

Part 1

PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS FOR THE PEACE PROMOTION PROGRAMME

During the last decade the world has witnessed an unprecedented increase in crime, violence and lawlessness. Because of its openness, vulnerability and small size, Trinidad and Tobago could not have escaped the effects of this disturbing global phenomenon. Our schools which are microcosm of the society have been plagued with a similar increase in violence and indiscipline.

In March 2002, Project Peace was launched as the main thrust of the effort of the Ministry of Education to deal with the violence and indiscipline in our schools.

Project Peace has evolved into a full-scale programme - **The Peace Promotion Programme** with a clear mission, philosophical base, Management Committee, defined structure, and a coordinated set of activities and areas of responsibility for personnel.

The long term goal and mission of The Peace Promotion Programme is to create a Culture of Peace in the individual, the home, the school and the community.

The main strategy is to cultivate Peace in the individual child – a Peace that entails self-discipline, self-esteem, respect, a non-violent approach to resolving disputes, and a sense of democracy. By imparting these qualities, attitudes and techniques we will be building up in each and every child in a preventative, proactive way, the resilience and capacity to withstand temptations to violence and indiscipline and to adopting peaceful, democratic alternatives to resolving conflicts.

We fully appreciate that there is no quick fix solution to the incidence of crime, violence and indiscipline. But, we have been seeing positive changes taking place in the behaviour and attitudes of our students. From our knowledge of how other countries are dealing with this worldwide phenomenon of violence and indiscipline and the endorsement of the appropriateness of our strategies by experts like Professor Deosaran of the U.W.I., we are confident of the paths we are pursuing. We must continue to conduct research to evaluate our projects and activities, gauge their impact on society and guide our future efforts.

We are determined to stay the course towards the achievement of our goal of a Culture of Peace.

We are particularly appreciative of the extent to which participation and involvement of students themselves in the management of their schools would lead to a reduction of violence and indiscipline through self-regulation. Accordingly, democracy should be the preferred administrative lifestyle, and the school must function as a democratic institution. One learns democracy not by chalk and talk but by living it on a daily basis.

Teachers are our key agents and front line “soldiers” as we “wage peace” against violence and indiscipline. They must be trained and assisted to be able to manage their classroom more effectively and deal with their own stress and anger, so as to build up confidence to reclaim their classrooms. We must ensure that no classroom is ever without a teacher throughout the day.

Our implementation strategy involves the extensive use of NGOs with the appropriate experience and capability of “getting the message” across to children and young people. We recognize that the enormity and complexity of the problem of violence and indiscipline require co-operation and coordination with other Ministries especially National Security, Social Development, Community Development and Health and the private sector as a whole.

The overall aim of the education that we are providing for the children of this nation is the holistic development of each and every child. No child should be left behind and we must attend to every aspect of the child's total personality.

Traditionally the education system of the country had been concentrating on the intellectual development of the child through curricula that were predominantly academic. We are fully aware that in order to reduce the violence and indiscipline among our students, greater attention must be paid to the emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of the child's personality. We realize too that each child has his or her special talents, potential, intelligence and way of learning. This is the philosophy that guides and inspires the diversification of curriculum development in the quality education system that we are constructing for our children. Each child should be allowed to 'taste success' in order to build up self-esteem. We are giving special attention to those in greatest need, especially the disadvantaged families, which because of poverty find it difficult to provide adequate parental support or home facilities for learning. We are convinced that the higher the quality of education we are providing our children, the more quickly and completely will the violence and indiscipline go away. One can interpret the violence and indiscipline as symptoms of malaise in the education system and the society, and as the cries of our students for help. And when we get to the core and the root of the problem, we find that the students

who are crying out the loudest by their expressions of violence and indiscipline are the ones who are hurting the most. They should be the first to get our help and not be discarded as a lost generation.

It was Mahatma Ghandi – the renowned apostle of Peace – who said, “If we are to reach real Peace in this world, we shall have to begin with the children”

The Peace Promotion Programme begins and ends with the children. Children are the principal target group and it is through the students that we will get peace to prevail all over the schools. But we cannot overlook the connection between the home and the school. We must pay attention to the needs of the homes and parents, especially the lack of parenting education.

