



**MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL**

# **THE STATE, SOCIETY AND THE CONDITION OF THE CHILD IN MAURITIUS**

**Final Report**

**MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL**

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**NAME OF PROJECT :  
THE STATE, SOCIETY AND THE CONDITION OF THE  
CHILD IN MAURITIUS.**

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## **List of Acronyms and abbreviations used in this Report**

BEC –	Bureau d' Éducation Catholique
CDU –	Child Development Unit
CPE –	Certificate of Primary Education
CRC -	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSEC –	Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children
CSO -	Central Statistics Office
CYC –	Correctional Youth Centre
ECD –	Early Childhood Development
DCC –	Day care Centre
DHT –	Deputy Head Teacher
FI -	Field Investigator
GS –	Government School
HAS –	Health Annual Statistics
HT –	Head Teacher
ISCO –	International Standard of Classification of Occupations
MAPBIN –	Mauritius Action for the Promotion of Breastfeeding and Infant Nutrition
MBC –	Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation
MCA –	Mauritius College of the Air
MFPA –	Mauritius Family Planning Association
MIE –	Mauritius Institute of Education
MLA –	Monitoring Learning Achievement
MOESR –	Ministry of Education and Scientific Research
MWC –	Marxian Weberian Classification
MWRCFW –	Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare
NGO –	Non-governmental Organisations
OMEP-	Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Prescolaire
P.P. –	Pre-Primary
PS –	Permanent Secretary
PTA –	Parents Teachers Association
RYC –	Rehabilitation Youth Centre
UNDP –	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Organisation for Education Science and Culture
VRS –	Voluntary Retirement Scheme
ZEP –	Zone D'Éducation Prioritaire

**“ Childhood is a crucial time in the fate of human beings. It is a time that confirms in us a faith in humankind, or turns us away from it. It is also a time when the foundations are laid for a love of life and of learning, for the desire to excel, to carry on in the face of adversity, to share to help each other, and to respect all living things.” Gauthier L. (OMEP):3**

# **THE STATE, SOCIETY AND THE CONDITION OF THE CHILD IN MAURITIUS**

## **Introduction:**

An in-depth study of the condition of the Mauritian child is an urgent necessity because Mauritius has reached a stage in its development where the family, the traditional guardian of the child's welfare and interests, is slowly undergoing silent transformations in its organisation and values. As the future of a nation, the well-being of its population, the quality of its labour force in a highly competitive world, depends to a large extent upon the quality of the treatment dispensed to its children in terms of health care, education, legal protection, housing facilities, and leisure activities, it is imperative that ways and means of improving the child's condition in Mauritius, be reflected upon and suggested. In our present world of economic uncertainty and insecurity, we cannot afford not to take measures to ensure the welfare and well-being of our children as unhealthy and poorly educated children give birth to an unhealthy nation, a poor labour force, a discontented population and a State where there is constant frustration and instability..

The child's rights must therefore be respected and its needs must be provided for in order to give birth to the fully developed human being (educated, well-fed, physically and mentally healthy) who is going to take his/her proper place in society.

## **AIMS of the study:**

This research which is a comprehensive study of the child in Mauritius, aims at researching the condition of the Mauritian child from a variety of perspectives in order to discover the different elements in the societal and governmental system of support which promotes the development and welfare of the child. The study also aims at scrutinising the various institutions which in an unintentional manner



conspire to produce individuals with different attributes, some having a head start and large numbers who are highly disadvantaged.

.Objectives:

- analyse the different types of child-rearing patterns among the different socio - economic groups;
- evaluate the contribution of ethnicity in the differential patterns of child-rearing
- identify the factors in society, which may hamper the development of the child;
- examine the State's contribution in providing for the needs of the child through:
  - the protection of the child's rights through its legal system
  - in the provision of quality schooling , health service, and leisure and sports activities.
- assess to what extent the different institutions in Mauritius, are contributing towards the welfare and protection of the child
- Provide policymakers, educators, programs, and other non-governmental organisations with research-based information to guide strategic development in the field of child welfare and protection.

**Relevance to national objectives:**

There is actually widespread concern about the welfare of children and the protection of their rights in Mauritian society. Since Mauritius' adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there has been a flurry of activities and legislation centred around the interests of the child and several reports have been produced to give some analysis of the situation of the child in Mauritius in terms of rights. The last one produced by the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, which is the Ministry concerned with promoting the rights and welfare of the child, is entitled "National Children Policy- A Republic Fit For Children". This document, which lays down the government's general policy on how to protect the interests and rights of the child, is a proof that there is a strong commitment on the part of the Government to promote the interests of the Mauritian child. However, it is felt that all the previous reports on the condition of the child in Mauritius, have failed to locate the child in his/her cultural context. On

the other hand this present research intends to situate the child in his/her socio – cultural context before proposing measures to ensure the protection of his/her interests. It is therefore hoped that this present study will offer a more in-depth understanding of the condition of the Mauritian child .

## **CONSTRUCTIONS OF CHILDHOOD**

The history of “childhood” is controversial because “childhood is a social construction brought about through the influence of cultural mores and practised values experienced by the community grouping” (Louis & Lindsay –2000).

During the Middle Ages, little distinction seemed to have been made between childhood and adulthood as the child was considered as a miniature adult. We have often marveled at examples of child kings and princes (the Black Prince) going to war, winning wars and territories. Such examples abound in History. Child marriage was not a practice limited to India and other Eastern countries but was also common practice in European countries especially among royalty and noble families.

The child as a social role and childhood as a social category separate from adults began to develop in the eighteenth century among the nobility. However, the first mention of the “rights of the child” in European social history, seem to come from Rousseau in his “Emile” (1762). His writings seem to suggest that childhood is a special time of life. He advocated the protection of the child’s innocence and he believed that it was the right of the child to be a child. In fact, he seems to have influenced the Romantics (late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) who portrayed the child in art and literature as a symbol of innocence. In England, Romantic poets like Blake and Wordsworth were glorifying children, seeing them as the basis of human nature.

Wordsworth’s famous verse expresses the perception of that period:

*“The child is the Father of Man” (W. Wordsworth – The Rainbow)*

While the Romantics were singing the innocence of children, the harsh demands of the economy of the Industrial Revolution was exploiting that innocence through institutionalised child labour. Working class children during the Industrial Revolution were being used as cheap labour in the factories and in the coal mines where conditions were very inhuman. The condition of the child during the Industrial Revolution is described by J. H. Plumb (1950):

*“ The children of the poor had always worked as soon as they could walk, but now their work was exceptionally valuable to factory owners. Children are tractable and easy to discipline; for simple repetitive operations they were ideal, they were cheap. Naturally they had none of the antipathy to factory work common among adult workers. So the factories and the mines absorbed them and child labour was more deliberately exploited than ever before. And, of course, it became much more visible. Children coming home from the factory or the mine stab the conscience which is at rest so long as to drudge is in the home or workhouse. Between the stirring conscience and effective action stretched many decades.” (Plumb, 1950:87-88)*

Eventually the degree of abuse of children as servile labour was such that governments had to legislate to control child labour and the rights of children came to be recognised. In nineteenth century Britain, philanthropists like the Earl of Shaftesbury in England came to realise that the conditions in which the children were working was not fit for children's welfare and development. In fact Britain was one of the first countries to recognise those children's rights to protection from harm and ill treatment. The Factory Acts were the first pieces of legislation aimed at protecting children from unrestricted exploitation at work :

*‘All factory Acts, except the original Act of 1802 which was promoted by Sir Robert Peel the elder, and which limited child labour to twelve hours a day without night work, had applied to paupers in cotton mills. The Act of 1833 still affected only children but it applied to nearly all textiles mills. After 1833 no child under eleven for the first year, under twelve for the second, and under thirteen for the third, was to be employed for more than forty-eight hours a week, or more than twelve hours in one day. Of these periods, an hour and a half each day was to be allowed for meals, and children of the protected age-groups were to attend school for at least two hours each day.’ (Thomson, 1950:47)*

These pieces of legislation gives us an idea of the type of exploitation to which children were exposed before 1833.

During the nineteenth century, “Saving the Child” started to become a major concern so that childhood was being distanced from adulthood. Children started to be perceived as being more dependent on parents rather than sources of income so that education started to replace work. The idea that children should have a proper childhood started to make its way.

The perception of childhood as an important stage in the development of a human being and this view of childhood has been strengthened by the research of psychologists such as Piaget mainly who developed the theory of stages of cognitive development of the child. These theories have been taken up by other psychologists such as Erikson, Freud, Vygotsky and others who have developed other theories which have given us an insight into the psychological make-up of the child. They have explained that childhood is the most rapid period of development in a human life. However these theories on child development brought changes in child rearing practices as explained by Wolfenstein,(1955):

*“ The twentieth century brought not only a shift toward more humane child- rearing practices, with legal protection for children’s rights, but also the increased questioning of preconceptions about children and development. Child behaviours that were once viewed as dangerous or otherwise undesirable, such as thumb sucking and masturbation, are now generally accepted as normal. Rigid schedules for feeding, toilet training, and play have given way to concerns about the child’s readiness .(Wolfenstein, 1955) (Craig :11)*

Although it is recognised that individual children develop at their own pace, it is now acknowledged that all children progress through an identifiable sequence of physical, cognitive, and emotional growth and change.

All these theories have served to consolidate the idea that childhood is an important period in the life of a person, the quality of which, very often influences the type of adult, the child will develop into.

Children have now become the objects of care giving and all that is best in our lives. Parental obligations have increased as society perceives the child as frail and dependent. In their job of caring for their children, parents now seek the help of other members of society, such as pediatricians, psychologists, educators and several others. The State and Society at large, have been roped in, through legislation and the setting up of different social institutions to cooperate in the upbringing and welfare of the children of today. The involvement of the State in promoting the welfare of the child has intensified with the universal declaration of the rights of the child. The State has now been assigned more responsibilities to secure those rights for the child in education, health and promoting other forms of welfare.

Therefore, it is now an accepted fact that childhood must be supported not only by the family but also by other institutions in society such as the school, health service, etc. Caring for the child is no longer the sole responsibility of the family, it has now become the duty of the State to protect the rights of the child in all spheres of life. The State may even protect the child from the abuses of the family.

As a result children have become increasingly important in social policy issues in many countries of the world but legislation to protect the child from various forms of exploitation has not prevented abuses of the rights of the child in most countries of the world.

There are large numbers of children who may not be directly exploited but who according to regular reports from various organisations and from research, experience lead a difficult life because of the consequences of modern-day industrialisation. These difficulties range from enduring the psychological stress caused by the divorce of parents, and living in a single-parent households to domestic violence and sexual abuse.

The development of the concept of childhood as a separate entity can also be associated with the emergence of the school as a place of moral training separate from the home and those new psychological and educational theories which support the idea that children needed the protection of adults to prepare them to become responsible adults in society at a later stage.

This has resulted in the fact that children have ceased to be regarded as having an economic value in the Western countries. At the same time they have become dependant on their parents. Education has replaced work and the idea that children should have a proper childhood has made its way. It is now recognised that children have the same human needs as adults, that is, material security, social contact and personal development. But it is also acknowledged that they have particular needs related to their development such as love and security, new experiences, praise and recognition and responsibility.

Therefore, though it has become a formal category of human groups with a social status in the wide society, childhood is a period of dependency and it is increasingly becoming a longer period in the western world. This is not the case in

Eastern and African societies where the conditions of life are very precarious and very often the child has to earn a living in order to boost the family budget. In such societies, children are considered as young adults and in many cultures, the protection of children from harm by their parents is not seen as a moral imperative. The economic and sexual exploitation of children still flourishes in many third world countries. Examples of these forms of exploitation are numerous throughout the world: the children working in the carpet factories and the brick-making industry of India, child-trafficking for sexual exploitation in Thailand and other third world countries. These countries may have adhered to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the protection of their children from exploitation and abuse is still far from being realised.

We must point out here that child abuse is not a new phenomenon of contemporary society. Throughout History, children, who form the most vulnerable category of human society, have been killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized and sexually abused by adults who very often were the closest to them and were morally bound to protect them.

### **Children in Mauritius:**

Mauritius, a fastly developing economy, supported by its textile industry, tourism and the sugar industry, is investing large proportions of its budget in promoting the welfare and education of its children. Budget

As from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2002, there were 246,734 children aged between 0-11 years old, that is, about 20.4% of the total population, in the Republic. If we count the number of children up to the age of 14, there were 307,826 children, constituting 25.4% of the population of the island (As we are concerned with the age group 0-12 years in this report, data on the number of children is only limited to this group of children). The following table gives an idea of the child population in gender disaggregated data:

**Table 1-Population of children from 0-11 year old in the Republic of Mauritius -July 2002**

Age group	Males	Females	Total	%
Under 5yrs	49,995	48,024	98,019	8.1
5-11	75,108	73,609	148,715	12.3
0-11	125,103	121,631	246,734	20.4
0-14	156,081	151,745	307,826	25.4

These children belong to different socio-economic backgrounds as Mauritius is a multi- ethnic society. The differences in social class, status and ethnicity have their impact upon the child -rearing practices in Mauritius and this report aims at studying the influence of social class and ethnicity in the different types of child-rearing practices.

The perception of childhood In the Mauritian context may vary from one ethnic group to another. Perception of childhood and child rearing habits have been influenced to a certain extent by the values prevailing in the early immigrants' country of origin and by the religious beliefs of the different groups. With the spread of education and the influence of media and greater social mobility, child-rearing patterns may have become more uniform but this remains to be proved through research in the field. Mauritius is also experiencing all the social problems associated with modern - day industrialisation and the lives of children of the Republic are being influenced by the impact of this new social and economic order. How far the rights of the child has been protected or violated (in relation to the declaration of the rights of the child) within the various groups will be examined throughout this report.

As far as the Mauritian state is concerned, the Code Civil or Code Napoleon, had taken care of the welfare of the child, since 1805. In the Code Napoleon, the responsibilities of the parents especially in terms of providing basic needs, are constantly stressed.

Since its adherence to the “Convention on the Rights of the Child” (CRC), The Mauritian State has recognised the child’s role as actor and participant in and of society. The Mauritian became more concerned with the protection of the “rights of the Child”. To take care of the rights of the child, a ministry, the Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare (henceforth referred to as MWRCDFW in this report). The authorities have become very vocal in recent years about defending the rights and providing for the needs of the child.

The Government especially through the Ministry of Women’s Rights Child Development and Family Welfare and that of Social Security has been setting up various units to see to the welfare of the child at risk, and various activities have been organised by other ministries such as that of Education and Scientific Research and that of Youth and Sports to promote the healthy development of the Mauritian child. We must also bear in mind that the Ministries of Education and Health have been taking care of the welfare of the child well before the country’s adherence to the CRC.

A lot has been accomplished in the field of child protection by certain institutions in Mauritius and we can say that most of the rights of the child are being taken care of by an elaborate system of legislation but the Mauritian government and society still have to face several challenges in the field of child welfare and the protection of the rights of the child in this country

It is taken for granted that the needs and rights of our children are being respected and provided for by society and its institutions such as the family, the school, the health care system, social security, the legal system and religious bodies, in a democratic country like Mauritius but there are a certain number of cases of child abuse in the Republic of Mauritius as the numerous cases reported at the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Women’s Rights and Family Affairs testify.

