



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

SENATOR HAZEL MANNING

MINISTER OF EDUCATION



TTUTA'S 28TH Anniversary Celebrations

**Centre Pointe Mall
Chaguanas**

Saturday May 19, 2007

5.00 p.m:

- Mr. Clyde Permell, President of TTUTA, General Secretary, Mr. David Lewis, members of the TTUTA Executive and membership
- Honorees and Retirees
- Mrs. Angella Jack, Permanent Secretary, Mr. Peter O’Neil, Chief Education Officer and, in the inclusive language of our reforms, I recognise all our employees – the hard working staff of the Ministry of Education who strive each day in our offices and in our schools to build a quality education system. I refer here to all Heads of Divisions, Sections and Units, School Supervisors, Principals, Vice Principals, Teachers, Administrative and other staff of the Ministry of Education present here this evening.
- Mrs. Zena Ramatali, President of the National Parent Teachers’ Association
- Presidents and other representatives of School Associations and School Boards
- Representative of the Inter Religious Organisation
- Specially invited guests
- Parents
- Students
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and gentlemen:

On an occasion such as this, I take the opportunity:-

- Firstly to thank the executive of TTUTA for inviting me to be part of your Anniversary celebrations marking as it were the 28th 'birthday' of TTUTA
- Secondly, for the interest shown and the collaborative support given by TTUTA to the Ministry of Education in its thrust towards quality, excellence and professionalism in the teaching service.

Tribute must be paid to TTUTA for the significant strides it has made since 1979 as the representative organisation for the 14,000 teachers now employed in the public education sector. **You deserve a round of applause**

The observance of an anniversary is therefore a fitting time to give thanks for progress made. Anniversaries are also a time for reflection, stock-taking, and celebration.

This evening we celebrate life and honour the hard work, the dedication and the enduring spirit of those lives and careers well spent in the service of education.

Your solidarity as an Association has remained firm over the years and this is a clear testimony of the loyalty of your membership. I congratulate you and all your members for this stability.

During the past 28 years TTUTA has stood witness to many sore and vexing problems in the education system.

There is the concern about **student performance** which we feel can be significantly improved if teachers display **the will** to use the new Continuous

Assessment system from the Early Childhood level right through to secondary school.

This system coupled with the introduction of National Testing has the potential for early identification of student need for remedial work, adjustment and support at Standards 1 and 3 at the primary level and Forms 1 and 5 at the secondary level.

We have made **quality** in education our number one priority. Success here depends in large measure on the **attitude of teachers and parents** towards our children and their commitment to work on behalf of future generations.

As a Nation we want to see **value for money**. Nine percent of total government expenditure, or 4.5 percent of GDP, is spent on education. For this year, expenditure on education is over TT\$3.4 billion and it is estimated that \$14,000 a year is spent on each student.

So what are we doing to address the many challenges that we face as we work to improve student performance, build a quality education system and get value for our money?

When I assumed office five years ago, I said:- *education is everybody's business*, and set about engaging stakeholders like TTUTA. Today, as we join in your celebration, it is good to reflect on the journey thus far.

Let me just focus on some key shifts that have taken place:-

1. There has been a shift in ***School governance*** to school based management which brings greater involvement of the school community e.g through a system of school boards. Over 80 Local School Boards have been successfully installed in government secondary schools and work has begun on a similar process at the primary and early childhood levels.

This thrust towards School Based Management empowers and democratizes the school system. It is now up to you - our teachers - to make School Based Management effective.

2. *Early Childhood Care and Education* has shifted from the informal to formal education sector. This shift is soon to be sealed in legislation.

3. *Curriculum and curriculum delivery* has shifted to incorporate new technologies and student centered learning

4. *Student assessment and certification* has shifted so that the multiple intelligences of our students can be recognized and rewarded

5. *Teacher professional development* is shifting to ensure that in the future, all teachers will be trained before entering the classroom. In this regard we are working with the University of the West Indies and the University of Trinidad and Tobago to address quality preparation of our teachers.

6. *Support for student learning and behaviour change* has shifted into high gear with the establishment of the Student Support Services Division, the introduction of a Peace Programme, the expansion of the Special Education Unit, the expansion of the School Nutrition Programme. In addition, never before have there been school psychologists and school social workers as part of our establishment working to improve student discipline and behaviour.

Ladies and gentlemen, only yesterday, we launched the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, CVQ.

