

Authentic Integral Human Development and Education
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Good afternoon brothers and sisters. It gives me great pleasure to share with you the practical implications of what Msgr Jason, Fr Joe, Dr Brown and Selwyn have been saying today about Authentic *Integral human development and Education*.

This will involve, inter alia, a consideration of indicators that I believe should be part of a quality assurance system – indicators that will assist you in determining whether or not you are succeeding in promoting integral human development among your students. These indicators can form a framework for self-evaluation for you as teachers, and for your school, and which could assist in developing an external quality assurance system.

But before we get there, I want to pay tribute to all of you as you are the pillars of education. You open the doors to a better world for the nation's children. As one of our past scholarship winners (2003), Nalini Maharaj, said when she credited her teachers for contributing to her success: "If you have a teacher that motivates you, you can get anywhere."

Pope Benedict XVI said in his Encyclical, *Charity in Truth*: "Development is impossible without upright men and women...whose consciences are finely attuned to the requirements of the common good." The challenge is for you to attune your consciences to the requirements of the common good.

Teaching is a wonderful vocation and educators play a great role in our society. Indeed, the teacher, as the Vatican Council states, is pivotal to the success of the Catholic school's mission. Catholic schools continue to be an integral part of the life and mission of the Church.

Christ-centered quality Catholic education must be central to your efforts. This should be reflected in your school's mission statement. Each Catholic School should have a Mission Statement that reflects its distinctiveness and which seeks to promote an integrated vision of Catholic education.

Each Catholic school is founded to work in fidelity and witness to Jesus Christ, and the educational mission of the Church. The Vatican II Declaration, *Gravissimum Educationis* outlines the nature of a Catholic school:

"What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love...It tries to relate all of human culture to the good news of salvation so that the light of faith will illumine everything that the student will gradually come to learn about the world, about life, and about the human person."

Is your school illumined by the Gospel message? The distinctive nature of a Catholic school depends on the way in which the Catholic teacher appropriates Gospel teaching in practice; it is the way you live Gospel values as Principals, class teachers, enforcers of discipline and so on.

The continuing challenge of today is for Catholic schools to be “*so inspired by the Gospel that they are seen to be genuine alternatives to other forms of schooling.*” (Easter People, UK 1981) The Catholic school must seek to offer an alternative which operates out of an educational philosophy which aims to meet the needs of young people today in the light of the Church’s faith in Jesus Christ and to prepare them for their life as Catholics in the community.

As Fr Michel de Verteuil stated in his Editorial in the Catholic News on Jan 12th, 2003 (TT):

“The mission and purpose of Catholic schools is larger than attainment of academic competency. Commitment to the full development of the spiritual as well as the academic potential of the student cannot be compromised in a standards driven movement toward academic assessment...we need to rediscover how to nurture individuals into becoming persons with spiritual and moral values, anxious to be involved in building the Kingdom of God...Christian values form the yardstick against which we rate our performance in the delivery of Catholic education. Are we developing young adults who have a well-rooted sense of relationship with Christ and His Church? ”

At the centre of the education process is the child. Catholic educators in primary and secondary schools should give some thought to the kind of human beings they want to see emerging at the end of their many years in the Catholic education system.

A child leaving a Catholic School should be:

1. “A discerning believer formed in the Catholic Faith community;
2. An effective communicator who speaks, writes and listens honestly and sensitively, responding critically in the light of gospel values;
3. A reflective, creative and holistic thinker who solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good;
4. A self-directed, responsible, lifelong learner who develops and demonstrates his/her Godgiven potential;
5. A collaborative contributor who finds meaning, dignity and vocation in work; who respects the dignity and rights of all; who is aware of his/her responsibilities; and who contributes to the common good;
6. A caring family member who attends to family, school, parish, and the wider community;
7. A responsible citizen who gives witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice, the sacredness of human life, and ecology justice.”

(<http://www.carfleo.org/linkscge.htm> - Catholic Graduate Expectation Links - Compiled by Religious Education Additional Qualifications Course participants. July 2007)

You need to examine all aspects of life in your school to determine whether they are geared to

fostering such qualities in your students and to determine whether you are in fact acting as agents of justice and peace.

The second Vatican Council gives specific attention to the vocation of an educator and it is stated in *Lumen Gentium* that:

“...the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can she become the salt of the earth.”