#### Studies on the “child” in Mauritius:

There have been some pieces of research on the child in Mauritius but most of them have dealt with one particular age- group or one aspect of children in this country.



Some of these pieces of research were focussed mainly on social problems in the island, namely the one on “exclusion” entitled “Multidisciplinary approach to Exclusion in Mauritius” (1997), which has inevitably included information about the condition of the Mauritian child. The chapters more directly related to children are the ones related to education, namely: “Exclusion: Children at Risk and Schooling” by R. Padaruth and **“Education and Exclusion”** by S. Bunwaree. Another study made by “Analysis-Research Consultants” still deals with schooling and exclusion in Roche Bois: **“Étude sur la scolarité des Jeunes à Roche Bois”** (1996).

On the other hand the UNICEF report on **“Early Childhood Care and Development Programme in Mauritius”** (2000), is, as the title suggests, limited to an examination of the condition of the young infants and toddlers only. John Bennett, UNICEF expert, and his team made a summative evaluation of the early childhood sector in the island, at the invitation of the UNICEF office in Port Louis. Though the focus of the report is on possible future orientations in early childhood and family policy, the analysis is complemented by an overview of the actual situation of early childhood care in Mauritius. This overview consists of brief explanations on the following: infant and maternal health, family policy and support, gender equity, cultural diversity and language, children’s rights and education; and the divided auspices of early development and education. The authors also analyse the context of early childhood in terms of legislation, regulation and monitoring, recent policy development, access, staffing, training and work conditions, quality standards, funding and financing, etc.

However the authors highlight one important weakness of this analysis of early childhood care in Mauritius:

*“ We are conscious that deeper knowledge of Mauritian society and culture, particularly of the various ethnic groups would have allowed us to assess more accurately how notions of childhood are constructed in Mauritius, and which child and family policies are realistic within specific contexts.”*

These above-mentioned studies, among the very few undertaken to deal with the problems of children in Mauritius do not give a holistic view of the condition of the child in Mauritius.

The studies which will offer a more in-depth analysis of the condition of the child in Mauritius will be the UNICEF situational analysis of 1998 and the “National

Children's Policy" presented by Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare (MWRCDFW) in 2003.

In 1998 the UNICEF office in Mauritius published an "updated situation analysis of children and women in the Republic of Mauritius" entitled **"Invest in Children: Securing rights in a Changing Society"**. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) served as backbone to the document and it looked into the condition of the child from birth to adolescence (0-18 years), as well as into the condition of women.

This report gives an overview of the socio-economic context of children and women in Mauritius in terms of the legislative framework, the major socio-economic changes in Mauritian society and the main demographic trends before examining the extent to which the rights of children and women have been protected in the satisfaction of their needs in terms of health and nutrition and education and cultural development. The situation in terms of the protection of the rights of the adolescent in a rapidly changing world, of the vulnerable groups as well as the rights of women and children in Rodrigues, have also been examined.

In 2003 the MWRCDFW produced its **"National Children's Policy: A Republic fit for children"**. This document has been strongly influenced by the principles of the CRC. After having justified the need for a shift from a "needs approach" to a "rights approach" in general policy towards child welfare and protection, the authors of the document briefly review the current situation in terms of the existing structures, policies and programmes offered by the government, and non-governmental organisations. At the same time the authors suggest future course of action towards the development of an "Integrated National Children's Policy" for Mauritius. This document was followed by its sequel entitled "National Children Policy: Plan of Action" which proposed a plan for the implementation of the children's policy by the MRCDFW and other stakeholders but the strategies being proposed have yet to be implemented

However this document, the "National Children's Policy" is focussed more on suggesting future courses of action for the Governmental organisations as well as

for the NGOs so that the examination of the current situation is rather too brief to be described as a comprehensive study on the child.

It must also be highlighted here that the UNICEF situational analysis (1998) as well as the National Children's Policy report on the current situation of the children of the Republic also suffer from the same weakness as the UNICEF summative evaluation of Early Childhood Care and Development Programme (2000) in the fact that these studies have made an abstraction of the cultural dimension in the study of the Mauritian child. All studies which do not take into consideration the cultural aspects in child rearing and perceptions of childhood, any child and family policy will be far from being realistic.

An examination of the above-mentioned documents, have strengthened my convictions that the condition of the child in Mauritius needs an in-depth study which takes into account the cultural dimension in child rearing and welfare.

### **The present study:**

This study attempts to provide necessary information to all stakeholders about the condition of the child in connection with concerns which are fundamental to his/her growth and well-being and these concerns are:

Nutrition,  
Health care,  
Education,  
Leisure activities  
The legal framework

This report will demonstrate how the satisfaction of the needs of the child and the preservation of his/her right will depend to a large extent upon:

- Child –rearing practices in different social backgrounds and parenting styles
- The role of the State and Society

In this study, the focus is on the amount and quality of care which the different stakeholders responsible for the welfare of the child in Mauritius are providing to the latter. The title of this research itself infers that the main care-givers for the child are the following:

- the State,
- the family
- Society at large.

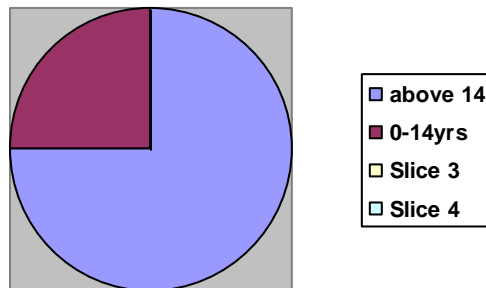
Each issue mentioned above will be discussed as far as possible in relation to the contribution of each stake holder in the development of the child in Mauritius.

Clarifications about the key concepts used in this research:

**The child:**

According to the Declaration of the rights of children by the United Nations, the term child refers to all human beings aged between the age of 0 to below eighteen. Studying the child from 0 to 18 would mean researching adolescence also. Adolescence is in itself a highly complex issue which would need more human and economic resources, to research. Therefore this present research has been limited to the study of the child from the age of **0 to 12**. This segment of the population makes up about one quarter of the population of Mauritius.

**Percentage of children of less than 14 years old, in the population of Mauritius (July 2002)**



**The State:**

The Republic of Mauritius has always been referred to as a “welfare state” which in the ideal model is one which provides comprehensive and universal welfare for its citizens. The Mauritian “welfare state” modeled on the British one contributes a lot to the welfare and security of the child. The most important contributions of the Government are in the following fields: education, health, and legislation to protect the child’s rights in all fields of life. The creation of the Ministry of Women’s Rights and Child Development Unit and the National Children Council are proofs that the government is highly concerned with the protection of children at risk. In this research we are going to examine the quality of the contribution of the Mauritian state to the welfare and security of the child.

**Society:**

The term society underpins the different entities of the Mauritian society and this study has attempted to analyse the different child-rearing patterns in different social groups. These child-rearing patterns have been described in connection to the different issues mentioned above.

This Report has been written in two parts, the first part dealing with the child-rearing practices in Mauritius while the second part discusses the role of the State in safeguarding the rights and interests of the child as a citizen of the Republic. Included in this report is a chapter entitled “The Child and Poverty” which analyses this sensitive issue and the respective roles and responsibilities of the stake holders concerned.

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## Chapter 2

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Though I agree with Vidich and Lyman (2000) when they declare that “ *the method-in-use for the production of a finished sociological study is unique to that study and can be neither described nor replicated as it actually occurred*”, I am nevertheless going to give a brief outline of how the data for this research has been gathered .

This is mainly a sociological research, where a more or less qualitative approach has been adopted because it is an area of research which has to be treated with a lot of sensitivity and “*and sufficient self-understanding to make possible an empathy with the roles and values of others*” (Vidich and Lyman- in “Denzin and Lincoln – 2000:37), as this piece of research was dealing with children and their parents.

This piece of research is more in the ethnographic tradition because it is

*“a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system, The researcher examines the group’s observable and learned pattern of behaviour, customs, and ways of life (Harris, 1968)” ( Creswell –1998:58)*

Even if the main approach in data gathering has been more qualitative in nature, quantitative data has also been used to support arguments.

All research is constructed, but qualitative research is constructed through the senses of the researcher and this makes this type of research highly subjective. Therefore this report, which has been drafted by only one person, who has also carried out almost all the interviews on which this report is partly based is the interpretation of reality by the researcher, “*who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective.*” (Denzin & Lincoln -2000:18).

This high subjectivity may not meet with the approval of die-hard quantitative researchers who regard this type of research as unreliable, and impressionistic. Therefore, in order to guard against the criticism from that

school of thought, I have sought to validate my data through some sort of triangulation by obtaining some “hard” quantitative data from the questionnaires in order to add some more rigor, richness and depth to the research.

In spite of having obtained quantitative data during the research process, the reader will not be in the presence of complicated graphs to represent those data and it would seem that this is an approach which is common with interpretive researchers who use quantitative data to some extent and this is mentioned by Denzin and Lincoln:

*“ Although many qualitative researchers in the postpositivist tradition will use statistical measures, methods, and documents as a way of locating groups of subjects within the larger populations, they will seldom report their findings in terms of the kinds of complex measures or methods to which quantitative researchers are drawn (i.e., path, regression, or log-linear analyses).”(Denzin & Lincoln-2000:9)*

The main research tools here have therefore been **interviews, observation, informal conversations and questionnaires** as well as the **analysis of official documents**, mainly in terms of statistics from the CSO. Newspaper articles corroborating with the data obtained in this research have also been utilized here to support my arguments and sometimes to clarify certain issues.

This variety of tools used by qualitative researchers has been described by the critics of this approach as “bricolage, quilt making or montage” among other names attributed to this way of doing research. But this very “bricolage” and “montage” may be the source of its strength and uniqueness as argued by Denzin and Lincoln:

*“ The qualitative researcher who uses montage is like a quilt maker or a jazz improviser. The quilter stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together. This process creates and brings psychological and emotional unity to an interpretive experience. There are many examples of montage in current qualitative research (see Diversi, 1998, Jones, 1999 ;Lather &Smithies, 1997; Ronai,1998)”*

Before starting on this research, the main issue has been sampling the target groups from whom data were going to be obtained. The main variables taken into consideration for the choice of samples of the whole population were: **ethnicity, social class and geographical location** of the target groups.



### Ethnic Groups:

Representatives of the main ethnic groups according to the official classification have been sampled. According to the official classification, the main ethnic groups have been classified thus: the Hindu community, the Muslim community, the Sino- Mauritian community and the General Population. The official grouping has been maintained but as within each of these official groups, there are differences in ethnicity and social class, it was necessary to differentiate between the Tamils, the Marathis and the Bhojpuri/Hindi-speaking Hindus and between the Creole population and the Franco-Mauritians (commonly known as the Whites) and samples of these different ethnic communities have been chosen to respond to questionnaires and participate in interviews.

### Social Class:

As within each ethnic group, there are different social classes, that is, there are the working class, the middle class and the upper middle class within each ethnic group, samples of each social class within each ethnic group had to be targeted as far as possible. ( The concepts of ethnicity and social class in Mauritius will have a more in-depth treatment in Chapter 3)

### Geographical Location:

The location, whether urban or rural has been an important variable throughout this research. As far as possible samples of respondents of same ethnic group whether adults or children have been identified from different regions of the island. For example Hindus from the North (Riviere Du Rempart and Triolet), Hindus from the South (Rose Belle and Grand Bois) and Hindus from urban areas (Chitrakoot and Sodnac) have been sampled. The other ethnic communities have also been differentiated according to their geographical location.

Certain geographical locations have been deliberately targeted because there is a concentration of a certain ethnic community with a particular social profile.

These variables were taken into consideration in the administration of questionnaires and in the identification of parents for in-depth interviews.

### **The Questionnaires:**

Three different questionnaires have been prepared and distributed to:

1. 435 Primary school children of 9-10 year old, mostly from the Standard V of Government primary schools and those managed by the Bureau D'Education Catholique (BEC) and also pupils of one private primary school in Plaines Wilhems district.
2. Heads of families, either the father or the mother who live mostly in the localities identified in figure
3. Primary school teachers.

A copy of each of these questionnaires is being included in the appendices to this report.

### **1.The Children questionnaire:**

It is a rather substantial one with 12 main items, each with its own sub-item. The aim of these items is to obtain information about the following:

Schooling experiences

Study at home

Feeding habits

Leisure activities

Health care

Expectations in life

Cultural background

### **The Parents' Questionnaire:**

This questionnaire too is quite substantial with 11 items each with its sub-items. Here emphasis is more on obtaining information about the quality of life at home.

Social class  
Cultural background of the family  
Educational background of the parents  
Living conditions  
Child-rearing Practices  
Health and hygiene  
Schooling of children and education in general  
Leisure activities of children  
Discipline

### **Employment of Field Investigators:**

Field investigators (henceforth referred to as F.I's.) have been employed to administer questionnaires. The F.I's were chosen mainly among the teacher-students who come to the MIE for their training courses and who were willing to help with the administration of the questionnaires. They were chosen mainly because they were working in one of the schools satisfying the criteria mentioned above and as people who being in daily contact with the target population of this research would be accepted and trusted by both the parents and children. It was felt that the children would more readily answer the questionnaire if it were administered by their own teacher.

The FIs had been told to allow the children to answer by themselves while being guided throughout by the teacher. Field investigators have also been employed to administer questionnaires to parents. For the parents' questionnaires, they were told to fill in the questionnaire themselves as many of the parents would not be able to write the answers by themselves.

In such circumstances, it was not wholly the administration of a questionnaire but really a sort of interview though a cassette recorder was not being used. In some cases the F.I's. have reported that they may have taken about one hour and in some cases more, to complete filling in the questionnaire while listening to the person.

Some other F.I's. have been more lucky as the parents , the educated ones, wanted to fill in the questionnaire themselves.

As we can see the administration of the questionnaires to the parents have been performed in two different conditions.

## **The Research Process**

### **1.Pre-testing of Questionnaire:**

#### **(a) Parents' Questionnaire**

The first stage in the data- gathering process was to try a representative sampling of the whole population of Mauritius in terms of ethnic groups: that is approximately 60% Hindus, 20% General Population, 10% Muslims, 10% Chinese.

So for each series of 10 questionnaires given to one field investigator (F.I), he was told that he had to target 6 Hindus, 2 from the general Population, 1 Muslim, 1 Chinese. The other variables which were included were "social class" and geographical distribution so that each F.I. was told to target a particular social class in a particular region.

Our objective in this pre-test was to have a general picture of the condition of the child and child –rearing habits at the national level.

With the help of the F.I, 60 questionnaires respecting the variables mentioned above, i.e. social class, and geographical location, were administered. The different social classes were given codes: the upper middle class was called "high", the middle class was called "middle", and the working classes were called "low". For geographical distribution we distinguished between "urban" and "rural".

Ex. To obtain information about children from **working class urban families**, the questionnaires were distributed thus:

6 low urban Hindus, 2 low urban General Population

1 low urban Muslim, 1 low urban Sino- Mauritian.

For middle class urban families, the questionnaires were distributed thus:  
6 “middle” urban Hindus, 2 “middle” urban General Population, 1 “middle” urban Muslim, 1 “middle” urban Sino-Mauritian.

