



TEACHING SERVICE COMMISSION NEWSLETTER

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The Role, Function and Jurisdiction of the Teaching Service Commission

The Teaching Service Commission was established under the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (Section 124) and is charged with the responsibility under Section 125 as follows:

Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, power to appoint persons to hold or act in public offices in the Teaching Service established under the Education Act, including power to make appointments on promotions and transfer and to confirm appointments, and to remove and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in such offices and to enforce standards of conduct on such officers, shall vest in the Teaching Service Commission

The members of the Commission are appointed for a three-year term by the President of the Republic, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

TEACHING SERVICE COMMISSION



Greetings to all from the Teaching Service Commission!

As we begin another year marking the continuation of the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our national society and our school communities, we extend our support and encouragement to teachers and administrators everywhere who are managing the crisis and keeping alive the teaching and learning activities which our children so desperately need. Thank you to all who have made the necessary and, in many instances, extraordinary effort to reach the most vulnerable of our pupils- with printouts, devices and in the creation of content.

The Commission has established eight strategic goals for 2021 including completing the interviewing and selection of Heads of Department and Deans in the coming months. Hundreds of applications have been received and we intend to select the best candidates.

In an effort to keep abreast of your needs and concerns, we will be meeting with key stakeholders and we have already met with the Ministry of Education, the Division of Education, Tobago and school boards.

Please be assured of our support as you continue the work in the service of education and for the well-being of our children.

Elizabeth Crouch

CHAIRMAN

TEACHING SERVICE COMMISSION

Profile of Mrs. Elizabeth Crouch

Mrs. Elizabeth Crouch is an educator with forty-eight (48) years working experience in education with twenty-eight (28) of those as working experience as Principal at both the primary and secondary levels. She is a former Principal of St Joseph Convent, Port of Spain. Mrs. Crouch was the founder of the School Leadership Center of Trinidad and Tobago and its President from 2000-2020. Mrs. Crouch was awarded the TT Public Service Medal of Merit (Gold) in 2007 and the Excellence in Education Award, Ministry of Education in 2012. She is a graduate of Hollins College, USA, with a B.A (Honors) History; the University of the West Indies with a Diploma in Education and the University of Toronto, with a Master's in Education.

APPOINTMENTS TO THE TEACHING SERVICE COMMISSION

On Tuesday October 6, 2020, Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes O.R.T.T., President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago appointed Mrs. Elizabeth Crouch, Mrs. Claire Brathwaite-Alexander, Mr. Inshan Mohamed, and Dr. Olabisi Kuboni to the Teaching Service Commission. All four were appointed for a three-year term, during which time Mrs. Crouch will serve as Chair of the Commission. The fifth member, Dr. Martha Des Vignes was already a part of the outgoing Commission and would continue serving with the other four.



TEACHING SERVICE COMMISSION: MEMBERS' PROFILES



DR. MARTHA DES VIGNES

Dr. Des Vignes has been an educator in higher education as well as an attorney-at-law for over 22 years. She is a Senior Tutor II and the Course Director for Civil Procedure and Practice I at the Hugh Wooding Law School where facilitates the practical training on procedure and practice in civil matters in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean States. Dr. Des Vignes also possesses a Ph.D. and a MSc. Degree and in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from Nova Southeastern University, Florida with a concentration in conflict in organizational conflict, school conflict and conflict in health care. She is a certified mediator in civil and family matters as well as is an experienced facilitator and trainer. Some of the training she has facilitated include training on the New Civil Procedure Rules of Guyana for the Attorney General Chambers and the Ministry of Legal Affairs as well as the Law Association of Guyana; Alternative Dispute Resolution at the Faculty of Law at the University of the West Indies as an adjunct lecturer; group skills at the Hugh Wooding Law School; dealing with conflict at the workplace at the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago and dealing with family conflict for the National Office of the New Testament Church of God, Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. Des Vignes has also served as a member of the Mediation Board of Trinidad and Tobago for two terms.