As previous speakers have said today, a central theme in Pope Benedict XVI’s Encyclical, *Charity in Truth*, is the concept of “**authentic integral human development**” – which, the Holy Father says, means the development of the whole person in all his/her dimensions and of every person.

This, he says, is authentic human development. He says: “...*development is part and parcel of evangelization*, because Jesus Christ, who loves us, is concerned with the whole person” (15). The pursuit of authentic development, the Holy Father says, “requires a transcendent vision of the person, it needs God” (11). That is, we must see humans in relationship with God. We need to remember that people are at the center of development and that we do not journey alone. We cannot think about our own development without reaching out in solidarity to promote the development of others.

But to promote integral human development we must also consider our duty to the environment. And, as educators, your task is to ensure that our young people develop their awareness of their responsibility to be good stewards of God’s creation.

In his Peace Message on 1 Jan, the Holy Father referred to his Encyclical *Charity in Truth* and says: “I noted that integral human development is closely linked to the obligations which flow from *man’s relationship with the natural environment*. Today more and more schools are developing Environmental Policies.

The Holy Father says that Jesus is concerned with the whole person. What does this mean for you as educators in Catholic schools? It means that **the aims of education** should seek to promote the moral, spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, cultural and social development of each student and to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life as Catholics in Community. You can help them to become critical thinkers who have developed the skills for moral reasoning, successful learners, confident individuals, responsible, productive citizens, and lifelong learners.

It was Martin Luther King Jr. who said: *Intelligence plus character* - that is the goal of true *education*.” Catholic education is about **character formation**; it’s about inculcating Catholic **values and virtues** that will help our children to make informed choices – this requires Catholic values to permeate every aspect of school life.

Catholic educators are called to be **witnesses to Christ** in a specific and crucially important context. It is through your work and example that our young people experience Christ in the

school community. Your influence over the young can be of deep and lasting value. True education cannot be value free. Each of us has the power to shape the future. As educators you are not observers but actors and you have the capacity to make a difference to the life of each student – not only to those in your particular classroom, but to the entire student body in your school and to those in the wider community - each school is a family, part of a wider community and you are ‘significant others’ in the lives of each student. You are agents of justice – ensuring that you create conditions in your schools that will empower students and help them realise their potential. Equity and equality for all must be the hallmarks of your work.

You can make a difference to your students’ lives by your attitudes, behaviour and by the expectations you have of them. The right to education is a fundamental human right. However, an educator’s expectations can create roles for himself/herself, and for each student that can adversely affect this right. If you have low expectations of a student, you may find that there is a self-fulfilling prophecy as low expectations can affect the way you prepare yourself to teach a student, the way you mark his/her work, the way you discipline that student, the amount of praise and encouragement you give to the student, the amount of teacher time you allocate to him/her, the way in which you relate to his/her parent(s), the comments you make to other teachers about him/her and so on. In turn, if students perceive that their teacher/principal has low expectations of them, they may behave accordingly.

I urge you to have high expectations of your students; positive attitudes towards them and a holistic approach to their development. Strive to provide high quality education to them, recognising the needs of individual learners, valuing the contributions of learners, parents and the wider community, as partners entitled to equality of opportunity.

You can make a difference to students by the values you seek to inculcate in your students through the teaching and learning process. This includes the values that influence your life. What kind of role model are you to your students? Do you practise what you preach? When you are evaluating the teaching and learning process in your classroom and school using the cyclical process of ‘Plan, Act, Review’, think about whether your professional and religious lives are inextricably linked – they should be. There should be a synthesis of your faith and your profession.

As a Vatican 11 document stated: “ *This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age.*”

I recognize the fact that today’s schools and teachers face enormous challenges in the face of an increasingly complex society and a rapidly changing, technology-based economy. However, I urge you to keep your eye on the ball and deepen your commitment to the nation’s children. Your goal must remain the promotion of what the Holy Father calls: integral human development – that is, authentic development which promotes the development of the whole child, in all his/her dimensions, and of every child. We should aim to ensure that no child is left behind.

The challenge for you is to discern the various dimensions of the students you teach. Each of your students is made in the image and likeness of God and has an inherent, inviolable dignity which should be respected and nurtured. How are we respecting and nurturing this dignity in each of our students? We have no national education standards in TT, so how do you know how your school is performing?

As Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, former Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education in the Vatican says in *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Education* (see: www.catholiceducation.org) . “How does a Catholic school know whether it is achieving its specific mission? Should not Catholic schools engage in quality assurance?” His 5 essential marks of a Catholic school are worth sharing. He says a Catholic school should be:

1. “Inspired by a supernatural vision”. The goal is to “foster the growth of good catholic human beings who love God and neighbour, enrich society with the leaven of the Gospel and thus fulfil their destiny of becoming saints” – preparing students for “heavenly citizenship”.
2. “Founded on a Christian anthropology”. There must be a clear understanding of who the human person is – made in the image and likeness of God. The school should be concerned with the development of the whole person, and, as Pope Benedict XVI said in *Charity in Truth*, “in all his/her dimensions and of every person”. Catholic education is the “perfection of children as images of God...Christ is not an afterthought or add on to Catholic educational Philosophy but the centre and fulcrum of the entire enterprise.”
3. “Animated by communion and community”. The school is “a community of persons; a genuine community of faith” in which there is teamwork, collaboration, interaction (e.g. between teachers, students, parents, the community), and an environment (e.g. the school’s physical plant and equipment and external signs of Catholic culture) that “safeguards the priority of the person”.
4. “Imbued with the Catholic worldview across the curriculum”, Catholic schools should “transform the way we see reality”. They should present a “Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture, and of history.” Faith, culture and life are “intimately related.”

Catholicism should “permeate the entire curriculum.” Catholic schools should help students “search for wisdom and truth” and “free children from the insidious consequences of what Pope Benedict XVI called the dictatorship of relativism which cripples all genuine education. Catholic educators are to have in themselves and develop in others a passion for truth which defeats moral and cultural relativism.” They are to educate “in the truth.”

5. “A place where committed Catholics teach”. Teachers play a “vital role in ensuring a school’s Catholic identity; for creating a unique Christian school climate, as individuals and as a community. Indeed, it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose. There is a calling and not simply the exercise of a profession.” If Catholic teachers are to be “witnesses for Christ”, they need to reflect on where they

stand on issues such as unjustified teacher absenteeism and charging for lessons after school to focus on parts of the syllabus that could be covered during the school day.

Pope Paul VI said in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelisation in the Modern World*: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. What educators do, and how they act are more significant than what they say – inside and outside the classroom.”

While we welcome and respect teachers from other faiths who teach in Catholic schools, it is essential that we do not compromise the identity of our schools. I urge all staff in Catholic schools to be good role models and mentors to our youths and to help them realise their potential; be the best educators you can be. Each of us in our parishes must work with our local schools to make a difference to the lives of the nation’s children. It still takes a village to raise a child.

As well as knowing what the distinctive marks of a Catholic school should be, it’s important that you reflect on other criteria that will help you to determine how your school is performing e.g.

- a. Malcolm Baldrige’s *Criteria for Performance Excellence: Characteristics of High Performing Schools* (this is based on a study in Washington State, USA. Baldrige summarizes the components into 9 key areas); and
- b. the *School self-evaluation framework* from the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted), (UK) .

a. Characteristics of high performing schools:

1. Clear and Shared Focus/shared vision
2. High Standards and Expectations
3. Effective School Leadership
4. High Levels of Collaboration and Communication
5. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with Standards
6. Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning
7. Focused Professional Development
8. Supportive Learning Environment
9. High Levels of Community and Parent Involvement

The 9 areas above were expanded in 2007 by G. Sue Shannon, Senior Researcher for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington, USA. Expanded concepts include:

- Effective processes for improving schools
- Expanded perspectives on effective leadership
- Relational trust
- Quality instruction, grading practices, monitoring
- Professional learning communities
- Cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching
- Family and community engagement in schools

- High School improvement
- District improvement
- Need-based allocation of resources (funding, staffing and support).

You can check material under each of the above criterion. “The description of "Clear and Shared Focus" reads *"Everybody knows where they are going and why. The focus is on achieving a shared vision, and all understand their role in achieving the vision. The focus and vision are developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent direction for all involved."*

Does your school exhibit the characteristics of effective schools? How do you establish clear and shared focus in your school or classroom? What do you think are the characteristics of ineffective schools or classrooms?