A clearer idea of the pre-test at the national level can be obtained in the following table:

**Table 2 - The trend in the distribution of questionnaires during pre-testing**

No of Ques..	Ethnic.G.	Low urban	middle urban	High urban	Low rural	Middle rural	High rural
6	Hindus	LUH	MUH	HUH	LRH	MRH	HRH
2	Gen. Pop	LUP	MUP	HUP	LRP	MRP	HRP
1	Muslims	LUM	MUM	HUM	LRM	MRM	HRM
1	Chinese	LUC	MUC	HUC	LRC	MRC	HRC
		10 ques.	10 ques.	10 ques.	10 ques.	10 ques.	10 ques.

Ques.= Questionnaire

A total of 60 questionnaires were administered for this pre-testing.

When the questionnaires were returned, it was possible to identify the difficulties and problems of working with a sampling representative of each ethnic group at the national level.

### **(b) Pupils' Questionnaire:**

The pupils' questionnaire were also pre-tested among primary school children. This pre-testing was not carried out in school but in an informal manner.

After pre- testing, the aspects of the questionnaires which were found a bit ambiguous or vague were amended.

### **Problems encountered during the pre- testing:**

- The major problem was to find parents who possessed certain characteristics we were looking for.

For example it is difficult to find people who satisfy the following conditions, that is of being “low rural Chinese” in other words working class people of Chinese origin living in rural areas.

- Some of the field investigators found it difficult to have some of the Upper Middle class parents to answer the questions. Those parents were very reluctant to answer questions related to their income. Some refused to answer some questions. The most difficult people to interview or to accept to answer questionnaire seem to be the highly educated and wealthy people.

Some of the ethnic groups consist of so distinct sub-groups each with its own specific characteristics that we found that it would not be appropriate to make as if these differences do not exist within the group.

- For example within the general Population who consist of mostly Christian people but who possess very different cultural characteristics. Within that same group, we can identify people of more or less pure African origin, people of pure European origin, people of mixed origins ranging from coloured people to people of Indian and African origin. At the same time within each sub-group, there were different strata of economic classes. It was felt that all these different groups may be rearing their children in quite different ways so that they had to be studied separately.

As a result of this pre-testing we (my research assistant and I) concluded that with a representative sampling, following the national proportion of the different ethnic groups, it would not be possible to have an in-depth appreciation of the child-rearing habits of specific ethnic groups.

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## **2. The New Sampling for administration of questionnaires:**

We opted for another approach which consisted of identifying geographical areas where we could find a good sample of each segment of the national population

Therefore we identified places where we know that there is a concentration of a specific group of the population with certain common characteristics and administered our questionnaire in that locality. A more qualitative approach has been adopted in the sampling.

The research has been carried out in localities where there are concentration or pockets of certain groups of the Mauritian society have settled. Among these localities, there are the following: the Plaine Verte area where there is a concentration of Muslims of different social classes, La Gaulette where there is an important community of Marathis, the Sodnac area of Quatre Bornes with a high proportion of upper middle class Hindu families, Cote D'Or with a high percentage of working class Tamils, Roche Bois and Tranquebar with predominantly Creole working class families, Riviere Du Rempart with mostly rural Hindu middle class families etc. All the localities where questionnaires were distributed and where interviews were carried out are listed in table 3. Below.

Therefore for the administration of questionnaires to school children, schools located in the above-mentioned localities have been identified . The geographical location of the schools gave an idea of the social background of the pupils. For example, questionnaires have been administered at Jean Lebrun Govt. school, Plaine Verte, because we were aware that most of the pupils at that school came from Muslim urban middle class families.

It was decided to choose a sample of 20 pupils of standard V from each of the school identified for the survey.

Standard v pupils were chosen because they were old enough to read and understand the questions. The Standard VI pupils were not chosen because we felt that both teachers and pupils would be reluctant to "waste" their precious time. To have chosen more than 20 pupils would have been beyond the resources available.

Letters have been sent to the Ministry of Education and to the Bureau D'Education Catholique and those organisations gave permission to have access to the pupils (their letters are being enclosed)

Questionnaires have been filled in by children from the following schools:

Grand Bois Govt. School

R. Jomadar Govt. School – Rose Belle

Sir Harilall Vaghjee Govt. School - Triolet

Beewa Mahadoo Govt. School - Riviere du Rempart

Chitrakoot Govt. School – Valée des Pretres, Port Louis

Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo Govt. School – Sodnac, Quatre Bornes

Jean Lebrun Govt. School – Plaine Verte , Port Louis

Camp Diable Govt. School – Riviere Dragon

Notre Dame de La Paix RCA - Port Louis

Raoul Rivet Govt. School

Philippe Rivalland RCA - Beau Bassin

Jules Koenig Govt. School –

Jean Eon RCA – Grand Gaube

Emmanuel Anquetil Govt. School - Roche Bois

Stanley Govt. School – Rose-Hill

N. Lutchmeenaraidoo Govt. School \_Cote D’Or (Only 18 questionnaires were administered as there were only eighteen children in that particular class)

La Gaulette Govt. School – La Gaulette

Ecole de Sans Soucis (Fictitious name for a private fee-paying school with a French system of education) – Exceptionally for this school, questionnaires were distributed to children who were in a grade equivalent to standard VI, according to the school’s administration’s wish.

The administration of questionnaires to the school children has been relatively easy as it has been performed by teachers in their schools. The only school where it was a long process before I could administer the questionnaire was the Ecole de Sans Soucis where I could have access to children of the upper middle class from coloured and white families and a few from Hindu and Muslim families. There were weeks of negotiation with



the administration of that school before my field investigator, could have the permission to administer the questionnaires. In fact we had to administer the questionnaires to 3 classes of standard VI as according to the school's administration, to give the questionnaires to only a few of them (the Franco-Mauritians), would be felt as a sort of discrimination towards other children

### **The parents:**

In general, we have tried to access parents who were residing in the same locality as the schools. The field investigators have been told to try to contact the parents of their pupils as far as possible. Thus questionnaires have been distributed and obtained from the following localities: Camp Diable, Riviere du Rempart, Roche Bois, Rose Belle, Stanley, Grand Gaube, Tanquebar, Triolet, Plaine Verte, Sodnac/ Quatre Bornes, Vallee des Prêtres. For certain ethnic groups such as the Sino- Mauritians and the Franco Mauritians who are not really concentrated in a specific place, it has been decided that a field investigator targets such types of parents wherever he could find them. A sample of 20 parents have been targeted for each group of people in different localities. About 220 questionnaires from the parents have been returned back

The administration of questionnaires to parents has not been too easy as the latter are very reluctant to answer them. The more educated and richer the parents the more difficult to have them answer the questionnaires.

It is not easy to get field investigators who have the free time to go out in the field to administer questionnaires to the parents. That is why the number of questionnaires administered to parents amounts to a smaller number than those administered to children.

This is compensated by the fact that I obtained more in-depth information from parents through interviews.

### **The Teachers:**

Primary school teachers (students at MIE) from different schools across the country have been given a questionnaire to fill in. The aim of that questionnaire was mainly to obtain information about the conditions prevailing in the different schools and at the same time, to obtain information about their attitude to children and their teaching practices.

It must be pointed out that most of those teachers were not my students and they were informed about the research and I stressed upon the fact that they were not under any obligation to fill in the questionnaire. In fact a good number of teacher questionnaires were not returned and I did not insist but the number of those who returned the completed questionnaires was sufficient to inform me about the condition of some of the primary schools in the Republic.

### **In-depth Interviews:**

In-depth interviews of parents and children have taken place generally in the places identified for the administration of the questionnaires except for the interview of parents from the Chinese and White communities.

In-depth interviews have been carried out with at least 75 parents from different social classes and ethnic groups. Most of the parents interviewed were mothers. The choice was deliberate because it is known that for cultural reasons child care is usually the responsibility of the mother in this country. This is confirmed by the survey conducted by the Centre for Applied Social Research UOM (2002):

*‘ Moving on to responsibility for childcare, (table3.21), there is a clear indication that this appears to be an overwhelmingly female responsibility. ....79% of male respondents stated that the children were “looked after by the school and then by their spouse”, compared to only 10% f Female respondents responding in the same manner.’(2002:77)*

Therefore it has been considered that the best source of information on child rearing practices in Mauritius would be the mothers. It must also be mentioned that very often the interviews took place in the presence of the father.

The table below gives an idea of the number of different types of parents who have been interviewed. From this table we also gather that the localities were chosen because it was settled in majority by a specific ethnic community :

**Table 3 – Table showing the localities where interviews took place and the profile of interviewees.**

Places	Profile of Interviewees	No. of interviewees
Valee des Pretres: Chitracoot	Working/Middle Class Hindus (Suburban)	5 mothers
Triolet	Working /Middle Class Hindus (Rural)	5 mothers and 2 grandmothers
Riviere du Rempart	Middle Class Hindus (Rural)	3 fathers and 2 mothers (4 families)
Stanley- RoseHill	Working Class (mixed -urban)	3 mothers and 2 grandmothers
Cote D'Or	Working Class (Tamils- rural)	1mother and 1 grandmother
Port Loui (warde IV)	Middle class (Tamils-urban)	4 mothers and 1 father
Plaine Verte- Port Louis and Beau Bassin	Working/Middle Class Muslims (urban)	4 mothers
Roche Bois – Port Louis	Working Class Creoles (suburban)	7 mothers
Tranquebar – Port Louis	Working class Creoles (suburban)	4 mothers
La Gaulette	Working/Middle Class Marathis (rural coastal)	5 mothers
Case Noyale	Squatters - Creoles	4 mothers
Port Louis /RoseHill	Chinese – Middle class	4 mothers
Curepipe/ The Mount	Franco _Mauritians	5 parents- 4 mothers, 1 father
Sodnac –Quatre Bornes & other localities	Upper Middle Class-Hindus - urban	3 mothers – 2 children
Grand Gaube	Working class creoles (coastal)	7 mothers
Camp Diable	Rural Muslims – working class	5 mothers

The interviews of parents in the different localities mentioned above would have been very difficult, if not impossible, without the co-operation of my contact persons in these places. These contact persons included some of my colleagues and some of my students. My students who could not come with me contacted other people who kindly acted as guides in places like La Gaulette, and Tranquebar.

For the squatter settlement at Case Noyale, I took the risk of stopping without knowing anybody there. Fortunately on that occasion, my research assistant accompanied me. Many people refused to talk to me there. In fact people refuse to talk if they have not been contacted by somebody whom they know.

In other cases some people wanted to talk too much as they have so much to tell and they were having the opportunity to speak about their children.

On average each of the interviews took about 45 minutes but some took about 90 minutes and in some places, some people took only thirty minutes. The factors affecting the length of the interviews were mainly the level of education of the interviewees and the ability to verbalise.

I must add that I learned far more about these people and their children from the fact that I went to talk to them in their home. I understood their way of life better from observation. If a research assistant had carried out these interviews, I would never have had such an insight into the way the different people live.

There were times where I obtained more information through informal talks after the formal interview and I had switched off my tape recorder.

In many instances the children were around and I took the opportunity to talk to them in front of their parents though this cannot be qualified as proper interview.

I have been able to interview two children who came to my office and whose parent I wanted to interview but the latter asked me to talk instead to the children themselves.

I must also point out here that a lot of information was obtained through informal conversations with colleagues and people met in my daily life. A casual conversation often led to an in-depth question from me where the answer gave a deeper understanding of the issues concerning the condition of children.

#### Key Informants:

There are some spheres within the scope of the research where it has not been possible to have access through lack of time and resources. In such cases, information has been obtained from key informants who were known to have in-depth knowledge of certain domains. For example, to obtain data about the pre-primary and the 0-3 age group, key informants have been interviewed as it has not been possible to visit large numbers of pre-primary schools and nurseries and interview large numbers of caregivers and pre-school teachers.

Such an approach has also been used especially to obtain information about the State's involvement in the promotion of the welfare of the child in Mauritius. In other cases where it was impossible to obtain unbiased information on a target group's activities, such as teachers' classroom practice, such information was obtained from trainee teachers who have been in contact with them or from other teachers themselves.

The use of key informants may have given rise to biased information in some cases such as data obtained from government officials who may have been giving only what is "correct" information, leaving out the "darker" side of the issue under discussion. There are also ethical issues also arose as in the case of teachers giving information on other teachers.

### **Analysis of Documents:**

Statistics from the Central Statistics Office, a branch of Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, have been used to support arguments in many instances. Statistics were heavily drawn from document such as: the *"Digest of Demographic Statistics 2002 ,)* – *"Digest of Educational Statistics 2003"*-, *Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey – First Quarter 2004 Main Results-*, *Mauritius in Figures 2003-*

Other official documents include the Government Notices and government gazettes where the various legislations on the child are officially published.

Statistics from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life have also been obtained and the most interesting ones for the project are those pertaining to

“School Health Statistics” which give an insight into the state of the health of children in the different districts of Mauritius.

CSO statistics have also been obtained on-line on its official web site.

Some checklists which were given to trainee teachers on their school based experience to study and learn about classroom practice in the primary classroom have also been used to cross check information obtained from the Teachers’ questionnaires.

### **The research assistants:**

The research assistants were employed mainly to process the questionnaires administered to parents and children and to transcribe the taped interviews.

### **Constraints and limitations:**

#### Ethics:

In any research project, ethical issues do arise and these may include access, confidentiality, respect of participants, and integrity of the researcher but there are concerns which are specific to children which have had to be respected for this research.

For ethical reasons, children themselves have not been subjected to in-depth interviews with a few exceptions when they intervened briefly during the interview of their parents and in the presence of the latter after permission had been asked by the researcher.

Field investigators (who were the children’s teachers in most cases) were explained about not forcing children to answer the questionnaires and they asked permission from the children’s parents before administering the questionnaires. In some cases, letters were sent to parents to ask for permission. The children and parents who answered the questionnaires did so under conditions of anonymity. Such precautions were taken with regard to the children because” *there is a duty that research is not carried out on children unnecessarily, and that the degree of intrusion is minimal*” (Geoff Lindsay – 2000:20)

#### The availability of time:

My biggest problem was the availability of time to carry out the research. I would like to point out that these interviews have been carried out in difficult conditions as most of them had to be carried out in the afternoons and on Fridays as the parents were mostly working. The afternoons were limited for me as on some days I had to lecture at the MIE till 5.00 p.m.

#### Non-response to questionnaire:

In some cases questionnaires distributed have not been answered by the targeted respondents. This is the case for parents rather than for children.

#### Representativeness of samples:

20 parents may be considered to be too small a sample to be representative of the larger population of each social group.

#### The non- inclusion of Rodrigues and the outer Islands:

Data has been gathered only from mainland Mauritius. The condition of children in Rodrigues and the outer Islands has not been included in this research because this would have involved additional resources and it was not within the scope of this research to do so. Rodrigues has its own social specific social profile which demands another research on its own.

## Chapter 3

### THE HOME ENVIRONMENT OF THE MAURITIAN CHILD

The Home environment of children will be influenced by two main factors, namely:

1. The socio-economic background of the children and their families,
2. Parenting styles which occur in various types of families

#### **1. The socio-economic background of the children and their families:**

Childhood cannot be studied in isolation from society at large. Childhood being a period of dependency on adults who belong to different social strata, each with their own specific attributions, it goes without saying that the children will also demonstrate the attributes of the social class of their parents. Therefore the socialisation process may vary with ethnicity and social class.

The quality of life of the children will also depend to a large extent upon the quality of life of the parents and their location in the socio - economic structure of society.

