999 is supposed to be a hotline, right? That does not always work that way.

Mr. Chairman: What has been your experience though? You perhaps would have had violent instances in your own establishment. If you were to call the police and students may have guns, they may have knives, they may have other weapons, you would like to get external help, is it readily available?

Mr. Sinanan: It depends, the police may respond immediately, they may respond one hour after, two hours after. It is contingent upon availability of personnel.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so your answer is that you are not guaranteed in 10 minutes upon a call for a police officer to arrive even though you have told them there are two guys fighting it out with guns in your school?

Mr. Sinanan: That is right.

Mr. Chairman: There is no guarantee that in 10 minutes a police officer will come. Okay, very well.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Recently a number of students were taken out of the school system because of certain circumstances, and both the Minister of Education and

the Minister of National Security have introduced the concept of boot camp to the environment—I would like to get the position on the PTA, TTUTA and the Anti-Bullying Association on the use of boot camps to deal with some defiant behaviour in our school system.

Mr. Chairman: Then we would like to get the NPTA, and we would also get Anti-Bullying as well, because we are looking at an intervention, the boot camp intervention to deal with students who are really major troublemakers.

Mr. Sinanan: I want to clarify that the Minister did not introduce boot camps. What is being introduced is a programme of out-of-school suspension, which we have been calling for, for quite a while. It is based on the understanding that if the child commits an infraction that is "suspendable" and the child is suspended from attending school, basically what you are doing is putting the child into the environment that gave birth to the negative behaviour in the first place. So what has to happen is when you suspend the child from attending school you should be putting the child in a place where the relevant interventions—diagnostics and interventions—could be made because your objective is to reform the offensive behaviour. The old approach to suspension, which is what we are operating with, assume that when the child is not allowed to attend school and stay at home, the parent and others in the community will make those interventions, and right now that does not happen. So what has been happening is we have been saying to the Ministry of Education for quite a while, when you suspend put them in a place where you can have experts who can do the diagnostics, understand the root of the problem and start to mount interventions with a view to rehabilitating the child, correct the offensive behaviour, and reintroduce the child in the school, if that is possible. If it is not, then where else can you take the child so that the child's long-term interest is being best served?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Sinanan. Does the NPTA have a

position on the boot camp? And does the Anti-Bullying Association have a position, as well, on that type of remedial action for the habitual and chronic offender in the school system?

Ms. Jackson: Well in the school system we are supposed to have guidance officers, social workers, school psychologists; we need to have sufficient of these people in the school system so that a lot of the defiant behaviours can be dealt with in the schools itself. What happens is that you have too few of those professional support systems in the school to deal with the children. So that that will be a recommendation to ensure that we have sufficient people. We have some social workers working with five and six schools, and all of that—

Mr. Chairman: Just to intervene, on our hearings again, we have the verbatim notes from the Ministry of Education, it was indicated to us that at least at the secondary school level that issue does not arise, because I think there is almost a one to one—one guidance officer for every something-hundred students, they said. And they said that ratio works very well in the secondary school system, not necessarily in the primary school system, so that we were told we will have to look at the data to see whether in fact those guidance officers then are effective. But we were advised by the Ministry of Education that there is an effective guidance system in the school system.

Ms. Jackson: Well, we have to have guidance officers, we have to have the social workers who will go to the homes of the students, we have to have the specialist teachers to deal with those who have problems with reading and other problems, and you need the psychologists. And once we have all those people in the schools we would not have much problem with out-of-school suspensions.

Mr. Chairman: Brigadier has a second question, but I just want to follow up on one of your questions that NPTA, what is your position with respect to boot camps for chronic offenders in the school system?—I mean students who are in gangs,

students who have weapons that can cause injury to life and limb, and so on.

3.10 p.m.

Ms. Ramatali: Well our position is not, you know, the boot camp model. We recommend, you know, national service—national service for those children. Some of those children they just need some attention, some love. They cannot cope and because they are coming from violent communities, you know, we cannot deal with them in that kind of rigid manner. For instance, we would look at prisoners and not every prisoner will be put in that kind of rigid kind of programme. So we are not in support of that rigid boot camp method.