You can only really know how your school is performing if you use some kind of self-evaluation template/framework in your classroom and school. You may wish to reflect on the following framework used by schools in the UK. This is issued by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills:

1. A description of your school (the context in which teaching and learning is taking place).
2. Overall effectiveness of your school
3. Leadership and management
4. Achievement and standards
5. Personal development and well-being
6. The Curriculum (including the hidden/covert curriculum)
7. The quality of provision (including resources available/used)
8. Home/school/community links.

See www.ofsted.gov.uk for a comprehensive outline of the framework. Also check some of their Inspection reports to reflect on the characteristics of schools that are outstanding, good, satisfactory or inadequate.

If you want to reflect on the state of play regarding Catholic Education in TT, I urge you to read Fr Martin Sirju’s articles in Catholic News Archives (www.catholicnews-tt.net) on: 31 July, 7 August, and 15 August 2009. In his articles he highlights some of the key challenges we face in Catholic education in TT.

I want to share a few stories with you. I often try to get across my points through stories – real live stories. Contained in these stories are some key issues/challenges that will help us to understand why the concept of integral human development is so important to the teaching and learning process. The issues raised in each story are mainly self-explanatory.

STORY: When I was an Inspector of Schools in the Inner London Education Authority, I had responsibility for a number of Projects. One such group held an annual essay competition as part of their work to promote the self esteem of students. I can still recall one student’s essay in

which he stated: “My teacher says she does not see colour, she only sees children. If she does not see colour, then she does not see me.”

Children do not leave at the school gate their colour/ethnicity/culture/language and other aspects of their being that make them who they are.

STORY: In one of the primary schools in which I taught, the Principal never ‘walked’ the job. She ‘led’ from her Office. She even had a day bed in her room where she had a siesta every afternoon. She would venture out of her office for daily Assemblies when she would tell the children – who were from a very deprived part of London – about the breakfast she had had that morning on her patio and about the birdsong she had heard. Many of the children had had no breakfast and did not even know what a patio was. The expulsion rate of black students there was high.

I was determined to help turn that school around. Mine was the only vertically grouped class in the school. I asked the Principal to let me have any child she wanted to expel. It was not easy, but with the help of the community, we did it. Strategies to restore discipline and a positive learning environment involved bringing into the school role models from the various ethnic groups represented in the school. I recall inviting Bishop Sydney Charles, the then Bishop of Grenada, to speak to the entire student body during Assembly. He turned up dressed in full regalia.

Both the Bishop and I were stunned when students greeted him by laughing at him. And what was the reason for their laughter? They did not believe that he was a Bishop because Bishops, they said, are not black! What was sad was that even the British-born black students present joined in the laughter. Do not underestimate the power of stereotypes to undermine the self-esteem of your students.

STORY: I am the Vice-President of the Education Discussion Group in TT (www.educationdiscussiongroup.com). Since we were established in 2004, we have been involved, inter alia, in dialogue with teachers to discover from practitioners the reality in terms of teaching and learning in TT schools. One teacher told us about a school in which there were 5 primary aged students sitting on a bench – 3 listening to 1 teacher and 2 to another teacher – open plan teaching. Do you think such infrastructure will promote authentic integral human development?

STORY: During my first year of teaching in London, I was appointed to teach a class of 38 students in a Catholic Primary School. Being bright eyed and bushy tailed, I tried my best to meet the various needs of all my students and thought I was doing a good job. I knew that ‘one size’ (in terms of my approach to teaching) could not fit all as not all children are alike. The range of abilities in my class was wide. There was no way I could expect the students to study the same things at the same pace and in the same way at all times. I needed strategies for managing diversity and addressing differentiation in the curriculum. My first priority was to find out what their needs were. I discovered these from a wide range of sources – including the

children's own writings, by developing links with their parents, by observing them in the playground, by listening to them and dialoguing with them.

There was one child in particular, **Mark Anthony Hinchliffe**, who seemed hell bent on disrupting my class. I knew he was bright. I could not understand why he was so disruptive. I arranged to visit his home. It was when his mother showed me all the trophies, medals, certificates etc that he had won for music, art, science projects, singing, karate, football, mathematics, poetry and essay competitions etc. that I realised that, in fact, I had a genius in my class.