It is important to explain the characteristics of the various ethnic groups and social classes in the country in order to understand their impact on the child-rearing practices in the different types of families. Before analysing the social structure of the Mauritian society, the latter must first be situated within the present economic context.

The present socio-economic context: A changing economic environment and a changing society



Since Independence to date there has been a gradual change in the social and economic development of Mauritius. The island has moved from the state of a colony to an independent State, from an agricultural economy based mainly on sugarcane to an economy based on secondary industry and services such as tourism and financial services.

During the pre-Independence period and for many years after independence, the sugar industry has been the backbone of the Mauritian economy which was the source of livelihood for a big segment of the population. Now forty years after 1968, the situation has changed: Sugar is no longer the main buttress of the economy, it is the manufacturing sector which is the main prop of the economy. The importance of the industrial sector in our economy can be evaluated by the value of its exports compared to other sectors. In 2003, the value of exports in manufactured goods such as textile yarns, fabrics, made up, machinery and transport equipment, articles of apparel and clothing reached a total of Rs.31,193 million. In fact *“Our textile and apparel sector is today the backbone of the Mauritian economy, it employs 87% of the total EPZ’s workforce”* (Beedassy 2004:71 in *Industry Focus No71*).

In 2003, the value of export of articles of apparel and clothing amounted to more than 25 billion rupees (Rs 25,005 million), that is about 58 % of our domestic exports value while sugar exports amounted to only a little more than 8 billion rupees (Rs 8, 430 million), that is, nearly 20% of our domestic exports value. These are the two biggest of our domestic exports.

The shift in our economy is very apparent when we examine the change in the pattern of employment between the early years after Independence and present-day Mauritius.

The following table gives an idea in the shift in the Mauritian economy as we can compare the statistics for employment of 1975 , that is, the early days of the post-independence period with the present-day situation, forty years after independence when we can take note of the fact that the tertiary sector is the biggest employer sector wise but if taken individually among the different areas of the economy, we find that the manufacturing sector is now the biggest employer whereas in the early seventies it was the sugarcane industry which was the biggest employer.

**Table 4 -Employment sectors in Mauritius for years 1975 and 2003 compared**

<b>Economic sectors</b>	<b>1975</b>		<b>2003</b>	
	Absolute figures	%	Absolute figures	%
<b>Primary Sector</b>	58,305	<b>35.4</b>	46,500	<b>9.3</b>
Sugar –cane	50,612	<b>30.7</b>	19,900	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Secondary Sector</b>	29,905	<b>18.2</b>	183,500	<b>37.0</b>
Manufacturing	21,126	<b>12.8</b>	134,800	<b>27.2</b>
EPZ			80,000	<b>16.1</b>
<b>Tertiary Sector</b>	68,612	<b>41.7</b>	264,900	<b>53.5</b>
Trade , Restaurants, Hotels	6,412	<b>3.8</b>	96,700	<b>19.5</b>
Financing, Insurance and Business activities	2,671	<b>1.6</b>	22,500	<b>4.5</b>
Transport, Storage, and Communication	9,260	<b>5.6</b>	34,600	<b>6.9</b>
Services	50,269	<b>30.5</b>	111,100	<b>22.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	164,464		494,900	

These figures illustrate the shift in Mauritian economy from a predominantly agricultural one to an economy based mainly on manufacturing and the services industry. The primary sector used to employ about 35% of all workers, now it employs only 9% of them. The Sugar cane sector, which used to give to 30.7% of our labour force its livelihood, now employs only 4% of all workers while the manufacturing sector employs 27% of all workers and the services sector employs 22 % . With the development of tourism, the hotels

restaurants and trade have given work to 19,5% of all workers when once (1975) that sector was employing only 3.8% of workers.

The biggest employer being the tertiary sector of trade, hotels and restaurants, transport, communication, financing, business and the services, employed a total of 264,900 people in 2003. The second biggest employer was the secondary sector of manufacturing, electricity, water and construction employing about 183,500 people while the Primary sector which was once the biggest employer, is now employing a mere 46,500 people. In this last sector, we find the sugar cane industry presently employs only 19,900 people while in 1975 , the sugar industry was employing 50,612 workers.

With these economic changes, it is not only the economy which has been undergoing a slow change during the last 35 years: it is also the social structure which has undergone a change. When once the majority of workers belonged to the class of agricultural workers, now the bulk of employees are to be found in the manufacturing sector, more especially in the EPZ and in the services.

The traditional plantation economy with its typical stratification very often based on ethnicity and colour has gradually undergone changes though traces of the colonial social stratification still subsist today in our society.

### **Mauritian Society:**

Mauritius is a society which is barely two hundred and fifty years old,( if we date it back to its foundation round about 1735 when French Governor Mahé de Labourdonnais founded the colony). The present society is the result of the settlement on the island of groups of people of various nationalities at different periods of time during these last two centuries. It can be described as a raw society in the making, where the

boundaries between the social classes are a bit blurred. Mauritius is unlike old European states, with a long history where the social classes can be more or less clearly distinguished. It is a post-colonial society where social classes may very often coincide with ethnic grouping. In a plural society where slavery and Indian indentured labour had played an important part in its past history, social class, status and ethnicity are inextricably interwoven in contemporary society. Therefore economic, political and ethnic membership are bound to coincide with one another.

In order to understand social stratification in our society, we must first have an understanding of the various ethnic groups making up this society.

### **Ethnic Groups in Mauritius:**

Children in Mauritius belong to the various ethnic groups which have populated the island since its first colonisation by the Dutch in the seventeenth century.

To understand Mauritian society it is important to get an insight into each entity which makes up this society. Compared to other plural societies, Mauritius is far from being a “melting pot”. It is in fact a very compartmentalised one with each entity claiming a separate identity and practising exclusion of others. Arno and Orian (1986) analyse this multi-ethnic society thus:

*“ La fermeture, l'exclusion, nous semblent former le moteur principal de la constitution et la survie des groupes, bien plus que la collaboration. Espace restreint, lieu social limité, l'île Maurice connaîtra le clivage à l'extrême. Chaque groupe veut son territoire, qui devra nécessairement se superposer à ceux des autres. ....Chaque groupe est une société dans la société. Qui cherchera à accroître son empire sur les autres. (p.91)*

Each group has been able to preserve the characteristic features of its original culture through the socialisation of its children into their ancestral traditions, customs and norms.

It is therefore important to have an understanding of the origins of each ethnic group in order to grasp the importance of the variations in child-rearing practices among different families who may belong to the same social class.

### The concept of ethnicity and “community” in the Mauritian context:

Hookoomsing (1989) quotes Van de Berghe (1970) who has given a definition of ethnicity:

*“ Selon Van de Berghe, L’ethnie primordiale serait issue d’une extension de la famille en un groupe généalogiquement lié. Au fur et a mesure de l’élargissement numérique et territorial du groupe, l’appartenance par filiation devient de plus en plus problématique, D’où l’établissement de marqueurs ethniques, que Van den Berghe regroupe en trois catégories:*

- *Les marqueurs phénotypiques, i.e. les caractéristiques raciales;*
- *Les marqueurs culturels visuels, e.g. les vêtements, tatouages, mutilations corporelles, etc.*
- *Les marqueurs culturels de comportement, plus communs, ar plus fiables, e.g. la langue, les gestes, le port, etc.”*

All these “*marqueurs*” are used to delimit ethnic groups in Mauritius but there is also an official ethnic grouping. In official documents such as the demographic census until 1972, an ethnic group is called a “community”. Community is a term which is also widely used in Mauritius to designate an ethnic group. When we examine the census data we take note of the fact that ethnic groups have been arbitrarily categorised because some groups have been identified on the basis of religion as in the case of the Hindus, the General population and that of the Muslims while others have been labelled on the basis of phenotype and culture as it is the case for the Sino-Mauritians.

The main ‘communities’ in Mauritius have been officially classified thus: the Hindus, the General Population, the Muslims and the Chinese.

It is difficult to know the exact number of people in each different group as information about the ethnic appurtenance is not asked in the recent

census. The last census which gives data about the population by “community” in the Republic of Mauritius 1972 census. The population statistics for the different communities are as follows:

**Table 5- Population census- 1972 giving statistics on ethnic communities**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Hindus	428,345	215,752	212,593
Muslim	137,171	68,834	68,337
Sino-Mauritians	24,373	13,018	11,355
General Population	261,079	128,246	132,833
Total Population	850, 968	425,850	425,118

Addison and Harzaresing (1984) , gives us an indication of the proportion of various ethnic groups within the Mauritian society:

*“There is a very small but influential European section (about 1.3%), a very large Indian section (about 65 %), and a small Chinese section (about 3%)., the remaining 30 per cent are largely Creoles of mixed ethnic origin. It would be misleading however to regard these ethnic or community groups as being solid and indivisible. Cutting across the ethnic differences which distinguish and separate each of these sections from the others there are other factors which create divisions within each section.”*  
(Addison & Hazareesingh – 1984:78)

According to Martial (2002:74), it would seem that the Mauritian population consists of 52% of Hindus ( including Tamils, Telegus and Marathis), of 30% of the general population (descending from the Europeans, Hindus and Africans) of 16% of Muslims and of 2% of the descendents of Chinese immigrants.

A deeper analysis of these groupings reveal that within each official group, a number of different ethnic groups with different cultures can be identified while the official grouping did not give any indication of these differences.

One of the illustration of the amalgamation of different ethnic groups under one label is the group known as the “General Population”. This latter group consists of ethnic groups as different as the people of ‘pure’ African descent and the “Franco-Mauritians” who are of ‘pure’

European descent. In that group we find also other types of “Creoles” who may be differentiated according to their phenotype which may show more African or more European characteristics or even others of mixed origins, that is, a mixture of African, Indian, Chinese and European descent. The only common denominator among these very different ethnic groups may be their religion as they are mostly Christians and predominantly Roman Catholics.

In this study, though the broad official groupings are going to be described, the different smaller components of these groups are also going to be discussed as each entity has its own specific social characteristic.

#### The General Population:

This broad group known as the “ general population” reflects the features of a society based on slavery as it is stratified along skin colour and phenotype. In such a context, the whiter the skin and the possession of Caucasian features, the higher the social status. This type of stratification which originated during colonial days (French and British) has been perpetuated till today. This has resulted in a social pyramid with the White group at the top and the creole of Pure african origin at the bottom and in between these two groups, we have the people of mixed blood called the ‘Creoles’ which group consists of different layers differentiated from one another by the skin colour and texture of hair.

In fact, four main ethnic groups can be distinguished within the “General Population:

1. The Whites, mostly of French origin, though the group may also include a few of British origin, form a minority group of great influence and in many cases of great affluence.

2. A small group of coloured people with more White characteristics than African ones.
3. A large intermediate group which may be of a mixture of Whites, Indians, Africans and even Chinese,
4. A minority of Afro-Mauritians of more or less pure African origin.

### **The Whites:**

The Whites are the descendents of the French settlers who were planters, traders, sailors, soldiers, big landowners and high government officials during the French and British rule. This group which used to have its own internal social differentiation during colonial days (Grand Blancs and Petits Blancs- Rich Whites and Poor Whites), now form a more or less close-knit group. They form a high status group with a style of living comparable to the inhabitants of the industrialised countries. They are mostly of the Catholic faith and speak mostly French. This is a group which has been able to preserve its French culture through excluding members of other ethnic groups and through a socialisation process which is described by Arno and Orian:

*“La mémoire est remise a jour a chaque génération; les enfants en seront les dépositaires grace a des pratiques pour ainsi dire initiatiques. Chaque famille a une histoire qui leur sera enseignée. Ainsi, la leçon de choses comprendra aussi bien la nomenclature des caractéristiques physiques repérables, que les noms de familles, surtout là ou l'on ne peut plus observer des signes distinctifs.”*

*Dans toutes les famille, il ya toujours une grand-mere ou une tante tres informée au sujet du roman familial des autres membres de la sphere relationelle environnante. C'est ce personnage qui instruira l'enfant et l'adolescent de la généalogie des uns et des autres, des mariages contraccté, des infractions au code de conduite. Meme la bonne d'enfant, la 'nenene", participe a cette éducation .*

### **The coloured people:**

This group consists of people of mixed blood, that is of European, African and in some cases Indian origin but they possess more of the European phenotype than that of the African or Indian ones. They speak the French language mostly and French culture prevails in their home. The fact that this group of people has been excluded from the



White group is the result of exclusion which was being practised in the colonial society. This mechanism of exclusion, became more pronounced after the abolition of slavery in 1935. The Whites excluded the coloured people from their group while the latter excluded the newly liberated slaves from their group. The emergence of the “coloured group as a social group is described by Arno and Orian (1986):

*“ De 1835 a 1870, la strate la plus ancienne de la population de couleur qui soit socialement reconnue, c’est a dire les affranchis ou les libres de couleur, va se constituer en groupe fermé envers tout ce qui est hiérarchiquement plus bas et formera la couche supérieure de cette population. Tres tôt, une élite avait émergé de la couche des anciens libres.” (p.89)*

Their aspiration for more political power and higher social positions is also mentioned by Teelock:

*“It is said that they aspired to social equality because they could not hope to gain it in the political field where Franco-Mauritians had complete control of the political apparatus”(p.321)*

In spite of being excluded by the Whites, this group gained access to the upper strata of Mauritian society through their relentless effort at acquiring education. This is how many members of the coloured group entered the liberal professions: many became doctors, lawyers, and teachers as well as businessmen.

### **The Creoles:**

The creoles of mixed blood form the largest sub-group within the “General Population”. This group is the result of inter-marriage between various ethnic groups in Mauritius. Many are the descendants of the emancipated slaves (Moutou -1986:65) with a small proportion of White blood but there are also many whose forebears were Indian or Chinese immigrants. Physically, this group is an intermediate group between the coloured people and those who possess pure negroid features. Their skin colour ranges from light brown to dark-brown and their hair texture ranges from straight to frizzy. Most members of this group are Christians, mainly of the Catholic faith. They started to adhere to the Christian faith when their ancestors were forced by the slave-owners to be baptised while their Indian ancestors became Christians through the

missionary zeal of Catholic and Anglican priests and missionaries. The upper and middle strata of this ethnic group have the tendency to look towards the French culture for reference and they speak French to the children.

### **The Afro- Mauritians (the creoles with negroid features):**

This group, once a majority group after the abolition of slavery, has now become a minority group through inter-marriage with other groups. They may physically look like their African or Malagasy cousins, but they have barely retained any of their ancestral culture which has been almost obliterated by the slavery system, except perhaps for the “Sega” which is a distant descendant of the African dance. This group also has adopted the Western culture through acculturation during slavery days. This phenomenon is not particular to Mauritius but to all former slave-societies like the USA and the Caribbean countries where it is observed that the Blacks have not preserved any or very few of their former African culture.

The fate of the liberated slaves is described by Moutou(1986):

*“ Ayant été contrainte de vider les lieux (the plantations), la main-d’oeuvre africaine nouvellement libérée convergea vers les banlieus de l’époque. D’autres encore furent contraints a trouver refuge sur le littoral ou ils s’adonèrent a la peche et a des formes rudimentaires d’élevage et de cuture maraichère pour subsister.....*

*La main d’oeuvre africaine, considérée comme impropre a l’gricuture, se recyccla peu a peu dans les petits métiers mais fut surtout contrainte d’offrir ses services pour les tâches les plus pénible et les plus contraignantes” (Moutou-1986 :71,72)*

The above quote enlightens us about the reasons why Mauritians of African origin nowadays live mostly in the suburbs of the towns and along the coastal areas of the island. Many of them are still have the same occupation of their ancestors, that is, they are fishermen, craftsmen such as masons, carpenters, plumbers, etc. Apart from those traditional jobs, the Afro-Mauritians are now employed in large numbers

as factory workers. In this context, we can infer that there has not been much social mobility in this group.