DR. OLABISI KUBONI

Dr. Olabisi Kuboni is a retired Senior Lecturer of the University of the West Indies. Her last position in the University was as Head of the Open Campus' Graduate Programmes Department. In that capacity, she functioned as manager of student support and instructional design services. Earlier in her professional life Dr. Kuboni served as Educational Technologist in the School of Education, UWI St. Augustine, and before that, she taught Modern Languages at the secondary level. In December 2013, she was conferred the title of Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) for her contribution to the advancement of open and distance learning in the Caribbean. Dr. Kuboni is the holder of a Ph.D. from the Open University United Kingdom.



MRS. CLAIRE BRATHWAITE-ALEXANDER

Claire Brathwaite-Alexander has served in education for her entire working life and has functioned at all levels of the system. Her teaching career at the secondary level

spanned thirty-five (35) years at the Bishop's High School, Tobago where she served as Principal for the last eight (8) years of her career. She served on the Methodist School Board of Management (primary schools) for two decades. In 2000, she took time off from the classroom to serve as Curriculum Development Coordinator for the Methodist Church in the South Caribbean District. She was also the District's Editor-in-Chief, coordinating the production of Sunday school materials written by Caribbean people. As Coordinator of the School Supervision Unit at the Division of Education (Tobago House of Assembly) she led the development of the fledging Early Childhood Care and Education unit. She has also functioned as part time lecturer at tertiary institutions. Mrs. Brathwaite-Alexander is the holder of a BA English, a Diploma in Education, a Post Graduate Diploma in Library Science (U.W.I) and a Master's in Education (Administration and Policy) at the University of Western Ontario.

MR. INSHAN MOHAMED



Mr. Inshan Mohamed has over twenty-five (25) years working experience at senior managerial levels in the public and private sectors. He

previously held the position of Director in the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services for ten (10) years. He is currently a Managing Director and serves as Chairman and Executive member of several ASJA Committees. He has earned the title of Haji having performed the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. He is a graduate of the UWI, St. Augustine with a BSc. (Hons) Double Major in Economics and Management Studies. He also pursued his MSc. in Economics and was a former Tutor of the UWI, Department of Economics. He previously functioned as a Lecturer at Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies.

The Role, Function and Jurisdiction of the TSC

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Both the 1962 and 1976 Constitutions make provision for the setting up of Service Commissions, of which there are five. The main purpose of these Commissions is to insulate the various Services (Teaching, Public, Police, Prison, Judicial) from political interference of the Government of the day

Rationale for the establishment of the Service Commissions: - Both the 1962 and 1976 Constitutions make provision for the setting up of Service Commissions, of which there are five. The main purpose of these Commissions is to insulate the various Services (Teaching, Public, Police, Prison, Judicial) from political interference of the government of the day. *To guarantee this freedom, legal and procedural safeguards were put in place, making the Commissions fully autonomous and vesting in them the exclusive power to make appointments to the relevant Service, promotions and transfers within the Service and power to remove and exercise disciplinary control over the members thereof. Further, the Service Commissions are precluded by the Constitution from forming any part of the Service of the State (Section 3) (4) (b) (iii) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago).*

Functions of the Teaching Service Commissions:- The functions of the Teaching Service Commission are enshrined in the Constitution. They include making appointments, promotions, transfers and exercising disciplinary control over its officers. In carrying out these functions, the TSC is required to follow the principles and guidelines of the Public Service Regulations that were designed to govern its day-to-day operations.

Appointments: - Persons seeking a first appointment as a teacher must apply to the Permanent Secretary on the prescribed form. If successful, such an applicant must serve a two-year probation. A teacher, already in the

Service, may make an application for an appointment to any vacant office. Appointments can only be made to positions that are vacant. In making appointments, the TSC ensures that the persons being appointed satisfy the pre-requisites of integrity, skill, ability, training and experience and any other criteria laid down in their Regulations. Appointments are made

without discrimination, prejudice or political influence of any kind. Fairness and equality are the right of every citizen.

Promotions: - In considering the eligibility of officers for promotion, the Commission shall take into account the seniority, experience, educational qualifications, merit and ability, together with the relative ability of such

officers. Also taken into account is an evaluation of the officer's overall performance as reflected in the annual staff report.