It blew my mind to see the furniture and gadgets he had designed and made for their home. He played about 6 musical instruments. His father had left home when he was young and his mother struggled to keep him occupied. He had a voracious appetite for learning. And here was I, setting work for him daily, without really finding out about his true ability. No wonder he was bored and became disruptive.

His mother and I became the best of friends and I spent every spare moment tutoring him to get into Ampleforth College in North Yorkshire – a Benedictine College (the 'Eton' in Catholic educational circles). He passed with flying colours. Sadly, on the day that his mother was driving him there for his first day at that College, she collided with a lorry that was carrying flammable liquid. It overturned on their car and he was killed. He was only 11 years old but had accomplished much during those 11 years.

This story highlights a number of issues:

- a. As you know, children do not enter school as empty vessels waiting to be filled. They are created by God with innate dignity and talent. The challenge for us is to identify and nurture their talent. I remember being part of the discussions in London after the production of the famous 1975 Bullock Report entitled: A Language for Life – a Report of the Committee of Enquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock FBA. A key statement made in that report was that children learn language in situations/contexts that call forth language. It pains me when I think of the number of children and adults in our country who are functionally or totally illiterate.

Pope Paul VI, in his 1967 encyclical, *On the Development of Peoples*, called illiterate people “starved spirits”. There are many starved spirits in our country and we know that not all of them are illiterate because they did not attend school. For many the education system has failed to meet their linguistic and other needs.

Our rate of illiteracy is far too high – An ALTA survey (1994) found that 14.6 per cent of those involved in their survey were functionally illiterate and that part of the population which was completely illiterate was 8.0%. Today about 50% of our children leave Secondary School without having passed English or Maths.

- b. The second point arising out of the story about Mark is that if you don't assess the ability/capability of the students you teach, there is a danger that you may put a ceiling on their potential and fail to present them with a curriculum that will meet their needs. Therefore, careful planning on your part, for each student, monitoring and evaluation are critical processes in education;
- c. Home/school/community links are essential if you are to help your students reach their potential. If I had not reached out to his mother, I may have done him a terrible disservice;
- d. All children are of equal worth. Each child is an individual with individual needs that must be addressed. If we are to address these needs, we need an education system that is inclusive. To achieve *inclusiveness*, you and your school must develop quality assurance systems. I believe that the state has a responsibility to introduce external inspections – linked to professional development/teacher appraisal/performance management. In the absence of this, you can create your own template to evaluate teaching and learning in your classroom and school. Of course, it's more productive if you could encourage your Principal and other members of staff to work with you to produce a self-evaluation template for the school. There are many examples on which you can draw – see Ofsted site, UK.

If you are committed to equality in education, if you are committed to help lift your students from less human conditions to conditions that are more human, then part of your evaluation must include consideration of **structural inequalities** that exist in the communities in which your school is located and in the wider community and which can adversely impact on the teaching and learning process. School-based intervention may not be all that is necessary. There may be times when you and your school have to become advocates/ the voice for the voiceless in your area e.g. by raising issues with your local MP, Councillor and so on.

Some time ago I addressed Principals in Sangre Grande. A Principal gave me an example of a child whose single mother was ill and who had to walk a long way each morning to collect water, make breakfast for his mother and siblings, get them ready for school and then come to school. He was always late for school and would often fall asleep in class. When he returned home on afternoons his routine was similar.

Do we know how many children in TT are out of school, truanting, unable to attend school regularly? I watched Marcia Henville's programme on 30 Dec. as TSTT Foundation distributed hampers and toys to residents in a village in South Trinidad called Kernahan. There are many places like this where children are either not in school – for a variety of reasons, or they do not go regularly.

The plague of structural inequalities can prevent parents from being able to afford the fare for their children to travel to school or to buy school uniforms.

If you wish to promote authentic integral human development, then the curriculum on offer in your classroom and your school - both the overt curriculum and the hidden/covert curriculum, must reflect breadth, balance, relevance, coherence, continuity, progression and differentiation.

Differentiation is critical in terms of content, process, product/outcome. I was able to set Mark work that would engage him in higher level thinking; help him to analyse, synthesise, hypothesise and so on.