This group of creoles is also of the Catholic faith which their ancestors were forced to adopt. According to the “Code Noir”, it was the duty of the Master to have his slave baptised. With the adoption of the Christian faith, the slave and his descendants gradually lost their original beliefs and abandoned their customs and traditions so much so that:

*“The Afro-Mauritian regard themselves as completely different from, and superior to, their counterparts on the Black Continent” (Benoit.C –1985)*

Therefore as discussed above, as the “General Population” consists of various groups which belong to different ethnic cultures, there may be some differences in the child-rearing habits and practices of the different families .We must not forget that there is a common thread between these different groups of people and that is the Catholic religion. This may mean that they share some common values based on religious principles. Another factor which may link them is the French culture to which, most people of the ‘General Population’ prefer to claim affiliation. This last factor has an influence over the language spoken at home, especially among the middle class.

### **The Indo- Mauritians:**

The Indo-Mauritians are mosly the descendants of the Indian immigrants who have entered the country as indentured labourers or as free immigrants. With the abolition of Slavery in 1835, and development in the sugar- cane industry, there was a great demand for agricultural workers and these were recruited from the British –controlled parts of India and the

*“British Government actively participated, administered and financed emigration and plantations in the colonies.”.(Teelock-2001:237)*

These workers known as “coolies” were to come to work under a period of indenture which varied from two to five years and though they were legally free workers, they were more or less treated like the slaves in the early period of Indian immigration. With the massive immigration of those workers, the number of Indians in Mauritius grew to such an extent as to outnumber the original population, consisting mainly of freed slaves, coloured people and Whites. Thus, in 1846, the number of Indians in Mauritius was 56,245, that is, more than half the number in the General Population ; but in 1901, the Indians had largely outnumbered the other inhabitants of the island.

The Indo-Mauritians have been sub-divided into two main religious groups: the “Hindus” and the “Muslims”. They now regard themselves as two separate social and political entities. The Hindus and the Muslims used to consider themselves as Indian immigrants politically united to fight the same battle for their social and political emancipation. With universal suffrage in 1958 and the imminence of Independence in 1968, the leaders of the different minority groups of the Indian community began to militate for the recognition of their separate identity and to demand that their rights should not be neglected. Thus it is that the Muslims were able to obtain that they be regarded as separate from the Hindus. As from the 1962 population census, the Indo-Mauritian community was divided into Hindus and Muslims.

The process of the “balkanisation” of the Indian community in Mauritius has amplified during recent years. The descendants of Indian immigrants who came from different cultural groups and different regions of India now claim their separate ethnic identity and have organised themselves into various socio-cultural organisations which receive subsidies from the State. The Recognition of the identity of the various ethnic groups has led to the setting up of cultural centres such

as the Tamil Cultural centre, the Telegu Cultural Centre and the Islamic cultural centre.

These broad terms of Hindus and Muslims also consist of other sub-groups who claim a separate recognition from the authorities.

### The Hindus:

The “Hindus” include various ethnic groups whose forebears migrated from different regions of India, which have their own native language and culture. These Hindus can be divided into two broad groups:

- The Hindus whose ancestors came from Northern India and spoke languages of Sanskrit origin.
- The Hindus whose forebears came from Southern India and who spoke the Dravidian languages.

The ancestors of the first group came mainly from the north-east of India, mainly from the provinces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where the language which is commonly used is the “Bhojpuri” language. The descendants of the Bhojpuri-speaking immigrants form the majority of the Hindus in Mauritius.

A minority of the Hindus are the descendants of those who came from the northern Indian states of Maharashtra and Gujarat where Marathi and Gujarati are spoken respectively. These minorities claim a separate identity from the rest of the Hindus.

The second large group of Hindus consist of the descendants of those immigrants who came from the Madras State (now Tamil Nadu) , where Tamil is spoken and those who came from Andhra Pradesh where Telegu is spoken. These two groups also claim separate identity from each other and from other Hindu groups.

All the Hindus of Mauritius may belong to the same religion but the different sub-groups belong to different cultures and therefore there may be some differences in traditions and customs and hence in their child-rearing practices.

### **The Muslims:**

The other main group of the descendants of Indian immigrants consist of the “Muslims”, who claim a separate identity from the “Hindus” but whose ancestors came from the Indian states of Bihar in the North – east and Gujarat in the North-west like many of the Hindus.

The Muslims whose ancestors came mainly from the Bihar region in India form about 90% of that community, and they used to speak the Bhojpuri language and they spoke Bhojpuri and Gujarati. The descendants of the Muslim immigrants claim to belong to the Islamic world rather than to the Indian culture though their children are studying “Urdu” (a north Indian language) as well as Arabic at school.

Islam is the most influential factor in child rearing among the Muslims of different social classes.

### **The Sino-Mauritians:**

The Sino - Mauritians, a minority group, whose ancestors came mostly from the Chinese province of Kwan Tung also consist of two linguistic groups, that is the “Hakka” and the “Namsoon” or Cantonese, that is the language of two groups of Chinese cohabiting in the same province. All Mauritians of Chinese ancestry have been categorised as “Sino-Mauritians” because of their distinctive phenotype. Though they are mostly Christians, they have not been grouped with the “general Population”.

Confucianism may have played an important role in influencing family values and child-rearing practices in the Sino-Mauritian families. It is a culture where obedience and respect of elders and ancestors are

enduring values. Education is of great importance in the sino-Mauritian family.

Martial (2002) summarises the history of the Sino\_Mauritians in the island:

*“ Paralememt. Un mouvement similaire, mais en nombre beaucoup plus réduit, se mit en place entre la Chine et Maurice. Ce mouvement, au fil des ans, donna naissance a une communauté mauricienne d'origine chinoise, forte aujourd'hui de 30,000 membres. Ces Mauriciens furent jusqu'à la seconde Guerre mondiale, des commerçants (grossistes et détaillants), , a tel point que chaque village se dota de sa boutique gérée par un chinois. Depuis ils ont, en grand nombre abandonné leurs comptoirs pour occuper les plus hauts échelons de l'économie mauricienne, ainsi que ceux des pofessions libérales et de la fonction publique, Malgré le nombre restreint de Mauriciens d'origine chinoise, la culture mauricienne n'en est pas moins tres influencée par les valeurs culturelles chinoises.” (p.70)*

One way in which the State recognises the different ethnic groups is by including in the schools curriculum of the primary and secondary schools the teaching of ancestral languages for the children belonging to various ethnic groups. Thus we have the teaching of languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, Arabic, Telegu, Marathi and Mandarin as well as the traditional subjects such as English, French, Mathematics, and Scientific subjects. The fact that the Asian languages have been given equal status with other subjects by recent court decisions, has encouraged parents to invest in the education of their children in Asian languages through paying for private tuition in those languages.

The determination of parents to preserve their cultural and religious identity has an incidence upon the type of socialisation which large numbers of the children of Mauritius experience.

However with economic development, the ethnic differentiation and stratification of the Mauritian society is slowly giving way to an economic type of stratification in a context of a changing economic circumstances as explained above. This trend is confirmed by Bunwaree (1994):

*“ Pluri-ethinc Mauritius indicates an ethnicity-related 'habitus' which is rapidly being replaced by a socio-economic one. Over the years, expansion of education and the changing occupational structure, consequences of Mauritius's continued integration in the global economy have made it possible for greater numbers of people form the different ethnic groups to climbing the social ladder.*

***“Qu’ on le veuille ou non les divisions communautaires a Maurice font de plus en plus place a la stratification sociale ou l’usage des langues relletent plus un niveau d’éducation et/ou un statut social qu’une appartenance ethnique”(Baggioni and Robillard,1991:165)” ( Bunwaree, 1994:173)***

That is why, in order to understand social differences in the condition of the child in Mauritius, it is important to analyse the social class structure in this country.

### **Social Classes or Economic Stratification:**

Like most societies in the world, the Mauritian society is a stratified and hierarchical one with a distinct social group on each rung of the social ladder so that all the children cannot be considered as one homogeneous group of society but as belonging to the social strata of their family. The various strata of society can be distinguished from each other in terms of their differential control over wealth, power and authority. These latter variables will in turn influence the different quality of their working and living conditions, life-styles, life-span and education.

It is not my intention to engage in a lengthy discussion on the class structure of Mauritian society but merely to seek a model to explain the differences and inequalities in lifestyle among children of the Republic. The best way to do this is to refer to the various theories of social stratification to explain the structure of Mauritian society.

Before going further, I must , in the context of this research, clarify the term 'social class' which has been used by many sociologists with a great variety of overtones. These various approaches to the use of the term “class” is summarised by Wright(1978):

*“ When non-Marxists use the term “class”, it generally designates a group of people who share common “life chances” or market positions (Weber 1968,p.927. Giddens 1973; Parkin 1971,pp.18-23), common positions within status hierarchies (Warner 1960; Parsons 1970,p.24), or common positions within authority or power structures(*



*Darendorf 1959,p.138; Lenski 1966, p.95) In contrast to these usages, Marxists define classes primarily in terms of common structural positions within the social organisation of production. (Wright in "Giddens and Held:521")*

The term "class" in its Marxian terminology has purely economic connotations, meaning a person's or a group's relationship's to economic production and acquisition of goods and for Marx, there are only two main classes: the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat who will always be in a situation of conflict with each other because of differing interests. But the Mauritian society is much too complex for it to be described as a situation of class struggle in the Marxian sense because very often, struggle for power is between the different ethnic groups- people vote for political party not because it represents the interests of a particular class but because it is supposed to represent the interests of particular ethnic group.

Therefore for the purpose of this report, the term "social class" will be used to cover both class and status as status plays an important role in the social class differentiation of such a society which we are presently studying. Social class and status will be used according to Weber's definition. According to Weber, class situation and class refer to the same or similar interests which individual shares with others in relation to consumer goods, means of production, assets, resources, and skills. On the other hand, he defines 'status' (Standische Lage) as 'an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privilege; it is typically founded on: style of life, formal education, and hereditary or occupational prestige."

Class distinctions are without doubt linked with status distinctions though property as such is not always recognised as a status qualification, but in the long run it is. Giddens explains this relationship between class and status according to Weber :

*" Status affiliations may cut across the relationships generated in the market, since membership of a status group usually carries with it various sorts of monopolistic*

*privileges. Nonetheless, classes and status groups tend in many cases to be closely linked, though property: possession of property is both a major determinant of class situation and also provides the basis for following a definite 'style of life'.* (Giddens-1973:44)

When we examine the structure of social classes in present day Mauritius, we can observe that the broad lines had partly already been established ever since the early days of colonial rule.

Social status and ethnicity seemed to have determined the social position of individuals in the colonial society but this type of stratification seem to have perdured to some extent in present day Mauritian society at least on the sugar estates. In some cases there seem to be a correlation between phenotype and socio-economic position in the social structure of the society. This phenomenon is more easily recognised among “the General Population”.

Teelock (2001) gives an insight into the social stratification of colonial society . She explains that while the agricultural sector was dominated by the Indian immigrants.

*” ...the higher positions on estates were filled by non-Indians in 1871: the managers, overseers, clerks, and also outside the estates in professional positions civil servants, physicians, teachers, ushers etc. In ‘industrial employment’ i.e. as bakers, blacksmiths, coopers, masons, sawyers, shoemakers, wheelwrights etc., there were 17,504 men of the ‘General Population’ (The census does not inform us of their ethnic background but they would be of French, African and Indian ancestry ), 2,862 Indian men and 3,386 women of the ‘General Population’.”(p.263)*

The traditional plantation economy of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, had given rise to a stratified society where economic position used to coincide largely with ethnic membership. Thus in the traditional rural society, the owners of sugar estates, who are called the big planters, were and still are the Franco Mauritians, descendents of the French colonists, the overseers in the sugar-cane fields and factories were the coloured people, the majority of the Indo Mauritians were the field labourers though a small number had been able to buy small portions of land and become a new class known as the “small planters”.

On the other hand, during the nineteenth century, a new Indian bourgeoisie started to emerge as mentioned by Selvon S.(2001) :

*“A middle and higher bourgeoisie of Indian immigrants would also emerge during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, as moneylenders, planter, traders, jewellers who would employ Indian coolies in their shops and fields.”(p.235)*

This new bourgeoisie of Asian traders had settled in the urban centres, but more particularly Port Louis (Teelock :310), where there was also a petty bourgeoisie of small traders and service workers. In certain areas of economic life there was a concentration of some ethnic groups: for example most people of Chinese, South Indian origin (Tamils) and the Muslim Gujarati in Port Louis, were engaged in petty trade while the artisans or craftsmen were mostly people of “Creole” origin.

Since independence, some sort of reshuffling in the social patterns occurred. Some traditional classes opened up to new membership and new classes have emerged. The processes which led to the reshuffling of the social stratification of Mauritian society started well before independence. The events and processes which led to the breaking up of the colonial ethnic stratification are the following:

- Political pressures mainly from the urban Creoles, led to the extension to the franchise in 1948, allowing the labouring classes, namely the people of Indian origin and the Creoles to vote and the working class gain access to political power (Mathur – 1983). Universal suffrage in 1958, consolidated their position in the political arena.
- Due to the “Grand Morcellement” in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Teelock 2001:302) or the subdivision of the big sugar estate lands, through the sale of small plots of marginal agricultural land to the former indentured Indian labourers, the latter became land –owners. Their descendents now make up the class of “small planters”.

- Access to education to children of all social and ethnic origins especially since independence in 1968, led to considerable social mobility , especially for people of Indian and Chinese origin and to a lesser extent to people of “creole” origin.
- New political leaders of the post – independence era opened up the Civil Service to the educated youths of Indian origin and thus led to the creation of a new middle class. This process is explained by Dinan, Nababsing, Mathur ( in Young -1999):
  - “ *A few decades ago, access to employment into the Franco-Mauritian controlled private sector of the economy was difficult for educated Indians. Instead they became absorbed into the rapidly growing state and parastatal bureaucracy*” (p.77)
  - These authors go on to explain the emergence of the Hindu and creole middle class: “ *the social mobility of the two major ethnic groups, namely Indians and Creoles, thus evolved more or less separately in the public and the private sectors of the economy respectively* (p78)
- With the onset of industrialisation, and the setting up of manufacturing industries, a new class of manual workers came in to existence in urban as well as in rural areas: the factory –workers. They are mainly the children of the Indian labourers an the creole craftsmen (carpenters, masons,etc.)

Certain aspects of nineteenth century social stratification along ethnic lines, still persist in our present day society : People of Chinese origin as well as members of the Muslim community still own big business in the main urban areas. The only difference is that the number of Sino-Mauritian traders is dwindling while the number of petty Muslim traders has increased with the influx of Muslim agricultural workers from the rural to the urban areas. The big traders of Gujerati origin still form the upper crust of the Muslim Community.

The big landowners are still the Franco-Mauritians while the agricultural workers are mostly of Indian origin and the craftsmen in the sugar mills are mostly of Creole origin.