Mr. Ali: Dr. Mahabir, may I? Mine is a follow up to TTUTA. You mentioned the out of school—

Mr. Sinanan: Suspension centres.

Mr. Ali:—suspension centres. But what about the use of the social workers in the schools and the counsellors and so forth? Are they available? The Ministry of Education is saying that they are available.

Mr. Sinanan: And this is why I asked the Chairman to make a point. The Ministry of Education has one, supposedly, one guidance officer attached to each secondary school. That guidance officer is also attached to a cluster of primary schools around that particular secondary school. So it is not as though it is one GO per school. All right? So in theory they may say, yes, we have GOs assigned to all of the schools, but you have to understand the practicality of that formula.

Secondly, one GO in one school where only 10 per cent of the students are at-risk students and require that kind of intervention is a different—will operate differently compared to a school where 80 per cent of the students are at-risk. You understand the dilemma that we are looking at. So that in some schools where you have the majority of students who are at-risk, underperforming, et cetera, without the corresponding extra support, what has been happening is that you overwhelm

the capacity of the school to treat with the underperformance, to treat with the at-risk behaviour. So you need now to have more support systems, internal as well as external to the school. You need to get other arms of the State, not just the police but the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, the Ministry of Social Services and Family Development, NGOs, et cetera to collaborate and form that kind of external social network to work with the school to treat with some of the presenting problems.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Anti-Bullying Association you were requested to have a perspective on the boot camp, that the military will offer a two-week training programme to really instil discipline into the chronic bullies. What is your position on that?

Dr. Martin: Well two things we agree with before that, that there may be a lack of specialized personnel to deal with the issues within the school environment, and in some instances students will need to be removed from the environment, even to ensure the safety of others in that environment. They have to be removed. We do not agree however that the approach needs to be extremely rigid either, because when you look at the sources of the problems, the approach must be appropriate. So you cannot adopt initially this all-encompassing approach. So, I guess, it would depend on what the source of issue is after a proper assessment has been done.

However, one thing that needs to be focused on is, once the student returns to the school environment, if the issue is at home, whether they would have been rehabilitated or not, once they go back into that home environment, the issue would persist and you would find the same students having to go to these programmes over and over. Therefore, one of the recommendations and many persons would have mentioned it, you really need mediation between parents and children or else you would be spinning top.

Mr. Chairman: Just for clarification with an aim to get solutions. Again,

hypothetical situation: suppose that there are four or five students in a school and they engage in what I understand to be taxing. They tax you to enter a classroom. They tax you to enter the playground. They tax you to enter the washroom, $5 per entrance, and you have a group of five. So it is a mini gang in the school. And they are there exercising that particular function that has not been authorized by anybody, but they take upon themselves to do that, making life miserable for the school. And they have been habitual and they are not really listening to the teachers and the principals. What kind of intervention do you think would be the most appropriate for that type of action which is making life miserable for teachers and students in the school?

Dr. Martin: Well initially I would not say a boot camp intervention, because it would depend on what kind of—what modules are involved in this boot camp intervention—it depends.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to know what are you recommending though because here you have students now engaging in actions which are highly undesirable. They may be actions of a violent, quasi violent and of a criminal nature in a school setting with children who are under 18, so it is a sort of a criminal action with children who are basically underage. And you do need to find a mechanism to treat those students who are the perpetrators and also to treat with the victims. We will come to victims support subsequently, but how do we rehabilitate then these chronic offenders?

Dr. Martin: I would say that they need to be removed, but the treatment is dependent on assessment. Like the PTA says, something like social service might work, even getting them involved in a sporting programme might work. So you cannot say beforehand how you would treat with those particular violent students.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. So you are recommending then a consideration by the Committee of a system of community service for students, could be cleaning the

school grounds, cleaning the school washrooms, cleaning the school, maintaining the school, going to homes for the aged and so on, doing things which are productive which can change their modus operandi. So community service as opposed to other types of punishment. Is that your recommendation?