As George A. MacBride says, differentiation is “the practice of ensuring that each child's experiences in school recognize his or her prior knowledge, interests, personal characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, and the variety of supports he or she will require to learn successfully within and outside the school.”

There are many definitions of the term: differentiation. Differentiation can help us manage diversity in the classroom.

Ofsted, UK, defines differentiation as “the matching of work to the differing capabilities of individuals or groups of pupils in order to extend their learning.” This approach can assist educators in managing diversity among their students. It means adjusting the teaching process according to the learning needs of students. It can be aimed at: a whole class, groups within the class, or individuals.

Another definition is that it is the “recognition of and commitment to plan for student differences. A differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquire content, to process or make sense of information and ideas, and to develop products. The goals of a differentiated classroom are to maximize student growth and to promote individual student success (Greenfield School Community and Arts College, Durham, UK).

The Department for Children, Schools and Families, UK, (formerly called DfES) talk about differentiation:

by task: setting different tasks for pupils of different ability;

by outcome: setting open-ended tasks, allowing pupil response at different levels;

by support: giving more help to certain students within the group.

Differentiation requires that a teacher must be student-centred and must be prepared to create different learning experiences for different students – in different contexts e.g. school trips, local visits e.g. to places of interest. Managing diversity requires teachers to use a rich variety of resources to enhance the teaching and learning process e.g. the media, music, inviting role models to address the students etc.

There is diversity in age and learning styles; cultural, linguistic, religious, ethnic, and gender (male/female) diversity, diversity in terms of values, ethics (including those of staff), class - the socio-economic backgrounds of our students and teachers – see the impact of social exclusion on the teaching and learning process; there is diversity in terms of physical and mental ability:

those with learning difficulties, special educational needs e.g. hearing and visual impairments, gifted children and so on; and of course, there is diversity in terms of the quality of the learning environment in which teaching and learning takes place – infrastructure, organizational culture, geographic location.

Do you know the extent of diversity in your school/classroom? Is the organizational culture in your school inclusive or are there stereotypes about certain students that adversely impact on your expectations of them?

Do you know what support you need to help you manage diversity e.g. student support, remedial teachers etc?

If we are to manage diversity effectively, the powers that ‘be’ must recognise the desperate need to provide our schools with more guidance counsellors, remedial teachers, social workers and so on. One of the teachers who was a member of EDG spoke about the challenge she had to teach science when many of the students could not read or write properly.

I must say that differentiation by outcome could be a ‘cop out’ for some teachers – particularly in a system where there are no agreed national education standards.

Sadly, as I stated earlier, here in TT, we have no agreed national education standards as to what children should know and be able to do in various subjects and at different ages – what concepts, principles and skills should they learn at different ages? How can we manage diversity successfully if there is no agreed national quality assurance system which would include national standards? This deficiency adds to the lottery system in the education sector in TT. Standards help us to address questions such as: What do we want students to learn? How will we know when students have learned it? How will we respond when students are not learning?

Also, how can we manage diversity effectively when our schools and classrooms are not equipped to meet the needs of our 21st Century students?

As Patrick F. Bassett said in *School design for 21st Century Schools*: “The current conundrum facing schools and their design is that we have Information Age kids trapped in Industrial Age schools: In a world where ideas and information are increasingly fluid and in flux, we frame (conceptualize) and construct schools that are fixed in time and space”. (talk about EDG and our Symposium on School and Classroom Design).

In 2004 and 2005 – before the budget making process, EDG submitted to the Minister of Education a number of proposals that we believed would take our education system forward: One recommendation was that “an item should be included in the budget for a consultancy to prepare plans and assess the cost of providing lunch rooms in all schools. A multipurpose facility can help to foster sharing, co-operation, appreciation, etiquette and polite behaviour while students eat.”

Another recommendation was that “a study should be undertaken of teaching resources available in schools for teaching various subjects, e.g. texts, manipulatives, models, laboratory equipment, software and accompanying hardware. The study should also establish capability of teachers to use resources appropriately for effective teaching and learning.”

Inter alia, such a study would enable us to consider the state of play regarding information and communication technology in our schools e.g. the number and age of computers in our schools, student/computer ratio, the quality of computer hardware and software, the suitability of their location in schools, the ability of teachers and students to use computers for effective teaching and learning – how they are used and for which subject areas etc.?