We fully understand the close relationship between the home, school and the community. In our concern for the physical security of the school, we understand that no greater protection can be ensured for a school than the interest and determination of the community to protecting it. We must maintain a safe and secure environment conducive to optimal teaching and learning in schools. Students and teachers must feel safe in their schools. Unfortunately it has become necessary to construct strong protective measures. We are also providing special trained officers to enhance security and assist principals in this

responsibility. But the most effective protection for the school will come from its immediate neighbourhood. In many instances the school may have to reach out to the neighbourhood and become a catalyst for the development of the community.

The activities of the Peace Promotion Programme therefore are directed to students, teachers, parents and the community.

Part 2

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME

Over the last decade violence and indiscipline have been increasing in our schools at an alarming rate. This phenomenon mirrors the situation in the society at large. For it should be understood that the schools are but a microcosm of the society and violence has become a global phenomenon.

There is a distinct relationship between violence and indiscipline in schools and crime, violence and lawlessness in our society and the world at large. .

The Ministry of Education has developed the **Peace Promotion Programme** to address this disturbing trend in the schools. **Project Peace** is the main thrust of this Programme which includes other components like the **Joint Action Plan** with the Ministry of National Security and a project co-funded by the J.B. Fernandes Memorial Trust Fund which is directed to **Parenting, Homework Centres** and **Classroom Management** in primary schools

The long term goal of the Peace Promotion Programme is to create a Culture of Peace - in the individual, the school, the home, the community and the society at large. The Programme has adopted a proactive, preventative approach, in that it aims to build up a defence and. resilience against any tendency or inducement to violence and indiscipline. Activities in the Programme are directed to students, teachers, parents

and communities. It distinguishes itself from other programmes in the Ministry in the almost exclusive use of Non-Government Organizations – NGOs and its collaboration with other government ministries and the private sector.

The Programme is administered by a Manager - along with two co-ordinators and a Research Psychologist. It works in close collaboration with the Department of School Supervision and the Student Support Services Division of the Ministry of Education.

Since Minister Hazel Manning launched **Project Peace** in 2001, the notion and ideal of Peace have been steadily cultivated and engrained in society especially among the children. Along with a variety of activities in schools to promote peace, students and youth in general have expressed their commitment to Peace and their rejection of violence, crime and lawlessness by parades, walks, rallies and other forms of demonstration. In March the children of all the primary schools in the Port of Spain and its Environs completely encircled the Queen's Park Savannah in a march led by the Minister of Education. The placards which were constructed by these 15,000 students revealed the extent to which children of the nations have internalized the notion of peace. It augurs well for the future.

Among the projects of the Peace Programme directed to students one of the most extensive and effective has been **TRAINING IN MEDIATION, PEER COUNSELLING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**. The basic concepts of mediation have been introduced by contracted NGO's with long experience and high expertise into 50 schools and the process is continuing until all the secondary schools are covered. Reports from principals, teachers, parents and students testify to the success of this project in reducing the fighting and aggressive behaviour which are among the most prevalent types of misbehaviour and indiscipline in schools. The Minister of Education has drawn attention to the reduction in requests for suspensions coming to her desk since the start of the current school year. There are concrete signs that the practice of mediation and resolving disputes by non-violent measures is catching on in our schools.

The project in mediation and conflict resolution among secondary school students is re-enforced by a programme in **Community Mediation** by the Ministry of Social Development. The recently established Family Court has also been advocating and promoting mediation in its operations. The programmes in mediation in the Ministries of Education and Social Development and the Family Court, have all adopted the theme of **'Talk it out, not fight it out'**

The **Mediation Project** of the Ministry of Education has also begun to provide teachers with training in Conflict Resolution both for equipping them to promote the appropriate skills and attitudes among their students and for their own utilization of these skills in their day to day activities, especially with their own peers. All this has been contributing to the creation of a Culture of Peace and reduction in violence and indiscipline in the classroom.

Other projects of the Peace Programme directed to students are '**Together We Light The Way**' in which respect and other positive values, self-esteem and peaceful peer relationships are developed in students. This behaviour modification activity has been introduced throughout the secondary school system.

A project that has been significantly changing behaviour and attitudes among students is the **Pre-Carnival Preparation Programme** in which NGOs and well known local artists have been conducting interactive and dramatic workshops to guide students in avoiding the pitfalls associated with Carnival like alcohol and other drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, fighting and aggressive behaviour. This project has had some of the most tangible indicators of behaviour and positive attitude modification among students.

Students who are having difficulty in their class work can attend **Homework Centres** set up by a project which is co-funded by the J.B. Fernandes Memorial Trust. The

inability of students to cope with the school assignments are a major cause of disruption and indiscipline in schools. These Homework Centres cater particularly for students in Junior Secondary Schools on double shift to provide meaningful supportive education and all round development during the time of day when they are not at school.