Transfers: - Requests for the transfer of a teacher must be made on the prescribed form and forwarded to the Permanent Secretary who then forwards same to the Commission for the final decision. Should the Commission agree to the transfer, it will make an order of transfer in writing to the officer. If not satisfied, the teacher may ask for a review of the order. A teacher may also seek a transfer to another school. Should the Commission agree to the transfer but to another school, the aggrieved teacher may make representation to the Commission for a review of the decision

Disciplinary Control: - An officer who is alleged to be guilty of misconduct or who is alleged to be guilty of indiscipline by failing to comply with any regulation, order or directive, is liable to disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the procedure prescribed in these Regulations. The role of the Commission in disciplinary matters is that of an independent and impartial body that receives complaints or allegations of misconduct which have contravened any relevant Codes of Conduct set down by the Employer or which are in breach of any implied terms and conditions of the Service.

Delegation of Authority:- The Constitution provides for the Commissions, to delegate any of their powers other than those conferred by Section 129, to any of its members or any public officer.

The Teaching Service Commission has delegated power to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education to:

1) appoint persons temporarily in the office of teacher for Government and Assisted schools for a period not exceeding three months, from a priority list of candidates approved by the Commission;

2) appoint persons to act in an office in the Teaching Service when such acting is not a prelude to a substantive appointment, except to an office in an Assisted School or to any office which is subject to consultation with the Prime Minister.

Safeguards and Protections: - To ensure that this mandate is adhered to, the following were built into the Constitution

- 1) Members of the Commission are appointed by the President under the Republican Constitution, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.
- 2) A member may only be removed from office by the President acting on his/her discretion and for a specific cause.
- 3) The Commission functions as a body, giving effect to the principle of joint rather than individual responsibility.
- 4) Commissions are free from Ministerial control.
- 5) Commissioners cannot be sued in their own names.
- 6) The Commissions are vested with discretionary powers to further ensure their independence from the Executive and the Legislature. (That does not mean however, that the Commissions are not answerable for any acts they may perform outside of their jurisdiction).

Feature Article

School Leadership in a COVID-19 World: The Role of Heads and Deans

by
Mrs. Claire Brathwaite-Alexander, (B.A.; M.Ed. (Administration and Policy Studies)
Commissioner, Teaching Service Commission

The literature on school leadership is replete with research that points to the close correlation between effective school leadership and student performance. This is often erroneously interpreted by some to refer solely to the Principal who may, or may not, be judged as a "good" principal. While there is undoubtedly a close connection between the effective Principal and student achievement, the "leadership" of high performing schools extends beyond the capacity of a single leader and encompasses those persons or teams responsible for undertaking the processes of leadership as a collective. This collective may include persons appointed to the task or those who willingly bring a variety of gifts and a unified commitment to ensuring that the imperative of learning takes place not solely among students, but also among teachers and even parents. One goal of every effective Principal then, is to enable the development of a cadre of persons with the dispositions and capacity to influence, develop and guide the persons under their charge. Enter the Heads of Department and Deans of the secondary sector

Rationale for Heads and Deans-

According to Cyrille (2008), the introduction of Heads and Deans had its genesis in 1988 when the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA), collaborated with the Ministry of Education to host a National Consultation on Violence and Indiscipline in Schools. One of the outcomes of this conference was a pilot project for Heads and Deans in selected secondary schools. By the middle of the first decade of the 21st century the posts of Heads and Deans were established in secondary schools throughout the nation. While the establishment of a middle management corps may have been driven by the discipline issues experienced by schools, the contribution of middle managers goes beyond the very basic management of discipline. Heads and Deans support the Principal in developing the climate and culture of a school as a space where learning in its fullest sense is experienced by all and where a sense of belonging removes the spectra of anonymity which can threaten the wellbeing of the school community and negatively impact learning and growth. Middle managers translate the vision of the school into reality

by their close daily interactions with student and other staff members.

Overview of Roles

Heads are responsible for a team of teachers within a subject cluster and organize the work programmes of the department. Their responsibility includes the oversight of curriculum implementation and assessment (including SBAs), mentoring and guidance of new teachers and building collegiality and professional discourse among teachers within their departments. Talented Heads can reduce resistance to clinical supervision by building collaboration and shared experiences among the teachers of the department and encouraging the formation of learning communities among their staff. While Heads lead a group of teachers in the implementation of the curriculum, Deans play a major role in the pastoral care of students. They have oversight over a cohort of students ensuring the quality of the students' learning experience. They monitor struggling students and, with the assistance of Guidance Counsellors, plan interventions for these students. Deans identify opportunities for student growth in and out of the classroom and support class teachers in initiatives to ensure mental and emotional health of the students under their care.

