Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

Public Hearing Summary

Friday May 17, 2019 at 10:37 a.m.

Topic:

Inquiry into the sexual harassment in the Education Sector in Trinidad and Tobago with a specific focus on students.

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present for the public hearing:

•	Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP	Chairman
•	Mr. Esmond Forde	Member
•	Mr. Rushton Paray	Member
•	Mr. Kazim Hosein	Member
•	Mrs. Hazel Thompson-Ahye	Member

Witnesses who appeared:

Ministry of Education

•	Mrs. Lenor Baptiste-Simmons	Permanent Secretary
•	Ms. Sharon Ashman-John	Deputy Permanent Secretary
•	Professor Dennis Conrad	Manager, Student Support Services
•	Ms. Darlene Smith	Guidance Officer II
•	Ms. Naima Hosein	Director, School Supervision and
		Management Division
•	Ms. Natalie Robinson-Arnold	School Social Worker

Teaching Service Commission

•	Dr. Fazal Ali	Chairman
•	Mrs. Joanne Joseph-Hannays	Member
•	Ms. Anoushka Ramsaran	Senior State Counsel, Service Commissions
		Department

National Parent Teachers Association

• Mrs. Raffiena Ali-Boodoosingh President

Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association

• Mr. Fitzroy Daniel

General Secretary

University of the Southern Caribbean Associated Student Body

• Mr. Shorn Wilson

Executive Member, Associated Student Body

Key Issues Discussed:

- 1. The need for statistical data in order to determine the prevalence of sexual harassment in primary and secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago.
- 2. The Teaching Service Commission procedure for a complaint of sexual harassment against a teacher and the disciplinary proceedings conducted in accordance with the Public Service Commission Regulations.
- 3. The current provisions of the Public Service Commission Regulations do not permit the dismissal of a teacher charged with sexual harassment until Court transcripts are received by the Teaching Service Commission.
- 4. The definition of sexual harassment in the 2018 Revised National School Code of Conduct of the Ministry of Education.
- 5. There were 33 sexual harassment complaint reports received by the Ministry of Education from 2014 to March 31, 2019:
 - a. Student against Student 0 reported cases;
 - b. Teacher against Student 0 reported cases;
 - c. Student against Non-teaching staff 2 reported cases (1 case in 2017, 1 case in 2018);
 - d. Non-teaching staff against Student 1 reported case (in 2016); and
 - e. Student against Teacher 30 reported cases (11 cases in 2014, 5 cases in 2015, 5 cases in 2016, 7 cases in 2017, 2 cases in 2018 and 0 cases up to March 2019);
- 6. There were 33 sexual harassment complaint reports submitted by the Ministry of Education to the Teaching Service Commission from 2014 to March 31, 2019:
 - a. Male Teacher against Female Student 21 reported cases;
 - b. Male Teacher against Male Student 4 reported cases;
 - c. Female Teacher against Female Student 1 reported case;
 - d. Female Teacher against Male Student 2 reported cases;
 - e. Female Teacher against a class of Male and Female Students 1 reported case;
 - f. Non-teaching staff against a Female Student 1 reported case; and
 - g. Male Teacher against a Female Teacher 3 reported cases.

- 7. The recommended provision of non-adversarial/ alternative dispute resolution methods to resolve cases of sexual harassment given the sensitive nature of the case.
- 8. The zero percent success rate for matters submitted to the Disciplinary Tribunal of the Teaching Service Commission involving a student's allegations of sexual harassment against a teacher.
- 9. The lack of monitoring of re-instated teachers who were previously the subject of a complaint allegation of sexual harassment.
- 10. The unwillingness of parents and students to provide evidence and appear as witnesses in the sexual harassment cases at the Disciplinary Tribunal of the Teaching Service Commission.
- 11. The recommended development of a Multi-Agency Protocol including the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Trinidad and Tobago Prisons Service, Director of Public Prosecutions, Teaching Service Commissions, Judiciary and Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to deal with the issue of sexual harassment and protecting child witnesses in the Court setting.
- 12. The need for additional education and sensitization of students on what constitutes sexual harassment and the avenues available for redress within the National School Code of Conduct.
- 13. The recommendation of the USC Associated Student Body that the school environment should be student friendly, the complaints process should be efficient and short and a student handbook containing the sexual harassment procedure should be distributed in schools.

View the Hearing:

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link: https://youtu.be/veP0gwT056U

Contact Information:

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at <u>jschumanrights@ttparliament.org</u> or 624-7275 Ext. 2288/2402.

Committees Unit May 20, 2019