In terms of upward social mobility, the ethnic group which has not made much progress is the “Creole” group (mostly descendants of slaves) and the present situation of the Creoles in Mauritan society and economy is summed up by B. Moutou (1986):

*Les Creoles sont:*

- (a) coupés du monde agricole dans un pays où l'agriculture reste encore l'épine dorsale de l'économie;*
- (b) Les grands absents dans le monde du commerce et de petites et moyennes entreprises, et*
- (c) Pour des raisons relevant de leur milieu d'études, les grands absents dans la fonction publique ou para-publique. On les retrouve de moins en moins dans les secteurs vitaux même comme petits commis ou plantons. Contrairement à la croyance populaire, ils sont de moins en moins nombreux au niveau des firmes privées. (p. 79)*

The Creole community in Mauritius still carry the weight and stigma of slavery with them.

### **Occupation Groups and social Class:**

In British academic research, the most commonly used model for the classification of social classes is the Erikson/Goldthorpe (EG) class schema. The EG schema classifies social classes into the Service Class (divided into higher and lower-level classes), the Routine non-manual workers, the Petty Bourgeoisie, the farmers, and the working class. All these classes can be recognised in the Mauritian context but with its particular history, this model must be used with care as there are nuances within our social structure which are specific to a newly industrialised post-colonial society. For this research, a more traditional combined Marxian/Weberian model of stratification is being used for the purpose of making this research more accessible to the wider public. This model recognises four main class categories, namely : the Upper Class, the Middle Class, the working Class and the Poor.

If we can compare the handful of families who control a large proportion of our agricultural land while also having large shares in the manufacturing and hotel industry and who enjoy a very high standard of living, to the landed gentry of the UK, we then have our upper class.

The higher grade professionals, administrators and officials and high level managers have been grouped under the term “Upper Middle Class”, while the lower-grade professionals, administrators and officials, technicians and small proprietors and small planters have been grouped under the term “middle class”, that is what is usually referred to locally as “*la classe moyenne*”. The clerks (routine non-manual workers) of the public and private sector and other rank-and-file employees have been grouped within the “lower middle class”.

Within the working classes, have been included the manual workers, a class which is itself stratified into skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, with each strata enjoying different status. The highest strata is the skilled manual workers.

**Table 6 - Erikson/Goldthorpe schema and the Marxian Weberian classification**

Types of occupations	Names used in Erikson/Goldthorpe schema		The Marxian/Weberian classification used in this research
Higher-grade professionals, administrators and officials, managers in industrial establishments.	Higher level service-class	S E R V I C E  C L A S S E S	Upper Middle Class
Lower grade professionals, administrators and officials, higher –grade technicians, supervisors of non-annual employees	Lower-level service class		Middle Class
Routine non-manual employees in administration and commerce, sales personnel, other rank-and file employees	Routine non-manual workers		Other Middle classes
Small proprietors with and without employees	Petty bourgeoisie		
Farmers and small-holders, other self-employed in primary production	Farmers		
Supervisors of manual workers Skilled manual workers Semi- and unskilled manual workers Agricultural workers and other workers in primary production	Workers/ working class		Working Classes – Skilled workers and unskilled workers

There are groups of people who are not included within the formal job structure of our society because they are engaged in informal and seasonal occupations and there are also the very poor, many of whom are living on the margin of Mauritian society in the squatter colonies. The table below gives us an idea of the stratification of society in terms of type of occupation and their location within the Marxian/Weberian model of social classification.

It is not easy to obtain information about the number of people belonging to each social class in Mauritius but the data obtained by the CSO for its multi-purpose Household Survey can be helpful to work out a simple classification of social classes in the Republic

According to the Multi-Purpose Household Survey - First Quarter 2004, the occupation groups in Mauritius have been classified according to the International Standard of Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and the results are:

**Table 7 – Occupation Groups in Mauritius**

ISCO	Occupation Group	Both Sexes (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
1-3	Legislators, Senior Official and Managers; Professionals; and technicians and associate professionals	14.9	13.5	17.6
4	Clerks	8.9	5.2	16.2
5	Service Workers and shop and market workers	17.3	17.2	17.4
6-8	Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; craft and related trades workers; plant and machine operators and assemblers	36.4	42.7	23.6
9	Elementary Occupations	22.5	21.4	25.2
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

When we compare the EG schema, the Marxian/Weberian classification (MWC) and the ISCO, we can co-relate the occupation groups of ISCO with the social classes of EG and MWC and both The classifications could be used as a basis for the delimitation of social classes in Mauritius. Thus occupations 1-3 coincide with the upper middle class , 4 and 5 consist of the middle class while 6-9 make up the working classes with 6-8 being the skilled workers and number 9 the unskilled workers. This co-relation between the ISCO and the MWC gives an approximate idea of the proportion of people in the various social classes as the table above is showing data concerning only the working population.

### **Social Classes Described**

What differentiates these classes of people is inequality of access to resources, to position and inequality of opportunity.



### **The Middle classes:**

Haralamboss and Holborn (2000:56) describe the middle class in these terms:

*“The most usual way of defining the **middle class** is to see it as consisting of those individuals who have **non-manual** occupations, this is occupations which involve, in some sense, an intellectual element.”*

We cannot speak of one middle class because within this class, there is a wide variety of groups which can be differentiated in terms of income, occupational authority and status that sociologists prefer to speak of middle classes. Thus for this research, I have divided the middle class into the upper middle class, the middle class proper and the lower middle class. What distinguishes the children and parents of the middle classes from those of the working classes is that the middle classes generally enjoy **material advantages** and **cultural advantages**. Material advantages include generally secure high salaries which allow parents to plan for and spend upon medical care, schooling and tuition, comfortable housing conditions and expensive leisure activities. Cultural advantages means that the parents the parents have enjoyed a high level of education and they can transmit their cultural capital (Bourdieu) to their children through socialisation and know what are the most appropriate cultural materials (books, music, sports, etc.) which they can provide to their children to make them adapt to and form part of the school culture. Bourdieu explains “cultural capital” in these terms:

*“ Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the **embodied** state, i.e. , in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the **objectified** state, in the form of cultural goods (picture, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc. ), which are the trace or realisation of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc., and in the **institutionalised** state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.” (Bourdieu –1986 in Ball -2004:17)*

According to Bourdieu's theory, we can infer that in order to have access to cultural capital in its institutionalised state, a person must acquire first the cultural capital in its objectified state and in its embodied state.

There are differences in terms of material advantages and cultural advantages between the upper middle class, middle class and the lower middle class. These differences will be apparent throughout the report as the various aspects of the condition of the child in Mauritius are being described but it would be helpful to distinguish between the different types of middle classes.

#### The Upper Middle Class:

As we set out in the above table (the EG class Schema and the MWC), the upper middle class consist of the high-grade professionals, administrators in the public service and the high managers in the private sector. Within this class two groups can be distinguished in the Mauritian context: the old established members and the newly admitted ones.

The old established members are mainly the Franco-Mauritians who are commonly known as the "White group", descendents, mostly of the French Planters. They may consist of a minority of not more than ten thousand souls, but still maintain their control of the agricultural sector. Most of the sugar estates, which own more than half of agricultural land, are still under their control to a large extent. The "Whites" are the administrators and managers on the sugar estates where the upper group of managers are called the "L'Etat Major". Apart from owning sugar estates, they also form part of important hotel groups and textile manufacturers (Peerthum 1983). They are also to be found among the

middle managers of the banking and business sectors and are also professionals such as doctors, and lawyers. We must note that a very small minority of the Whites are the owner of great wealth, but because of historical reasons they constitute a group which enjoys a very high status in Mauritian society. Though, they constitute the traditional upper classes, there are now members of other ethnic groups who also have joined the ranks of the upper middle class through education and social mobility. Thus in the urban areas and in some of the big villages we have an upper middle class of professionals and big traders of people of Indian (Muslims and Hindus), Chinese and Creole origins .

Upper middle class families seem to be mostly nuclear with two to three children. As the parents enjoy high levels of income, the children of the upper middle class enjoy a high degree of material wealth which allow them to live a comfortable and care-free life.

According to the sample of parents' questionnaire from Sodnac and from members of the White community, the upper middle class children's parents who are the professionals earn salaries of more than Rupees 25,000. Very often both parents earn high salaries.

They generally live in large houses, which allow them to have a certain amount of privacy. Typical Upper middle class families' houses seem to contain seven to fifteen rooms. Some even boast of more than fifteen rooms. Each child seems to have a room of his/her own.

As the parents generally own one or two cars the children rarely or never travel by bus.

#### The Middle class:

The middle class proper consist mainly of the civil servants, small traders and middle managers and those working in the service industries and living in the urban areas. The small planters in rural areas, who are mostly Hindus, can also be classified as forming part of

this middle class though in this category there are wide variations where there are rich landowners with hundreds of hectares of land as well as families who own only one or a few arpents.

In a changing society, new classes are emerging. In urban as well as in rural areas, there has emerged a new middle class consisting of people who were the children of the labouring classes and who through education have been able to join the civil service and other service industries.

#### The Lower Middle Class:

The routine non-manual workers such as clerks and secretarial staff are usually categorised as belonging to the lower middle class. They form a transition class between the working class to the middle class. In fact they possess some of the features of the middle class in terms of nature of their work which is white collar, office or technician-based work reliant on educational qualifications and they enjoy job security and pension rights, especially those who are government servants. On the other hand their salary may very often be lower than the wages of the skilled manual workers. Goldthorpe calls them a “white collar labour force”. The emergence of this group of the middle classes is due to the “*embourgeoisement*” of part of the working class since independence especially through access to education for the children of the working class.

#### Petty Traders, Hawkers, etc.

Another sub-group, which is difficult to be categorised according to the traditional class system is the class of petty traders, hawkers and those engaged in informal jobs but whose members are very often successful at making their business thriving i.e. the “*dhall puri*” sellers etc., that they have become land-owners in the urban areas. A typical locality

where these petty traders thrive is the Plaine Verte area of Port Louis where many seem to be the owners of their residence and enjoy a certain degree of comfort.

### The Working Classes:

Traditionally the working class in Mauritius consisted mainly of the mass of rural agricultural workers of Indian origin in the sugar-cane and tea fields and the artisans and craftsmen of creole origin who worked in the sugar mills. In the urban areas there were the craftsmen and lower-grade service workers mainly of creole origin. In some coastal villages such as Riviere Noire, Grand Gaube, Mahebourg there were the fishermen, descendants of the former plantation slaves who went to settle there after the abolition of slavery to earn a living as fishermen.

In contemporary Mauritian society, the working class in Mauritius does not constitute a homogeneous group. We cannot speak of a class but of classes.

Different categories can be identified:

- the manual workers, office attendants, and care-takers who work in the civil service and municipalities as well as in private firms and with individuals;
- the skilled manual workers: masons, mechanics, cabinet workers.
- the factory workers who may themselves be categorised according to the degree of power which they wield in their work-place.
- the unskilled workers such as labourers and cleaners.
- Primary industry workers such as the field labourers and fisher men.

It must be pointed out that among the working classes, those who work in government jobs are attributed with higher status though the highly skilled manual workers, such as masons, plumbers, carpenters, mechanics can be earning very high wages for skills which are very

scarce. Those skilled manual workers can be having a good standard of living which can be compared to that of the lower middle class.

We must also differentiate between the working classes of the rural areas and those of the urban areas

A particular aspect of urban working classes is the fact that it predominantly consists of Creoles of African descent in terms of ethnic belonging. A good number belong to a thriving community of skilled workers and some have been able to climb the social ladder to form part of the middle classes. Large numbers work in the manufacturing industry. A good proportion of this Creole community seem to be among the poorest of the Republic and they have settled mostly in the poor suburbs of urban centres, such as Roche Bois, Sainte Croix, Tranquebar and the “Cités” of other towns. Their standard of living is typified by the type of dwelling in which they live. They generally live in very small houses of two rooms and the sleeping conditions give us an idea of the degree of discomfort enjoyed by member of the family, including children.

The situation of the working classes in rural areas is partly the result of historical processes.

Traditionally the working classes were made up of the artisans, generally skilled manual workers, working in the sugar mills and the other group was made up of the field labourers. These two groups were divided along ethnic lines: the artisans were generally the creoles, descendants of the former slaves and who stayed in a “*camp*” quite distinct from the labourer’s “*camp*” where the field labourers, generally people of Indian origin, descendants of the Indian immigrants, lived.

These two classes still exist today but their numbers have dwindled with the great reforms which are occurring in the sugar industry. With the centralisation process, sugar mills are closing down and workers

are being offered the choice of the VRS(Voluntary Retirement Scheme). The field labourers also are included in the scheme.

In fact, field workers are becoming scarce and expensive as the younger generations prefer to work in the manufacturing sector where the pay may be higher and they do not have to toil the earth and get “dirty”.

Many of this new generation of industrial workers of the rural areas, seem to enjoy a rather good standard of living and with the VRS of their parents they have been able to obtain a piece of land where they have built comfortable houses for the whole family. Such cases of moderate affluence can be witnessed in Cote D’Or (where data for this research has been gathered).

The people of coastal areas, especially in the north, east and west of the island, have also experienced changes in their occupation with the development of the tourist industry and the establishment of big hotel complexes which have given employment opportunities to them. One example of a thriving community whose members owe their prosperity to the hotel industry is the village of La Gaulette one of the localities where data have been gathered for his research.

Many of the children of the creole fishermen, who themselves are the descendents of the former plantation slaves have found employment in the fastly developing hotel industry as service workers such as chamber maids, waiters, bar-men, cooks and even in secretarial jobs. Some members of this creole community are still fishermen though there are now members of other communities who have joined the ranks of the fishermen.

The working classes are generally characterised by job insecurity , low purchasing power and debts. The recent closing of quite a number of industries and the resulting loss of jobs of thousands of workers is an

illustration of the job insecurity of the working class. The job insecurity of parents can have very negative effects upon the general welfare of the children. Another characteristic of the working class is the low “cultural capital” (Bourdieu -1986) which can be detrimental to the educational achievement of the children of the working class.

A concept which is closely associated with the theories on Social Stratification is that of “Cultural Capital” which has been proposed by Pierre Bourdieu(1983). In fact, Bourdieu identified two other forms of capital apart from the economic one and these are the cultural capital and the social capital, in the context of a proposition for the development of a general science of the economy of practices, capable of examining capital in all its forms.

Cultural capital is explained (by Bourdieu) in terms of non-economic forces such as family background, social class, varying investments in and commitments to education, different resources, etc. which influence academic success. Bourdieu distinguishes three forms of cultural capital: the *embodied* state (personal to the individual, in terms of knowledge and attitudes absorbed from the immediate social environment), the *objectified* state (in terms of cultural goods), and the *institutionalised* state (in terms of academic credential or diplomas).

“Social capital” according to Bourdieu, consists of “ the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other word, to membership in a group – which provided each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital...” (Bourdieu in Ball, 2004:21)

Though Bourdieu’s theory on cultural and social capital has been severely criticised in some quarters and has been described as being



mechanistic, over- deterministic and inflexible, it is being heavily referred to by many sociologists.