Adjusting to the New Normal

In the best of times, the stability of a school is in large measure dependent on the expertise of a strong middle management team which can enhance the work of a competent Principal and counterbalance the effect of inexperienced or inept administrators. But what happens in times of widespread instability, when uncertainty becomes the norm, when the comfortable routines that have sustained us disappear without warning? How do schools operate when there is no "normal" new or otherwise? In disruptive times, Principals must depend on their teams to build connection and continuity. Administrators need to access the widest possible range of skills and gifts among the school's leadership. Decisions on what is best for a particular institution will need to be context-driven so that while the Ministry of Education and Denominational Boards have an undeniable overarching role, it is the leadership within the school which must navigate the challenges of the COVID- 19

pandemic for their immediate reality. Leadership at all levels must be flexible and embrace collaboration and creativity to provide staff and students with a sense of calm even during this time of unprecedented chaos.

Challenges of the pandemic

Two elements of the current crisis brought on by the pandemic make the work of Heads and Deans even more significant. The first is the emotional disruption and increased level of alienation and loneliness being experienced by staff and young people. The burden on teachers and students has increased exponentially. In this context, concern for the wellbeing of members of the school family is critical. While monitoring student absences, depression and fear, Deans must also have a greater awareness of the staff members on the edge and their own self-care. This cannot be ignored, nor can it be left solely to the Principal. The second element is the inequities brought into sharp relief by the realities of remote learning. There have always been issues of access to quality education, even in an era of *Education for All*. However, these issues have been exacerbated by the questions of availability of devices and connectivity, teacher competencies in the digital environment, variations in parental capacity and possible teacher resistance to learning new skills. The return to in-person learning or blended learning requires honest and skilled assessment of and for learning and a commitment to addressing the gaps that will be revealed. Heads of Department with strong subject knowledge, and clarity regarding the purpose and structure of assessments must consistently lead schools in identifying where students are, and, planning programmes to meet student needs.

I have noted in the last year an increase in training and webinars about adaptive leadership and shared leadership, about insightful decision making, the need for new definitions of learning and about new approaches to engaging and empowering students. These are essential features of leading schools in turbulent times. One of the very best decisions we can make though, is to ensure that middle management posts in our secondary schools are staffed with excellent candidates for the Herculean task that lies ahead. Our children deserve the best that all of us in the management of education can offer.

References

Cyrille, J.L. (2008, December). *Violence and indiscipline in schools the experience of Schools in Trinidad and Tobago*. Presented at the CUT/BUT/UNICEF Education Conference, Barbados. Retrieved from: <http://butbarbados.com/images/konference2.pdf>

QUARTERLY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE TSC FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2020

1. Submission of the 2020 Annual Report.
2. Articulation of the Commission's Strategic Goals 2020-2021.
3. Facilitation of meetings with the Minister of Education and the Permanent Secretary on November 30, 2020, and the House of Assembly on December 9, 2020, where the Strategic Goals 2020-2021 were shared.
4. Completion of 1,201 temporary appointments, 30 appointments, 220 acting appointments, 153 confirmations, 17 promotions, 4 retirements and 66 transfers.
5. Review of 30 disciplinary matters. Six (6) officers were medically boarded and 4 were retired.
6. Development of a Communications Policy Statement and preparation of an e-newsletter.
7. Completion of a response to the Joint Select Committee on questions arising out of the Annual Report.
8. Screening of 809 applicants for the office of Head of Department has been completed. A decision was taken to reconcile the establishment information of Secondary Schools in Tobago.
9. Decision made to reconciling the establishment information of Secondary Schools in Tobago.

FAST FACTS QUARTERLY STATISTICS

Transfers 66

Temporary Appointments 1201

Appointments 30

Acting Appointments 220

Confirmation 153

Promotions 117

Retirement 4

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