This is a pioneering attempt for Technical and Vocational Education in the region as it now positions TVET as an integral part of general education opening up new pathways to certification.

We hope all teachers embrace the possibilities the new vocational qualifications bring and see the CVQ's as a liberating force for all our students as it shifts the perception from the narrow focus on O.Levels, to a wider link between educational goals and CARICOM-approved industry standards.

All these initiatives constitute a holistic approach to addressing systemic weakness as well as the educational, socio-economic, psychosocial and emotional needs of our students.

As` educators, you, more than most, know that these shifts in policy reflect the full scale implementation of the recommendations embodied in the Education White Paper 1993-2003 and the Education For All (EFA) goals.

We are now well ahead in defining an education system for 21st Century needs. There is no turning back. To reverse these processes is to take us back to the 19th century!

As teachers and principals in the schools, you, more than most, know that these changes in our education system **are happening**, for you are the implementers in the schools. Yet so much misinformation on education abounds!

Therefore your professional discourse and informed involvement is crucial and necessary if parents, the school community and the wider public are to understand the complex, dynamic nature of the education sector.

As educators you have a responsibility to be curious, not only about aspects that affect you directly, but also of changes in the entire system in order to see the full picture and to be better able to share that knowledge with your school community. The Ministry of Education's website is growing as we place our documents and policies in the public domain. I invite you all to be part of this exciting journey by providing us with information on best practices and giving us feedback so that the website becomes a rich reflection and reservoir of information about our education system.

Mr. President and members of TTUTA, as you celebrate and reflect today, I encourage you to continue to do in-depth, research driven reflection on the state of public education in Trinidad and Tobago and to consider the joint responsibility of TTUTA, the Ministry of Education and the community in addressing the challenges we all face.

Let us look not only at the negatives, but also bring forward the many, many positives that exist. Then let the evidence speak to the Nation and help us to work with renewed vigour to achieve the quality and excellence we desire for all our schools.

You only have to look at the latest wave of media reports on the education sector to be concerned that balanced reporting is missing – to be concerned that so much of the good that you and your schools do is negated in the Media.

TTUTA's Executive and membership should be very concerned that your life's work is being sacrificed and blemished by those among you, whose lack of professionalism may be seen as the norm by the general public.

Let us begin therefore to put forward issues in education in a manner that helps others to appreciate the complex and dynamic nature of educational transition and change.

I wish to place on record, that much of what we have accomplished thus far has been the result of the wonderful collaboration of our teachers and TTUTA. *And we need to applaud these efforts.*

I would be remiss if I did not say that despite the current media profile of TTUTA, the Ministry of Education knows that you are not only interested in salary increases and the terms and conditions of your members.

As important as those issues are, the Ministry of Education also knows that TTUTA shows keen interest in every matter involving teachers, from the issues of safety and security in our schools to teacher accountability and professional development.

Over the last five years we have been able to secure resources that give life and meaning to the Mission of the Ministry of Education - the Mission being, *“to lead the modernisation and renewal of the system of education.”*

- We have made significant shifts, which I mentioned earlier and we have put in place the human and financial resources to support them
- We are deshifting our Junior Secondary Schools
- We have developed standards for improving Quality in the delivery of education and for the operation of all schools

- We recently signed an agreement with UNESCO for technical assistance for the development of quality assurance in the Ministry of Education
 - We have spent over \$26 million on the computerization of our Primary Schools. So far computer labs have been set up in 58 of the 60 schools in Phase 1 and in 3 Special schools.
 - We signed the contract on March 29th this year for the delivery and commissioning of computer hardware and software for 133 Secondary Schools at costs amounting to \$60 million.
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- Infrastructural work which is needed in 79 of the 133 schools is in progress to facilitate installation of the secondary school computer labs.
 - We are installing Library detection systems and that is 60% complete
 - We are delivering and commissioning equipment for school libraries at the rate of 8 schools per day.
 - We have established an Employee Assistance Unit which delivers services of assessment, counseling, referral, management consultation, and workshops for critical incident stress debriefing
 - We have implemented a new administrative structure to provide support to principals of Primary and Secondary Schools in the area of curriculum delivery, teacher supervision and supervision of students, especially in the area of discipline. A total of 1,737 positions have been created by Cabinet to support this initiative as follows:

Trinidad

- 570 Heads of Department (Secondary)
- 233 Heads of Department (Primary)
- 330 Senior Teachers (Primary)

- 505 Deans (Secondary)

Tobago

- 31 Heads of Department (Secondary)
- 15 Heads of Department (Primary)
- 28 Senior Teachers (Primary)
- 25 Deans (Secondary).