In this report, Bourdieu's theory has been found to be highly relevant and in several chapters, especially the ones dealing with child rearing practices in education, health care and the provision of leisure activities, the differences in cultural and social capital between the middle classes and the working classes is very apparent. In the following chapters, we become aware of the fact that the higher the location of the family in the social pyramid, the stronger the cultural and the social capital which reinforce the effects of the economic capital of the middle classes.

Whatever the social class or ethnic community, different parents have their own personal style of responding to the needs of and making demands on the child. These parenting styles will influence Child - rearing practices and this aspect of parenting is going to be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### HOME ENVIRONMENT 2 : PARENTING STYLES

The future development of the child into a blooming adult may depend to a great extent upon the emotional climate of the home which may in turn be influenced by the **parenting style** of the father and mother. The parenting styles will influence the way parents respond to the physical, social and emotional needs of the child. The parents not only respond to the child's needs but also make demands upon the child to obtain the latter's cooperation in the accomplishment of the important parental task of childrearing to take the child from childhood to adulthood. Therefore parenting styles may be revolving around issues of « control ».

The classic work in this field of parenting styles is that of Diana Baumrind (1975,1980) who has identified three broad categories of parenting styles, namely the **authoritarian**, the **authoritative**, and the **permissive** parents.

Baumrind has categorised the parenting styles according to parental values, practices, and behaviours and the degree of parental demandingness. Parental demandingness refers to 'the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys.

To this list, Craig (1999) has also included « indifferent parenting » (Maccoby and Martin,1983). These broad parenting styles have been described as follows:

**The authoritarian parents** demand unquestioning obedience. The parents assert their power through punishment which is very often corporal in nature if the child's actions or beliefs conflict with the parent's beliefs of what is right or wrong.

**The authoritative parent** exercises control through reasoning of the child rather than resort to corporal punishment. Hoffman, Paris and Hall describe the authoritarian parent thus:

*«When directing their children's activities, authoritative parents use a rational, issue-oriented method and encourage a verbal give-and-take that the authoritarian parent does not tolerate» (p.224)*

**The permissive parents** are characterised by an interpersonal relationship with their children. They consult a lot about decisions in the family and do not usually punish their offspring. They are not too demanding about their children's household responsibilities

**The indifferent parents** also called the 'rejecting-neglecting' parents are indifferent to their children's needs and seem to spend as little time with their children and their parental role seem to constitute a burden for them.

An analysis of the data obtained from interviews and observation, reveals several parenting styles. These styles range from the rather indifferent parents to the very authoritarian ones. These different parenting styles may be the results of the type of education received by the parents, the personal beliefs of the parent on parenthood (they may be influenced by religion) and the social milieu of the parent in general. According to the data of this research, it would seem that certain parenting styles are more prevalent among some particular social groups.

Though authoritarian parents could be identified in almost most social classes and communities, nowadays authoritarian parents are more common among working class parents with very elementary level of education while the authoritative parents have been identified more often among middle class parents. On the other hand the permissive and indifferent parents can be identified among all social classes.

### **The Authoritative and reflective parent:**

Some parents seem to be more reflective about their role as a parent. Those parents in general are the more educated ones. The quality of their answers during interviews give us an indication of their level of reflectiveness. This middle class parent is explaining why she does not allow her child to have

certain drinks and sometimes is critical of her own laissez-faire attitude in certain circumstances :

- *Donc, il faut être sévère sur la nourriture. Et je donnais beaucoup de coca aussi surtout quand il faisait chaud parcequ'on avait dit que c'était bien bon, c'est bon pour les intestins quand les enfants étaient déshydratés et tout. Mais là je dois dire que j'ai coupé parcequ'ils se sont tellement habitués, ils voulaient avoir du coca tous les jours. Ca j'ai arrêté, donc c'est que pendant le week-end et... Mais allons dire que ce n'est pas une nourriture super saine, c'est pas parce que je ne veut pas c'est parce que le goût des enfants ne sont pas comme nos goûts et parcequ'on ne veut pas trop lutter : bon aller, tu ne veux pas manger de légumes, bien...La solution facile.*

Another middle –class mother tries to negotiate but sometimes she has to scold, and sometimes « *Les claques partaient* »

***La discipline, comment est-ce que vous imposez la discipline ?***

- *Ca dépend quand ils étaient petits ou grands etc. Il n'y a avait pas des règlement strictes écrits comme ça*

***Vous étiez sévère ?***

- *Pas trop sévère. J'essayais plutôt disons de faire comprendre plutôt que de crier, de dire il faut faire ça et les claques partaient.*

***Ah les claques partaient ?***

*Assez rarement, il fallait que je sois énervée et tout. Jamais il n'y a eu de rotin chez moi ou de coup de sangle ou de je-ne-sais-quoi. Mais de temps en temps je m'énervais et je fichais deux bonnes claques. Mais je crois que les enfants savaient que arrivé une certaine heure, il fallait dormir, qu'aux heures de repas on mangeaient et quand elles retournaient de l'école quand elles étaient plus grande était la discipline. Je ne disais pas : asseyez vous 2/3 heures pou travailler, mais elles savaient quand elles retournaient, elles faisaient leur travail. Et puis quand elles avaient fini, elles allaient jouer dans la cour. Mais elles n'allaient pas disons en semaine voir des amies etc. Les week-ends on*

The above –quote gives an impression of authority while at the same time, the mother tries not to be too severe. This same attitude was adopted another upper midlde class parent :

***Vous ne donniez pas des claques ?***

- *Ah de temps en temps j'envoyais des claques hein. Et je... c'est pas plus mal.*

***Pour les plus jeunes aussi ?***

- *Non, pour les plus jeunes non mas de temps en temps j'aurais dû. Même les aînés me disent : tu aurais dû envoyer des claques, ce aurait été plus facile. J'ai dit : oui mais je veux expliquer et tout. Ils m'ont dit : mais c'est plus facile d'envoyer une claque.*

***Mais qu'est ce qui marchait le plus, quand vous expliquiez ou quand vous envoyiez des claques ?***

- *Si on donne tout le temps des claques, forcément c'est pas bon. Si on fait qu'expliquer aussi c'est pas bon parce que de temps en temps une bonne claque remet les choses en place. Mais avec François, jamais j'ai battu.*

The following case gives an idea of the friendly relationship which can exist between children and parents in a middle class family of Franco-Mauritian origin which at the same time does not exclude some indulgence towards the children:

**Les week-ends vous allez a la mer ?**

- *Les week-ends a la mer si on peut. Une ou deux fois les dimanches nous restons la. Meme les enfants eux aussi quelques fois les dimanches disons ils peuvent rester la. Nous sommes bien...très famille, hein envers nos enfants. Tres proches. Il y a le dialogue, une bonne communication ici.*

**Quand ils étaient petits vous jouiez avec eux ?**

- *Oui.*

**Vous et votre mari ?**

- *Oui.*

**Vous parliez beaucoup avec eux ?**

- *Beaucoup. Jusqu'à l'heure. Tout se passe très bien. C'est ça qui est fantastique. Surtout aujourd'hui les jeunes. C'est que... il faut ! C'est vrai nous sommes comme des amis hein, nous enfants et nous. Des copains quoi.*

The above family speak of dialogue and communication and understanding not to say complicity between children and parents. In such an atmosphere, beating and shouting seem to be very foreign. The absence of shouting may be the result of the parents' personality and level of education.

Again in another middle class (Chinese) family in Portlouis , emphasis is on dialogue and communication, though there is the « battu et zouré » occasionally (« Zouré » means only scolding and « battu » means mild slaps in this family) :

**Disons la discipline dans lacaz, ki sanna ki impose li ? C'est ou, ou bien....**

- *Enfin tous les deux, mais zot papa aussi.*

**Mais si jamais zot désobéir ki ou faire ?**

- *Gagne batter, gagne zourer.*

**Ou batte zot ?**

- *Enfin bien rare, mais si vraiment zot faire mauvais même...*

**Mais ou ki ou faire si banne la désobéir ou ?**

**Belle-mère :**

- *Enfin moi mo laisse zot papa, mama corriger mais avant mo pou cause are zot, mo pou explique zot.*

**Mais en général zot désobéir ?**

**Maman :**

- *Non, zot écouter. Simplement bizin cause avec zot bien. Mais après zot bien ensam, zot habituer jouer ensemble.*

In many cases the authoritative parent does not have to explain and negotiate with the children too much in later years as once they have been socialised in a certain way, they seem to have been cast in a mould from

which it is difficult for them to stray as there is a system of gentle accountability which has been set up by the parents. This Hindu middle class mother describes her children's behaviour and their relationship with their parents :

**...rules and regulations ?**

- *C'est a dire ki nous panne... jamais noune bizin dire zot ki zot bizin faire, ki zot pas bizin faire. Séki noune faire, c'est que ler zone commence alle l'école que ce soit en pre-primaire ou bine primaire, kan zot vini zot raconte moi sipa : intel ine faire tel zaffaire, intel tel zaffaire, intel ine cause coume ça, a partir de la on dirait, nous prend ça l'exemple la pou dire zot : to trouver ça pas bon. Mais ene zaffaire peut-être li bon mo faire ressortir,.....*
- *Kot moi banne zenfans, nous ti ena ene principe ki la journée nous pas zoene. Alors c'était pour le dîner ki nous zoene. Et ek moi disons, mo ti available, comment zot rentre lacaz là, communication la ti vin que soit avec mo garçon ou avec mo tifi. Même jusqu'à l'heure quand, secondaire Vikram kan li pas alle l'école, li pou vini li pou raconte moi. Jamais mo pou demander. Nek mo pou demander : ok, la journée ine bien passer ? Mo penser tout maman demande ça. Là zot pou commence dire moi : mais to conner ma, telle affaire, telle affaire. Lerla a partir de là mo pou dire : mais to trouver li pas ti besoin faire ça. Ça pas bon, to pas cause coume ça ek to mama. Mais mo rigide, stictly speaking, jamais mone dire : vini nous assizer nous causer. Noune prend l'exemple, comment mo pe dire ena ene communication ki zot même zot vini zot dire moi tout. Alors de ce fait, jamais mo panne gagne problème. Any kind, mo panne gagner. (Hindu Mother – Quatre Bornes)*

While encouraging dialogue with the children at dinner time, which seems to be a daily ritual generally in middle class families, the mother explains that her children are accountable for their actions during the day .The friendly conversations are very often accompanied by gentle « indoctrination » about the correct behaviour.

The authoritative parent is both responsive and demanding but in different families, the parents have their own way of being responsive and demanding.

**Authoritarian parenting:**

This style is characterised by parents who are aware of their duties towards their children by providing for all their needs but at the same time expecting unquestioning obedience to rules and regulations. If the rules are not obeyed according to the parents' expectations, the latter resort to vociferous scolding and to corporal punishment.

The authoritarian style is the most common style of parenting mainly among working class parents, whose education may range from being barely literate

to secondary schooling. Physical punishment seems to be a common practice among working class parents. Beating and shouting at the children seem to be a normal practice. As these mothers from Camp Diable testify, when their children disobey or are naughty their main recourse is «beating» and «scolding» (criyé) :

**Kan zot faire mauvais ki ou faire?**

- *Batte zot.*

**Ou aussi ?**

**1st mother :**

- *Oui. Encore moi mo ena trois garçons, zot bien faire mauvais.*

**Ki qualité désordre zot faire ?**

*Zot laguerre a cause ene kitchose.*

**2nd mother:**

- *Moi mo ena tifi, nannier li pas rode faire. Mo criye are li.*

The use of corporal punishment to enforce discipline is echoed in this transcript of a working class mother from Beau Bassin (Muslim), living in an extended family where the children seem to be spoiled by the grand parents:

**Non, ki sanna ki mette discipline are zot ?**

- *Seulement zot peur moi. Kan zot faire ene zaffaire banne la dire moi lerla kan mo vini tantôt, lerla zot peur. Mo puni zot, mo pas laisse zot guette télévision, mo dire zot alle dormi bonne heure, pas laisse zot jouer.*

**Mais si arrivé zot désobéir ?**

- *Si zot désobéir, ena fois mo casse ene rotin mo routine zot derrière. Après zot alle assizer.*

**Mais grand-père, grand-mère ki faire zot ?**

- *Grand-mère, grand-père pas kapave cause are zot.*

She firmly believes that the use of a «rotin» is more effective in enforcing order and discipline :

**Grandpere et grandmere gâte zot ?**

- *Ça même, sitant ine gate zot, zot pas écouter. Kan zot faire ene zaffaire ki pas bizin faire, normal mo pou trappe ene rotin. Seulement pas sipa trappe calchul tapper non. Mo pou prend la peine alle casse ene rotin mo pou amener. Sipa mo donne zo cinq coups, si prochaine fois mo tende ene zaffaire mo augmente li. Mais pou tapper avec n'importe ki kitchose, non.*

Even in her beating, there is a limit, she does not wish to inflict too much harm on her children as she does not use harmful utensils like a «calchul» (big spoon) to beat her children.

**Mais kan zot désobéir ki ou faire ?**

- *Mo pas batter, mo criye are zot. Et quand mone fini attrape ene rotin même zot pou alle dans ene coin. Mais mo pas batter mo juste crier.*

**Mais ki qualité désordre zot kapave faire ?**

*Parfois zot insignifiant. Ou dire zot pas faire ça, zot pou faire ene zaffaire... Parfois zot trouve moi prend ene couteau, zot pou prend couteau pou alle coupe légumes. Mais si couteau la fiter zot la main kapave couper. Du moment zot trouve moi faire ene zaffaire zot pou alle faire li pareil. Mais lerla mo bizin criyé are zot. Parfois zot pas écouter, zot jouer dans la terre. Lerla mo bizin criye are zot.*

In many cases, even though the parents do not beat their children, the fear of physical punishment seems to be enough to make the children obey. This mother explains how with a non-verbal message she makes her children obey her:

**La discipline, comment ou impose la discipline dans ou lacaz ? Eski ou batte zot, ou criye are zot ?**

*Batter non, mo palé batter mais crier oui. Mais tellement mone habituer zot avec mo regard, comment mo guetter zone fini comprend, mo pas bizin crier. Parski parmi ene société ou pas kapave criye ek ene zenfan kan li faire mal élevé, ou même ou pou senti ou gêner dans ça l'heure là.*

**Mais ki qualité mal élevé zot kapave faire ?**

*Zot pou taquine zot camarade. Sanne la pou pince sanne là, lot là pou faire sanne là, zot là pou rier, sanne la pou dire li pas riye moi.... Ça mo pas content. Façon mo pou guetter même zot pou fini comprend lerla, zot pou tranquille.*

**Mais arrivé zot désobéir ou ?**

*Assez rare seulement. Si arrivé zot fine faire li mo pas pou dire zot nannier mais quand zot pou vine lacaz, lerla zot pou gagne zot crier avec moi.*

**Mais dans lacaz zot désobéir ?**

*Bien rare.*

**La plupart du temps zot faire séki dire zot ?**

*Oui.*

**Mais comment ou explique ça, eski ou manière élever zot ki faire ki zot...**

*Peut-être parski mo lé ki zot commence bien dans la vie. Au fait bien rare ki zot pou prend ene mauvais chemin, ene mauvais conseil. Et tout seki pou arriver zot faire moi conner parski mo vivre couma camarade avec zot. Mo pas comment ene maman sévère.*

The element of fear is present in the process of socialisation when parents are authoritarian. Very often discipline is maintained through fear rather than through corporal punishment and the father is the one who is most often the parent who inspires fear.