As we renovate and build new schools in T&T, we would do well to read the 70 page report on school design issued in June 2006 by the American Architectural Foundation and Knowledge Works Foundation, USA. (free on www.archfoundation.org) This is a report on the National Summit on School Design which took place in the USA in 2005 and which “builds on the National Symposium on School Design that was organized in 1998 by then-U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley and the American Institute of Architects.” Each recommendation is accompanied by brief case studies and a list of resources.

More than 200 public, private and civic sector leaders participated in the 2005 Summit. The report states that “schools in the 21st century should feature more diverse learning environments, greater technology and better integration with their communities” Ronald E. Bogle, president and CEO of the American Architectural Foundation says:

“The successful schools of the future need to apply the research on how students learn and how the quality of our educational facilities affects student performance, health, safety, self-esteem and well-being.”

According to the report's findings, “critical components of successful school design must involve:

"a) **Designing schools to support a variety of learning styles.** Since not all students learn the same way, school facilities should support project-based learning, tutoring and mentoring, interactive classrooms and individual work stations as well as traditional classrooms.

"b) **Enhancing learning by integrating technology.** Technology must be integrated into the environment of any well-designed school to support learning and help schools operate more effectively.

"c) **Fostering a "small school" culture...** that fosters relationships and attachments by creating more intimate learning environments.

"d) **Creating schools as centers of community.** A growing trend is for schools to serve as the center of the community, where learning takes place for students and adults and where the facilities may also house recreational centers, health clinics and community meeting spaces.

Schools as centers of community can be used all year and serve the intergenerational needs of a community-from pre-school...to adults.

"e) **Engaging the public in the planning process.** The school design process must involve the public in an open engagement process that includes school and community stakeholders and recognizes minority opinions.

"f) **Making healthy, comfortable and flexible learning spaces.** Good school design provides for adequate security, day lighting, ventilation, acoustics and other elements that impact the health, safety and functionality of school facilities used by ...students, teachers and other adults daily...

"g) **Considering nontraditional options for school facilities and classrooms.** Underused civic, retail and cultural facilities can be adapted as learning spaces and can contribute to student learning by offering nontraditional opportunities to engage with academic subjects outside the classroom."

Research has shown that school design/facilities can either hinder or promote teaching and learning. EDG held a Symposium on this subject earlier this year. We will further the debate about this issue by organizing a follow-up Workshop.

We hope to prepare a model of what a well-designed school should look like and to make suggestions to the Ministry of Education for re-modelling schools that are already built. We hope to bring together architects, planners, individuals from the Ministry of Education at the Workshop to address these issues. .

Since school design matters, our Government's strategic plan must include an innovative approach to this issue. We need to develop some benchmarks for school design and inspire/motivate students, teachers and communities to achieve more.

If we are to promote integral human development, we also need to consider seriously theories of multiple intelligences e.g. Howard Gardner – 1983 – Harvard Univ.:

1. Linguistic intelligence (word smart)
2. Logical – mathematical (number/reasoning smart)
3. Spatial intelligence (picture smart)
4. Bodily –Kinesthetic intelligence (body smart)
5. Musical intelligence (music smart)
6. Interpersonal intelligence (people smart)
7. Intrapersonal intelligence (self smart)
8. Naturalist intelligence (nature smart).

Gardner said that the traditional notion of intelligence based on IQ testing is too limited. He proposes the above 8 different intelligences to take account of a broader range of human potential in children and adults.

Many educators and researchers still debate which school variables influence students' achievement most. Variables that play an important role in what students learn include: the child's background and general social context; class size; school size; the school environment; teacher qualifications/attitudes/expectations/behaviour; school/classroom organization and management; the quality of the teaching and learning process; subject matter knowledge by teacher; the quality of leadership in the school - at all levels; the intended, the offered and the received curriculum; the quality of resources available, equality of opportunity for all.

I know from my years in education that, together, the family, the community and schools matter and must forge effective links to enhance the teaching and learning process. If we do not believe that teachers and schools can add value to children's lives, then we should close up shop and go home.

Research demonstrates that schools can make a difference and a substantial portion of that difference is attributable to teachers. I believe that one of the most powerful factors in students' success or lack of success is their access to high quality teachers. In other words, teacher quality, including training, qualification, and participation in high-quality targeted professional development - both in and out of school - have a significant impact on students' outcomes. I believe that teacher quality is **the** most important school-related factor influencing student achievement.