This system of Heads and Deans, Student Councils and Local School Boards is a major support for the shift to site based management and is expected to become more robust during the academic year 2007-2008.

The challenge, ladies and gentlemen, lies in the willingness of our staff – Supervisors, Principals and teachers – to embrace change and to familiarise themselves with the shifts created by new policies.

The challenge lies in the willingness to create a new lexicon – a new set of words to describe the changing reality in the Ministry of Education.

Too often the language is reflective of the old centralised system e.g the general public, the News Media, even members of our staff, continue to talk about ‘The Ministry’ as a central and distant force, not recognising that our education system is now more decentralised.

There are in place new arrangements that bring the District Office, the Principal as leader of the school community into the management of school affairs, giving life to the concept of - ‘The Ministry’ *on site*.

We have invested a lot of capital in training, preparing our principals and teachers to assume **leadership** positions and to be agents of change as ‘The Ministry’ on site.

Therefore much is expected from you. It is our hope and by extension, the hope of the Nation, that this investment leads to a new culture - a new way of doing things through effective site based management in our schools.

With effective site based leadership, we look forward to new attitudes towards collaboration, investigation, dialogue, critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving among our schools.

We have put in place new financial arrangements to support site based leaders by removing some of the restraints hitherto encountered and by improving direct allocation of financial resources to schools.

These are things that you have wanted for years. In five short years we have made it possible. It is happening!

There is still much to be done, but it is my hope that as you reflect on the advances made you will feel empowered to embrace the change – not as more work or hard work, but as SMART work.

I therefore urge you all to become proficient in the use of the new technologies being made available to schools

I encourage you to maximize the benefits of school based management by building strong community networks.

I advise you to use wisely the direct funding being provided especially to secondary schools.

I know that the primary sector is anxious for similar arrangements, but the fact is that more than 72% of our PRIMARY schools are denominational schools which require negotiations to be made.

In our negotiations, The Ministry of Education has made it clear that we uphold the Concordat. The Concordat is not the issue.

The issue lies in resolving the transition from schools established on 19th century requirements to requirements for primary schooling in the 21st century while at the same time ensuring that proper attention is paid to new financial procedures that demand transparency and accountability the disbursement of public funds.

Our research which we share with the boards shows that consideration has to be given to changing demographic trends, land size, and even the religious composition of the denominational school which in some instances no longer reflects the religious persuasion of the Board.

Therefore we need to work together in the best interest of the children of the Nation to find the best possible solutions. I want to assure you that new Primary schools are coming as we turn our attention to the overall reform of the primary sector.

The reform of the primary sector is set out in the National Model for Education in Trinidad and Tobago 2007-2015 which has just been approved by Cabinet.

The National model ensures 14-16yrs schooling for all young citizens from early childhood to secondary school, bringing us on par with many countries in the developed world.

This National Model for Education in Trinidad and Tobago is the new framework that encompasses all the policy shifts of the past five years. While at the same time guiding the development a seamless quality education system by 2015.

We begin discussions shortly on the National Model of Education 2007-2015 with our valued partners and stakeholders and we look forward to your fullest participation.

We look forward to meaningful change, with our schools moving centre stage and our teachers assuming responsibility for nurturing and promoting quality and excellence in education for the benefit of future generations.

We look forward to a professional teaching service capable of coping with rapid change, technologically and otherwise, while at the same time shaping our unique identity and preparing our young citizens for the challenges of a competitive global environment.

We have made significant achievements as we discharge our mandate to create innovative and caring citizens capable of driving sustained national development to 2020 and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen: good teachers touch lives Good teachers make the difference.

Good teachers work with the belief that all children can learn.

Let me in closing leave with you something a Principal said recently on one of my visits to schools. The school he said should be (quote) “a soft place for children to fall.”

Let us make our schools places that care, places that nurture, places that bring hope into the lives of our young citizens.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education, and on my own behalf, special congratulations to those being honoured today. You have done us proud.

Congratulations to TTUTA on your 28th Anniversary and I wish you every success in the years ahead



2007 May