Another project that is designed to reduce the violence and indiscipline caused by those students who are finding it difficult to assimilate the conventional secondary school curriculum is the **Skill Based or Alternative Education Project** which constitutes a special extension of the ongoing curriculum reconstruction and modernization effort of the Ministry. The project is designed particularly to meet the needs, special interests and learning styles of those low achiever students who are being transferred from primary to secondary schools.

To stem the tide of violence and slaughter on our roads due to irresponsible driving, the Peace Programme has been providing training for the secondary school students who will be tomorrow's drivers to cultivate in them a sense of responsibility in the use of the roads. **The Driver Responsibility Education** project is co-funded by Toyota Trinidad Ltd with workshops conducted by the Drewsyl Driving Academy.

Suspension is one of the most widely used strategies for dealing with indiscipline in the classroom. It is universally regarded as a convenient measure in research and in the evaluation of programmes to deal with violence and indiscipline in schools. But rather than merely removing the disruptive student from the classroom a Project in '**Out of School Suspension**' is being conducted at three (3) centres in the school system in which students on suspension are given special education and training to facilitate their return to the classrooms.

Whereas the student is the targeted recipient in the education process, the teacher is the critical agent. In order to assist teachers to manage their classrooms to ensure maximum quality education production, the Peace Promotion Programme has been conducting training courses for teachers throughout the system in the '**Management of the Classroom**' – '**Alternatives to Corporal Punishment**'. The prohibition of corporal punishment by the Ministry of Education has meant that teachers can no longer use that strategy for disciplining students. The provision of this training for teachers in classroom management has resulted in teachers being better able to create and maintain a more propitious climate for learning in their classrooms resulting in a reduction of violence and disruption.

This has meant that teachers are less inclined to be absent from school or classroom. For in recent times teacher absenteeism has been plaguing the education system. To

further remedy this situation, the Ministry has designed a **Substitute Teacher System** which is to ensure that classes are never without teachers thereby eliminating opportunities for disruptive behaviour from students with such tendencies.

Furthermore the Peace Promotion Programme has been providing training for teachers in **Stress and Anger Understanding and Management**. For it is recognized that teaching has become a most stressful occupation. Helping teachers to better cope with their own stress and 'classroom woes' is significantly decreasing violence and indiscipline in classrooms. This training in emotional and psychological stabilization for the teacher is being passed on to the students to produce a **Culture of Peace** in the student, the teacher and the classroom environment.

It is understood that to a large extent violence and indiscipline in the schools find their origins in poor parenting in the homes. The effort of the Ministry to deal with the situation in the schools would be to little avail if attention was not paid to what goes on in the homes. Consequently the Peace Promotion Programme includes a project in **'Parenting'** in which community leaders are being trained to go back to their communities to organize courses, workshops and other educational activities to improve the parenting skills in families.

To conceive, design, implement and evaluate programmes to address problems as elusive and complicated as violence and indiscipline in school, research is obviously necessary. The Peace Promotion Programme has been conducting its own very basic research and all the projects and activities include an evaluation exercise. But the most comprehensive and penetrating research so far has been carried out on behalf of the Ministry by Professor Ramesh Deosaran of the University of the West Indies which produced thirty five (35) recommendations to guide the further development of the Peace Promotion Programme. The major follow up to the completion of that research is the adoption of a **School by School Approach** to addressing violence and indiscipline in schools whereby each school develops a special Action Plan based on the findings of the Deosaran study to produce a climate in the school and classroom more conducive to teaching and learning.

In order to strengthen its Peace Promotion Programme, the Ministry of Education has been seeking co-operation and support from other Ministries, NGOs and the Private Sector. One major outcome of this effort is a **Joint Action Plan** with the Ministry of National Security. Implementation of this plan has led to the recent introduction of **School Safety Officers** in schools to assist School Principals to provide a safe and secure environment and 'Keep the Peace' in the school. 77 officers have already been

trained and appointed to schools. It is intended that all schools be supplied with at least one School Safety Officer.

A School Physical Secondary Programme which is now being managed by an Education Facilities Company entails the construction of perimeter walls, fences, gates and other securities measures. Schools are also provided with Security Personnel to guard the premises.