This has major implications for teacher education and for the way in which new teachers are inducted in our schools. But teachers operate within a hierarchical system and the quality of leadership in a school has an impact on the quality of teaching within that school. Effective leadership is vital to managing diversity and to school improvement.

Inspirational leadership ensures staff loyalty and dedication to a school and encourages teaching excellence. Good leadership and management of teachers and other school staff are essential if schools are to improve and sustain high achievement by pupils according to a 2004 report by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) UK. ***Leadership and Management: managing the workforce*** focuses on the different ways schools can make the best use of staff to raise standards. (see Ofsted website for the report: www.ofsted.gov.uk/).

The report highlights the importance of developing and managing the culture and ethos of the school, providing a good working environment, tackling excessive workloads, providing well targeted staff development opportunities and introducing change with sensitivity. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools David Bell said:

"Strong leadership involves taking staff with you in the constant quest for improvement. Effective management involves listening, encouraging and supporting good work done by teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff. "

The report finds that effective school leaders create an atmosphere of openness among staff and

promote clear and shared values. Team work is actively encouraged.

If you are to raise standards, you need to work as a team in your school – with your Principals - to produce a school development plan which would set clear direction to promote high quality teaching and learning. At the moment, do you have a compelling picture of where teaching and learning in your school needs to go?

Are teachers really united around the same goals?

The challenge is to motivate all teachers to have a resolute and unshakable belief that they can make a difference in children's lives and in building our nation.

Do teachers accept mediocrity or do you all strive for excellence?

Of course, this brings me to 2 other key issues that the nation needs to address. That is, teacher absenteeism and charging students for extra lessons. TTUTA is to be commended for calling on its members to address the issue of teacher absenteeism. I recognise that the Ministry itself adds to teacher absenteeism by calling teachers and Principals to various meetings – without providing cover in the form of 'supply teachers'.

I recall that there was a teacher who used to sign the book at school each morning and rush off to practise law in the local Court in Chaguanas. It took years before the Teaching Service Commission fired him. Some teachers sign on and 'run away' during the course of the day to check on their private businesses that they run, or to drive 'PH' taxis – leaving their students without a teacher.

Not all teacher absenteeism can be justified. Unjustified teacher absenteeism is child abuse. Teaching is a noble profession/vocation and we should not let a few bad apples spoil it. To build a professional teaching service, we must weed out those who do not really care about our children. Our education reform efforts will be futile unless we address this issue urgently. We must open our eyes to the spin-off effects of teacher absenteeism. It often leads to stress for those dedicated teachers who either have to cover extra classes or who pay the price of having to discipline students who were left unsupervised to wreak havoc in their classroom because the teacher responsible for the previous lesson was not there to teach the students.

While there may be only a small number of teachers who are not teaching from the heart, the number is significant enough to impact adversely on the system. I would be interested to know if teacher absenteeism is higher in low-income areas.

Children live what they learn – and vice versa. If we treat children with disrespect some will lose respect for those in authority. The stakes are too high for us to ignore this issue. The question that each teacher must ask himself/herself is: "How do I demonstrate my commitment to the children in my care – daily?"

There is also the issue of charging for lessons. I pray for the day when all teachers will try to

complete the syllabus in school time or do as some teachers do, and offer pro bono service to those students who are in need of extra lessons. Where is the equity for those children whose parents cannot afford to pay the class teacher for extra lessons to cover topics that should be covered within the syllabus?

Each of you can make a difference to the lives of the nation's children. Respect and value them. Each one is a unique child of God with great potential.

I urge you to take up the challenge to be good role models and mentors to our youths. We are our brother's and sister's keepers. In our present crisis, we have a greater responsibility to serve, to build community, to build our nation.

May God inspire each one of you to do what you know is right as an educator. May He fill you with wisdom and the knowledge, skills and ability you need to enable you to undertake your duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently so that you will play your part in promoting the development of the whole child in all his/her dimensions and of every child in your care. Don't put a ceiling on children's potential. Let us empower them so that they will be able to achieve their potential. May God bless you all and guide you as you seek to be the best educators that you can be.

Thank you.