Dr. Martin: Yes. But it depends—

Mr. Chairman: Upon assessment. Upon proper assessment currently.

Ms. Ramatali: Sir, I wanted to also—one of our recommendations we would like to see is mandatory parenting sessions for those children or for all parents, mandatory. So that parents who have deviant children they must be placed in a programme. It must be mandatory. For those children who do not have parents, who are living with old grandparents, whose parents have died, somebody needs to be held accountable for them. If there is nobody coming forward, those children could be placed in an institution like MiLAT or MYPART or some one of those programmes that will bring about some level of discipline and so on to them.

Mr. Chairman: So every child then should then have a parent or a parent surrogate to whom you could have some relationship.

Ms. Ramatali: Yes. Once you are under 18.

Mr. Chairman: Very positive recommendation. And for the longest while the first vice-president—

Mr. Lum Kin: Third vice-president.

Mr. Chairman: Third vice-president wanted to make a point. So I invite the third vice-president of TTUTA to make his submission.

Mr. Lum Kin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I may come back to the Student Support Services Division, that group, that arm of the Ministry of Education that has the social worker, the guidance officer and Special Ed. We are saying that the Ministry is focusing on secondary schools, but really we feel intervention should come from primary and even the CCE. Because at that level you can identify the

traits and the behaviours. So that the Ministry focusing on secondary—putting guidance officers in every secondary, because there is less secondary schools than primary schools. So economically it is more viable to do that and then have them go to a cluster of primary schools. But primary school principals and teachers can tell you that this is where, the lower level, the intervention needs to be given attention, greater attention. So we feel that it needs to be beefed up at that point.

And the whole idea of staffing, if I may come back as well to. As a primary school principal if a teacher is absent you try to ask the teacher next door to take the children, to supervise. But what—the situation arises, when you are understaffed how do you deal with that? So you talk about teacher absenteeism on one hand, but then there is understaffing of the schools. There are many primary schools that have to put First Year and Second Year together and a teacher teaches both those classes, Standard 1 and Standard 2 because it is so close. But the idea of staffing, the Ministry has to ensure that all schools are adequately staffed, so that you can also have the supervision there as well.

Mr. Chairman: I think you have made a very, very valuable intervention and that is, from your perspective you can actually identify from age five a child who might be a troublemaker. And Mr. Sinanan is saying may be at age four you can identify. Okay. I just want to get to the solutions perspective now. If in fact that is the case, would you recommend that there are child psychologists who have a speciality with respect to the problems of children under 12, or 12 and under, to actually move from school to school to have sessions with these children. Because I would imagine that in a class of 30 it cannot be all 30 deviants. You might find one or two and therefore, you may not want to have such an officer full time at the school, but certainly there should be a day in a month where this particular officer, with specialized training in rehabilitative techniques for 12 and under, be able to evaluate the child, counsel the child, guide the child and provide some course of

programmes so that we do not create a pool of matured deviants for the high school. So that is your recommendation, that we should start with the guidance or child psychologist who have specialities in 12 and under. Anti-Bullying Association, do you think there is merit in that proposal?

Dr. Martin: Yes. And to add to that, I know you are looking for immediate solutions. However, an immediate solution in the developmental frame would be to actually challenge the curriculum from that age as well. So for instance, we will be from September, I think, going into Moruga to work with kindergarten schools with regard to anger, helping them to understand bullying. So you have to start at age. Because like Mr. Sinanan would have said, when a child comes to the school you have particular assumptions that they would have received particular values at home, but that is not necessarily the case now because of challenges with the institution of the family. So the next system would be the school if they are not part of a religious group or community group. Therefore, you have to insert these things from the curriculum even at the kindergarten level, then onto the primary school level onward.

Mr. Chairman: So, you are recommending then that children be taught courtesy, manners, good behaviour as civil interactions, how to control their anger and their rage and how to really behave politely to parents, teachers and superiors. That should be part of the curriculum even at the preschool level. Okay.