It should be understood that there is no 'quick fix' solution to the problems of violence and indiscipline in schools. The projects and activities which the Ministry has been conducting within the Peace Promotion Programme have been producing evidence in behaviour and attitude modification amongst students. We must stay the course towards the ultimate creation of a **Culture of Peace** in the individual, the school, the family and society at large.

Part 3

ACHIEVEMENTS TO MAY, 2005

PROJECT	PRIORITIES	STATUS	BENEFICIARIES
PROJECT PEACE:			
1. Pre-Carnival Programme	Prepare and implement interactive Workshops in 168 Secondary Schools	NGO'S contacted and briefed for designing Programme and 110 workshops completed	11,000 Students
2. Peer Mediaiation/ Counselling Conflict Resolution	To provide basic training in Mediation/ Conflict Resolution for students and teachers in 50 Secondary Schools	Workshop curriculum designed and NGO'S contacted and workshops for 40 schools completed	1000 Students 100 Teachers
3. Homework Centres	Locate, equip new centres and train facilitators	Site found for 5 centres and facilitators trained. Students educated in 5 centres.	210 Students.
4. Research and follow up	To follow-up on Research by Professor Deosaran in 10 schools and preparation of Action Plan	Follow-up completed in 10 schools and Action Plan preparation commenced in 10 schools	1,200 Students from the research 50,000 students from Action Plan
5. Anger and Stress Management	To train teachers in 10 secondary schools in interactive workshop	NGO'S contacted and training of teachers in 10 secondary schools completed	750 Teachers

6. Supporting teachers in changing times Primary Schools)	To train primary schools in 20 schools in anger and stress understanding and classroom management	Data collected for design of training courses and training commenced in 10 schools	400 Teachers
7. Reclaiming the classroom alternatives to Corporal Punishment	To train 480 secondary school teachers in classroom management and review and evaluate programme	Training completed by U.W.I. and evaluation completed and report prepared	480 Teachers
8. Parenting Education	To train 25 community leaders for training families in Good Parenting	Courses completed for 25 trainers; projects developed for training families in their areas. Family training commenced	25 Leaders 1,200 Parents
9. Together We Light The Way	To introduce the basic concepts of respect to the secondary school population and to training teachers	“Respect” pillars introduced into 168 secondary schools and teachers trained	6,000 Students 300 Teachers
10. Out of School Suspension	To rehabilitate secondary school students on suspension in 6 centres	2 Centres established and Guidance Officers and School Social Workers appointed	240 Students
11. Skilled based education (programme (Alternative Education)	To provide relevant education for 400 low achieving secondary school students	Courses designed. 300 teachers trained and curricula started	4,000 Students 300 Teachers
12. Driver Responsibility education	To provide basic Driver Education for students in 10 secondary schools	Courses in driver responsibility designed and NGO contacted. Courses commenced and completed in 7 schools	240 Students

Part 4

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main challenge in the implementation of the Peace Promotion Programme is to get the stakeholders and people at all levels to understand that there is no quick fix to the problem of violence and indiscipline in schools. The current high incidence has been reached after an extended period of neglect; violence and indiscipline are the symptoms of the malaise in the education system and the society at large. For sometime now they were not adequately treated nor the root caused accurately identified and appropriate corrective measures applied. And so it would take some time to effectively turn around this trend.

A programme, therefore, to adequately address the current situation must contain both short term measures to address the immediate symptoms and long term strategies to deal with the deep causes of violence and indiscipline in schools.

Inappropriate or delinquent behaviour among students is characterized by a complexity of variables mainly of psychological and social dimensions. Moreover each child is a unique individual and each school a special environment.

In developing and implementing a programme to reduce the violence and indiscipline, one would have to design activities that aim specifically at the make-up of the individual student, others that address the child in a group setting and others that recognize the school as a total entity.

Furthermore one has to face the reality that the school is a microcosm of the society and is therefore subject to influences that the society at large and the nearby environment would exert on its life and growth.