NPTA, do you have a position on that? Because basically what is coming out is that the schools must now act as a supplement entity when the homes and the society themselves are failing. Do you think the PTA is going to be an instrumental body in this regard to ensure that this type of curriculum is then implemented in the schools and all students are inculcated with interpersonal skills?

Ms. Ramatali: Definitely we believe in that and that is why we promote the

HFLE, Health and Family Life Education, which will cover all those aspects, the interpersonal, the intrapersonal, how you deal with people, how you deal with your little personal hygiene and everything, it is total in that respect. But I also want to add the relationship. When you meet a child, how do you relate to that child? Are we friendly to the child? Are we welcoming to the child? Do we love the child? How are we treating these children? Because sometimes, you know, we tend to push them off a bit instead of embracing them, and I think that embracement, that relationship, building that relationship from the preschool with the parents and the child and moving forward in the primary school. Because sometimes even in the preschool, you bring the child in the school and you find the teachers might say, okay, "You leave them there. I will see about them." And then you go to the primary school and say, "Well we would see about them." And then when you want the parents to come, they cannot come because they expect you to see about them. So we want to have that all-encompassing idea that we all, we, the parent and the teacher and the child, we are a unit together and we are seeing about each other.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. I just—

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I have one final comment from—

Dr. Martin: I just want to quickly add to what she just said. So when you look at the adults and I want to add community to that. Because you see it on the streets now. You see adults looking at children in uniforms like, these people. Right? And they feel isolated. It is a form of isolation, and when you increase the gap between adults and children, whether it is parents or members of the community, you push them more into themselves and they tend to deepen into those negative values, some of which they have been developing and it shows in their behaviour. So, I just want to add to what she just said.

Mr. Chairman: Sen. Ameen. Yeah.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Just to ask. I do not know, so it is a genuine question. The NPTA spoke about the coping mechanisms in place for teachers and so forth. I just want to know, because for the changing environment, do we have our teachers, our potential teachers undergo a psychometric testing, evaluation? Just a question.

Mr. Sinanan: A quick answer to your question is, no. But TTUTA would have gone on record as calling for a comprehensive review of our recruitment of teachers, the whole methodologies that are employed to recruit teachers, determine suitability of persons to be in a classroom. We have been calling for that kind of reform.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Miss Ameen: Thank you, Chairman. Earlier, members both of the NPTA and TTUTA indicated that a number of the students who display violent behaviour often have trouble with their academic work. There is currently a Motion before the Lower House of Parliament on Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. I think it started in the Lower House last Friday and the debate is ongoing. But it asked the Lower House to resolve that the Ministry of Education initiate a programme in schools to identify children with ADD and well ADHD because studies are advanced in terms of the symptoms and so on. But also to train teachers to manage the students in the classroom and to implement a long-term study, a long-term strategy in schools to assist students where this is identified.

In addition to the other learning disorders, the one identified, the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder seems to affect a lot of children. Is this something that you would advocate for, for teachers to be trained to identify and for a strategy to be placed in schools to deal with children who seem to not have a grip on their academic studies and then who tend to act out in violent ways on the playground?

Mr. Sinanan: Sen. Ameen, I am absolutely delighted that you have introduced this issue into the dialogue because I was about to ask the Chairman for an opportunity to speak to this whole issue of special education. The literature will tell you that in any "normal class", approximately 25 to 30 per cent of the students have some kind of special need. The reality is teachers are not trained to detect those special needs. Our teacher training systems do not take that into consideration. TTUTA, recognizing that fact, partnered with the Canadian Teachers' Federation for last four years, and every year for the July/August vacation we run a summer institute to teach our mainstream teachers how to identify these special needs in our children, and what do you do about it. Because very often what we do, and I suppose it is being done out of ignorance, we just do not know. The child has a learning deficiency whether it is ADD, ADHD, whatever it is. There is some problem preventing the child from participating in the classroom the way they ought to, and the child is not. But because of our limited training and our limited appreciation of these realities, we may label the child as being poor performing. The child starts to display deviant behaviour. The child is simply looking for attention because the child is being ignored. So you understand the scenario.