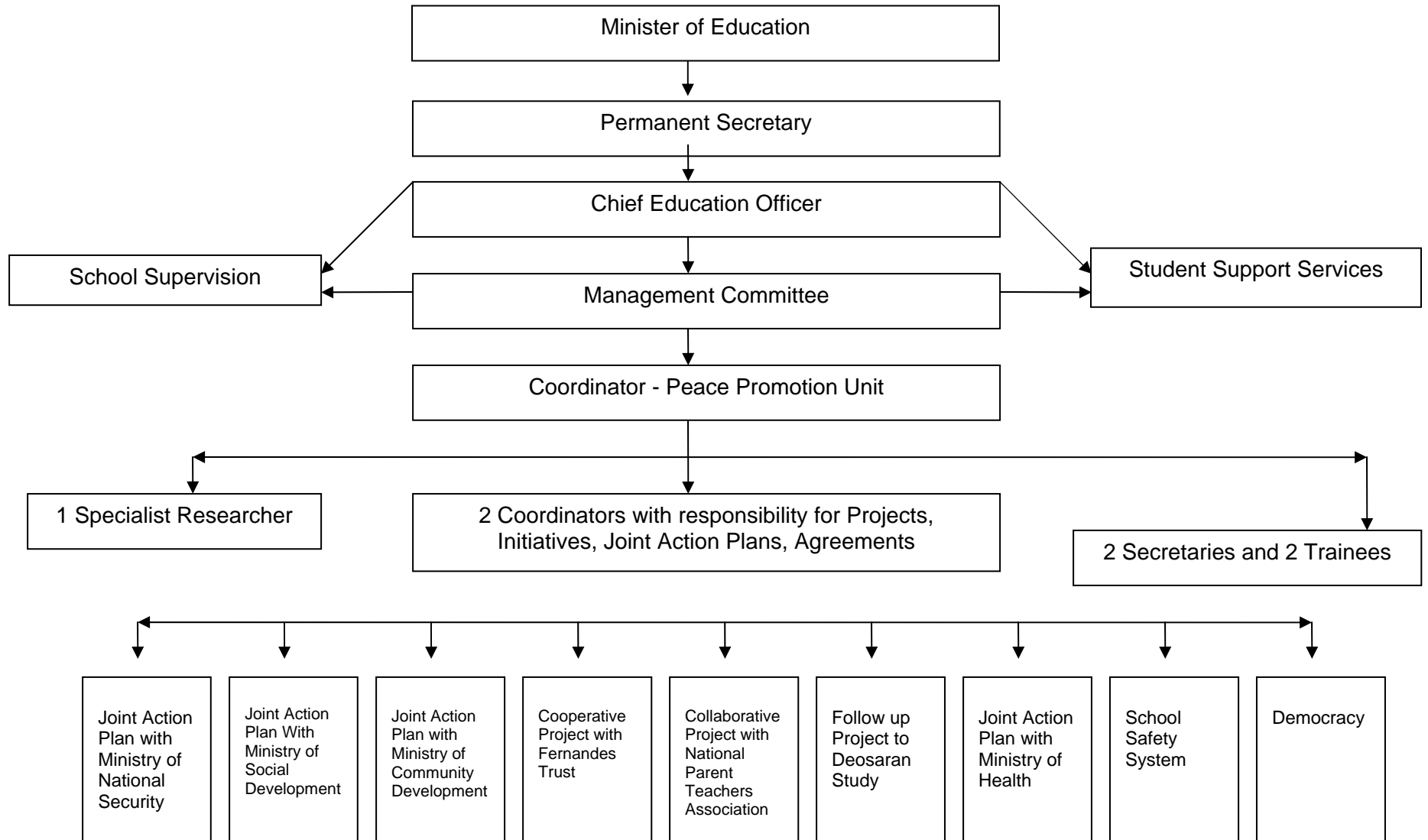
One would therefore have to design programmes that are aimed at making positive changes and rectifying some of the pertinent deficiencies that mar that environment. In those areas where socially destructive decay has already set in, programmes would have to be launched to rebuild the social infrastructure of those decaying communities. In these instances the school could operate as a catalyst for this social transformation. All of this requires a special total socio-economic development programme.

The schools that comprise the education system have some distinct common features but in the final analysis each school is intrinsically different. Therefore a school-by-school approach is highly recommendable to focus on the peculiarities of each school and to design a customized action plan to address its special configuration of delinquent behaviour by students, related teachers, inadequacies and failing leadership.

Thus a multi-disciplinary approach and a wide variety of projects and activities are necessary for reducing the violence and indiscipline in schools. In the short term specific interventions must be launched to treat the immediate manifestations of delinquency, but concurrently a long term development plan must be designed and implemented which reaches down into society to the root causes.

Peace Promotion Programme

Administrative Structure



The Management Committee of the Peace Promotion Programme includes representatives of the major stakeholders e.g. TTUTA, NPTA, Associations of Principals, other Ministries and Departments of the Ministry of Education – DCDE, DERE, all S.S. IIIs and representatives of various NGOs