So that I am totally in agreement with what you have just said, that we need now to pay some emphasis on this whole issue of special education and how we treat with special education in the system as a whole. Because I have said it repeatedly in Trinidad and Tobago we have treated special education as a bastard child. It is still by and large being undertaken by NGOs and special interest groups. The State has not accepted its responsibility to treat effectively with special education. We have talked about inclusive education, all right, where we ensure that all schools have a place for all children notwithstanding their special needs, but we have not done anything in that regard.

Mr. Chairman: Sen. Ali wanted to speak. Yes.

Mr. Ali: I would like to hear the views of each one of the bodies here regarding the religious bodies in schools. You will know that the denominational schools usually do not show this high level of deviant behaviour. So what are your views on probably reintroducing—you know, long ago they had the religious leaders coming into the government schools. I do not think that exists anymore. Would that be effective in bringing that system back in place? Each one of the bodies I would like to hear from.

Mr. Nedd: Okay. Mr. Chairman, in some schools they do have RI still taking place, in some schools. Right? In some government schools in particular, I can speak to that fact, you do have some RI. But I agree with you that you do not have the issues, right, where you have the whole issue of religion. I mean, there is the song that you put the Creator out and so on—remember that song? Okay? So, yes, religion, but more than that, in our submission we asked, what is the role of religion? And we were making the point in a meeting we had recently. Twenty-four children from Chaguanas North, they were taken out of the system, put in another school, it was a government school, government to government. No denominational school said, "Well, let me take four of them and try to rehabilitate them." Right? And I am saying, I think—

Mr. Chairman: We are running out of time. But a recommendation: do you think that just as we said that there really should be a PTA in every school so that there is parental involvement with the schools, there should be some form of training in ethics and religious education, all schools should be exposed to it?

Mr. Nedd: Of course there should be.

Mr. Chairman: On the curriculum.

Mr. Nedd: Of course there should be because these things help to build emotional intelligence in children.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Nedd: And more emphasis should be placed on that.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Very well. We are now at 3.32 p.m. and we are two minutes over our time. Is there any burning question from any member of the Committee, anything that you would like to say at this point and raise with the panellists? If not, what I will do is, I will ask the three organizations Ms. Ramatali, Mr. Sinanan and Dr. Martin to provide some brief closing remarks, brief closing remarks on what they would like the Committee and the audience to take away with them at the end of this hearing. Ms. Ramatali.

Ms. Ramatali: Well, Sir, thank you so much for the opportunity to be here and to share our concerns. And you did your homework, I must say, the Committee in finding our Act of Parliament and, you know, that is something I am very appreciative of. I am hoping that the recommendations that we discussed today, that many of those recommendations will become a reality. And that what is happening in our nation's schools, I think all of us, everyone, every stakeholder must take blame. So it is not just the parents. It is the various Ministries, it is the teachers, the parents, all of us. And if we could all, the society as a whole, and if we can all work together, and if we can get some of what we recommended today going forward to the Lower and Upper House, certainly it would make a difference.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mr. Sinanan: Mr. Chairman, very quickly, we are looking at solutions. Further to what Sen. Ameen said, we need to retrain, retool teachers on an ongoing basis. We need to give them some competencies, some skills so that they could better cope with the realities of the classroom today. So that ongoing teacher professional development will help tremendously.

Secondly, a lot of our principals are overwhelmed by the realities of their

schools and we need to establish a leadership institute, a school leadership institute. It is not new. The concept exists in other countries. We have to stop expecting good principals to magically appear. We need to prepare people to be good school leaders and it does not take much to establish a school leadership institute, so that we can train our principals, both primary and secondary, to better manage their schools and better manage their resources, their teachers, because many of problems that we are seeing in the schools is an outcome of poor leadership and poor human resource management.

And finally, Sir, we have been discussing school violence and it is our humble view that we need to broaden the dialogue. It is not just school violence, we should be discussing societal violence. The school can only be insulated from the wider violence of society so much, and that is exactly what has happened. We have tried to shield the schools from a very violent society for so long. It just cannot happen anymore. So we need to broaden that dialogue to look at societal violence.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, and the Anti-Bullying Association.

Dr. Martin: Okay. We believe that we should adopt proactive approaches with an effort towards engendering a culture of peace and not violence via the values that we inculcate in our children through the schools particularly, as the family is failing. Also, ensuring that schools are equipped via the correct processes and the training of the personnel within the schools, addressing parental involvement through mediation between parents and children and parental classes on the whole. Also, research. A lot of the research we have is outdated with regard to school violence. So, yes, if we have the proper processes in place, we will get statistics, but we want to do qualitative studies with students to find out why they are so angry, why these symptoms and what they think can be done.

And lastly, that we should have a more coordinated, holistic approach. So

we can, in fact, build relationship with these persons here and the other stakeholders. And we would like to thank you for allowing us to share.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to thank all members of the organizations, the NPTA, the TTUTA and the Anti-Bullying Association for participating in today's proceedings. We have learnt things today that we did not know before the hearing began today. This hearing continues next month when we have other stakeholders who will, of course, be bringing their own perspectives on solutions to the problems.

But before I close, let me indicate to members of the Committee, as well as to the panellists, what are some of the solutions which have emanated from today's enquiry. From the NPTA we are told that there should be a PTA in every school with regular meetings, and very important, every child should have a parent or guardian with whom there can be some liaison between the school and the child. So that, I think, that is something we will have to look at as a positive recommendation that we can implement.

From the Anti-Bullying Association, what I was able to pick up quite early is that we need to be looking at the school administration that existed in the past with effectiveness. The use of the prefect systems, the use of other systems where there are mentors within the schools and for prefects to even fill in for late teachers and absentee teachers, so that the younger charges will always be under continuous supervision.

The TTUTA has made some positive recommendations. We need to have training for teachers especially with respect to dealing with violent children. I think it is important for teachers to be trained, not only to teach physics, but also how to handle a potentially violent child or a violent child.

We were able to obtain, as a positive recommendation, that there should be a roving child psychologist, speciality 12 and under, who will be able to visit the

primary schools and select and identify very early a potential problem child even at age four or five, provide the necessary remedial counselling so that that child will be won over to the education system and not become a recruit to the deviant elements in the society.

There is, again, recommended from the TUTTA the need for there to be, very important, remedial work for students who are having difficulties with their academic duties. Special needs students who may be having problems with reading, who may be having some learning difficulties and students who are finding it difficult to cope, so that instead of them finding an outlet in unacceptable behaviour, we are able to train them to find some more meaning within the school environment. In that way, I think, sports and other activities can be very beneficial. And activities such as the Cadet Force today, which we did not raise, can instil in some of these students a sense of discipline and belonging and a sense of achievement. So we would want to be looking at the reintroduction of the Girl Guides, the St. John Ambulance, the Cadet Force and other activities, football, cricket and tournaments like that for students who can shine, who may not be able to shine perhaps in chemistry, but who certainly can shine in industrial arts or in some other area.

And finally, what I took on as a positive recommendation that we did not have before is that principals in schools, given what I indicated earlier in the Education Act, where principals are charged with the responsibility for ensuring this safety of all in the school, the pupils under their charge. Principals in schools should be trained in leadership. And we did not cover where the principals are adequately resourced by the Ministry, but certainly given that responsibility under the Education Act we would want to probe further to see whether, in fact, not only can we provide, recommend leadership training for principals, but also to see what the Ministry can do to give principals the power to discharge their functions as

dictated by the Education Act.

I would like to bring this particular session to a close. We will continue our hearing next month, and I want to invite all our viewers and members of the audience to tune in for the next time we have this particular hearing. And please send your suggestions to us via the various email handles and so on that we have suggested, because we are compiling a list of recommendations which hopefully can make a difference in the short term and then a bigger difference in the long term, so that our schools and our teachers can function in a safer and more harmonious environment, and students can go to school to learn. I thank you very much. It was a very pleasant session. Good day.

3.41 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*