In many families, especially the working class ones, the father is a person who inspires fear in the children. From different interviews of mothers, it would seem that they rely a lot on the father to control the children. The father is the one who “*mette dur*”, “*batté*”, “*checker*”. The mothers seem to spend their time “*criyé*” but with very poor results on the children’s behaviour.

A mother from Stanley describes for what reasons she and her husband have to discipline their child very severely:



..... Fek la li pane faire devoirs, hier line prend so livre line donne camarades mais li, li panne faire devoirs. So papa leve are li, li panne faire so devoirs. So papa habituer checker. Mais li prete tout so zaffaire, so crayon tout li prête so camarade.

**Mais li apprane ?**

- Oui li apprane mais ou bizin mette dur are li.

**So papa aide li kan pou faire devoirs ?**

- Oui, mais parfois **kan ena pou batte li, li batte li** mais lerla li alle faire rapport dans l'école li. Mais lerla faire appelle so papa. (interview)

Even if there is no corporal punishment, the father's presence and scolding seem to inspire fear, as exemplified by this family of Triolet :

**Comment ou mette discipline are ou banne zenfans, ou criye are zot, ou batte zot ?**

- Non, pas batte zot. So papa mette dur ene tigitte.

**Comment li mette dur ?**

- Li criye are banne la. Pas nécessaire batte zot, zot peur li. (Triolet)

This element of fear leading to obedience among children is also present in this transcript of an interview of a couple in the squatter colony of Case Noyale.

**Mais banne zenfans kan zot désobéir ki ou faire ?**

**Papa :**

- Moi ki control zot.

**Zot peur ou ?**

- Normal.

**Zot plus peur ou ki zot mama ?**

- Normal, parski mo pas rier moi.

**Ou batter ?**

- Rare. Si mo casse ene rotin mo pou batter, mais rare.

**Ou crier ?**

- Tous les jours.

**Madame, ou crier ?**

**Maman :**

- Ça tous les jours.

In families where the father inspires fear, the father/child relationship seems to be strained and friendly conversations with the parent are rare or even absent. This mother from Roche Bois speaks about the father/child relationship in a working class family:

**Mais li, li occupe banne zenfans la ?**

- Oui, li travaille li vini. Enfin... li pas trop. Bane zenfans la ek moi couma dire moi ek zot, comme ca non. Li alle travail li vini.

**Li causer are zot ?**

- Oui, ene ti moment. Li acheter ene gateau li amene la, li cause are zot. Sipa li pou dire grand la : mais demain pena l'école, assizer nous guette ene film ensam.

**Mais causer meme, li pas causer ?**

- Non.

**Mais li pas bocoup letemps aussi avec zot ?**

Non

Some mothers, though authoritarian in style, for sentimental reasons do not beat their children but they shout at them a lot. Though beating seems to be a common practice in the family as she refers to her mother who advises to beat the children instead of shouting at them, this mother from Roche Bois does not seem to like the idea of beating her children to discipline them:

***Mais ou veille veille zot, ou criye are zot sipa lor maniere zot comporte zot a table ? Ou exige certaines manieres a table ou zot faire se ki zot envie ?***

- *Non zot faire se ki zot envie, mo pas exiger. Seulement mo pas content kan zot prend zot l'assiette lor zot. Parfois zot pe guette television, ca kapave glisser, manzer kapave tomber.*

***Letemps zot desobeir ki ou faire ?***

*Mo crier. Tout le temps mo grand-mere dire moi, mo mama dire moi : to bizin batter, arrete crier to pou malade. Mo pas kapave batter. Kan mo batter mo senti... couma dire mone faire zot du mal. Parski moi aussi mo pas pou content ene dimoune batte moi. Mo pas batter, mo criye ek zot, mo dire zot grand zot bizin comprend kan mo causé..... »*

## **The Permissive/indulgent Parents :**

These are doting parents who though they are aware that there must be some control over the children's behaviour, are too doting to discipline them. They have the tendency to spoil them allowing them to get away with their misbehaviour. Though there are rules about the division of labour in household chores, this mother from Triolet explains how she prefers to do those chores herself :

***Kan zot désobéir, ki qualité désordre zot faire ?***

- *Zot pas faire désordre ça quantité la.*

***Ki qualité désordre ?***

- *Dans jouer même mais zot pas faire ça quantité désordre ki bizin criye are zot la. La guerre le ena ene ti peu mais zot pas faire moi crier ça quantité la.*

***Mais si jamais mo zot désobéir ki ou faire ?***

- *Mo criye are zot imper.*

***Ou pas batter?***

- *Non.*

***Mais ki sanne la zot plus peur, zot papa ou zot mama ?***

- *Zot peur zot papa plus.*

***Papa la batter ?***

- *Non, li pou causer. Jamais li batte zot.*

***Kan zot sorti l'école zot faire l'ouvrage ?***

- *Si zot fatigué zot pas pou faire nannier, si zot ena devoirs tout ça, lerla mo dire préférable pas faire nannier, mo même pou faire.*

***Ou pas exigé ?***

- *Non.*

Some parents are aware of their responsibilities but they feel powerless to control and regulate their actions and behaviour as they do not have the

means to enforce discipline because of their own weak personality and lack of education. This results in a sort of laissez-faire climate which can be to the detriment of the children. This grandmother who is in charge of the children in the absence of the parents who are at work explains how the children do what they like as she cannot maintain discipline :

**Ler la letemps zone sorti maternelle, ou meme oune contigne occupe zot jusqu'à.. ?**

- *Oui oui. Depi bane la vini, alle cherche zot. Loto quitte zot labas. Alle cherche zot. Parfois mo sœur fini sorte travail 11 heures, li fini faire zot dulait tout li garder. Lerla donne zot. Zot fini boir, change zot linge lerla zot commence faire zot desordre. Bizin criye are zot. La kan zot vini la, ayo ! Bizin crier meme are zot. Couma zot regler television zot trouve ticomique pa bon la, zot pou teigne la, zot sorti. Prend bicyclette. Chacune ena ene bicyclette. Zot pou prend zot pou monter.*

**Mais pena loto tous ca ?**

- *Non, mais pa laisse zot sorti couma dir dan lot coté la. Nek zot faire ca boute la. Parfois zot fini aller ! Ou dir zot meme, zot fini aller. (interview – Cote D'Or)*

This other mother, living in a shack at Roche Bois, claims that she maintains discipline through corporal punishment and scolding but her voice and attitudes reflected a lot of indulgence

**Mais kan bane zenfans la desobeir ki ou faire ?**

- *Mo batte zot.*

**Avec ki ou batte zot ?**

- *Parfois coup de rotin, parfois are mo la main meme.*

**Zot pas rezimber ?**

- *Non.*

**Ou crier aussi ?**

- *Crier, oui. Gagne nerf are zot.*

**Mais ki zot supposé faire dans lacaze ? Ki, ou donne zot l'ouvrage pou faire ?**

- *Oui. Parfois faire l'ouvrage.*

**Mais kan zot pas alle l'ecole ki zot faire ?**

- *Ca meme l'ouvrage zot faire apres ene journée zot assizé, guette television.*

**Parfois mo trouve zot zouer zouer dans la rue la. Mais pena trafic bocou la ?**

- *Oui, dir zot pas zouer dans la rue. Couma zot veille ou ine alle ene place la, zot sorti zot aller.*

She was speaking in a fatalistic way about her children's behaviour and at the same time was admitting how her parenting style was being ineffectual.

This other mother from Roche Bois also explains how ineffective she is at maintaining discipline. She does not seem to have any control over her child during the day.

**Mais si li faire desordre, li desobeir? Ki ou faire ?**

- *Mo criye are li.*

**Batte li?**

- *Parfois. Pas fort. Mais parfois, trop mauvais pas content ecouter du tout. La couma congé, ene journée li zouer, li alle kot ene camarade lot coté ene journée li zouer.*

### **Over caring Parents:**

There is a category of parents who may be authoritarian in their demands towards the child, demonstrate a stifling sort of « overcaring ». This overcaring is apparent in the way they want to do everything for their children acting as a sort of personal servant for the child, giving the bath, tying the shoe laces, spoon - feeding the child and even going to the extent of going to school everyday to feed the child or children. This grand mother from Triolet explains how her daughter -in -law and occasionally herself carry the lunch pack to school every day at noon and « *faire zot manger* » :

#### ***Mais ki so mama donne li pou alle l'école ?***

- *Li pou donne li so du pain, mette fish fingers, burger la-dans, so du beurre, mette so mayonnaise ou bien li pou mette ene cari, ene rougaille. N'importe, banne tipti zaffaire, li pou fini mette li. Li pou mette so jus ou ene l'heure so de l'eau. Li pou amene ene yoplait l'heure deux heures coume ça. Couma gagne l'occasion, vers midi nous alle guette zot pou faire zot manger, nous amene manger depi lacaz.*

#### ***Ou aussi ou amene manger pou zot ?***

- *Oui. Li pas rode manger a cause ça nous bizin alle faire li manger.*

This practice of taking hot meals to school at midday is common among non-working mothers in rural areas where the distance between the school and the home is very short. However in the Port Louis region also, especially in the Plaine Verte area where many mothers do not seem to be working outside the home, this practice is very common. In fact, in a primary school in Plaine Verte, there are dispositions which have been taken to cater for the needs of the feeding mothers during recreation : there is a covered area of the schoolyard where long tables and benches have been installed for the parents' and children's convenience for the midday feeding ritual.

This overcaring is observed again for the bath of the children as this mother points out that she does not allow her younger children to bathe by themselves as she believes that they are too young to do the job properly :

#### ***Zot baigne zot tout seul ?***

- *Non, moi ki baigne zot. Si mo pou laisse zot, zot pou baigner par zot mais si moi mo baigne zot, zot pou plis propre. Zot zenfans zot pas pou conne baigner tellement bien. Sanne là parfois mo laisse li, li baigner par li mais ene fois par semaine moi mo bizin baigne li.*

This working class mother from Stanley also wants to continue to intervene in the bath of her children even as they grow older.

***zot baigner par zot même ?***

- *Non, mo même mo occupe zot.*

***Jusqu'à ki l'âge ?***

- *Mo garçon, on dirait ti plis malin, disons jusqu'à cinq ans. Mo apprane li le matin comment pou prend so bain, pou brosse so ledents mais jusqu'à l'âge cinq ou six ans mone donne li so banne grands bains.*

***Deuxième la, jusqu'à ki l'âge ou ti pe baigne li ?***

- *Mo garçon cinq ou six ans. Quand li sorti l'école li tire so linge li baigner mais kan ene grand bain mo donne li. Mo montrer li. Mais aster la li palé. Mo tifi même lot fois mo dire li mo frotte so le dos mais li palé.*

This mother has stopped giving the bath to her six year old son but she continues to closely supervise her child's bath .

***A partir ki l'âge zone commence baigne zot tout seul ?***

- *Mo tifi avant mo ti pe baigne li mais kan line gagne six ans mone dire li : to bizin conne baigner par to même, alle dans toilette tout ça. Mo garçon li pou gagne cinq ans là mais line trouve so sœur aller, li dire : « mama moi aussi mo pou baigne tout seul » Lerla mo allume douche là, mo dire li : « aller, mo pou guette toi comment to pou baigner » Là li pou baigner par li même, lerla mo demande li : toilette ? Li dire moi : « toilette mo pas pou kapave lave mo derrière, to bizin vine laver » Seulement li baigner, kan line fini baigner mo guetter si line lave so cheveux, so lecorps tout propre.*

***Arrivé ou alle baigne li ene deux fois ?***

- *Oui, bizin guette li avant couma dire. Mais là mone trouver ki zordi banne là ine fini baigner par zot même. Mone demande li si line frotter embas les bras tout. Li dire moi oui, so licou tout et line brosse so lipié. ( interview at Vallée des Pretres)*

Another mother from Valee des Pretres also speaks of supervising the bath of her children :

***Ou encore baigne zot ?***

- *Non.*

***Tipti là ?***

*Brosse lipié, sipa guette zot ongles, si savate lavées. Pou zot pas reste sale.*

Such close control of feeding and bathing may lead the child to become very dependent and take a longer time to acquire his/her autonomy. Feeding and bathing are only a few of the situations where very often the mother is trying to cling to her « baby ». Such mothers are generally those who do not work and have the time to supervise their children very closely. It would seem that working mothers have the tendency to train their children to become

independent at an early age as they do not have too much time to devote to their children.

This over - caring attitude is not to be encountered only among working class mothers only but also among the upper middle class parents who though may not be giving their bath to the children of more than 5 years old but may be exercising a very close control over them by overseeing so many of the children's activities. It may take the form of constantly transporting the child by car to and from school everyday and on top of that there is the parent who accompanies the child to all the other non-academic activities such as dancing lessons and tennis lessons. These practices continue even during the adolescence of the children. Many of the latter are not able to travel by the public transport by themselves as they have never been accustomed to do so.

Those parents who are behaving in such an overprotective manner towards their children are not allowing their children to become autonomous and may affect the emotional development of their children in some way.

### **The Negligent parent :**

At the other extreme end of a continuum of parenting styles, we find the negligent parent who contrary to the overcaring parent , does not show much interest in the welfare of the child and do not seem to have as ideal « doing their best for their children as other parents of other categories. According to the street educators, the parents of the street children are mostly of the negligent type. Those children roam the streets of towns and villages without their parents having much knowledge of their whereabouts.

Another indication of negligence of parents may be the number of children who suffer from injury and poisoning. In 2002, 10 infants died from injury and poisoning, 4 children aged between 1-4 died from accidental drowning and submersion, others died of accidents caused by fires and flames. On the other hand 280 children of under one year have been discharged from hospitals, suffering from injury and poisoning. Many of these deaths and injuries for children of less than one year may have been due largely to parental

negligence. In fact the media informs us from time to time of children's deaths caused by accidents where the parents were responsible. Such cases consist very often of children being crushed to death by the father's own car or lately we learnt about the toddler girl drowning in a bucket in her bathroom, while she was playing with the water. We cannot help questioning the sense of responsibility on the part of the parents.

### **Inter-generational differences in parenting styles:**

Though, it is not within the scope of this research to investigate parenting styles of past generations in Mauritius, this issue kept emerging through many of the interviews which were being carried out mainly with the present generation of parents. Some parents liked to compare their child-rearing practices and their parenting style with that of their own parents. Some still follow the practices and advices of their own parents while others were critical of their parents' parenting style. Therefore it would be of a certain interest to learn about some parenting styles of the previous generation in Mauritius and compare them with them with present day child-rearing .

This mother from Vallée des Pretres who used to live at Triolet in her childhood speaks of her mother's way of taking care of her children as if it was near-negligence while her own parenting style verges more on the overcaring type. Her whole child-rearing focusses more on the education of her children while a generation ago most people of the rural areas were uneducated and were not too concerned with the education of their children, more especially girls.

***Mais si ou compare ou même, couma ou ti élevé par ou mama et comment ou élever ou zenfan li ti pareil ?***

*Non. Moi mo pe veille zot plus. Mo mama pas ti veille nous ça quantité là. Longtemps kot dimoune ti pe veille zenfans coume ça !*

.....  
***Ou mama ti pe travaille ?***

*Mo papa ti pe vende gâteaux dans l'école mais mo mama ti pe alle donne coup de main.*

***Li pas ti pe gagne letemps occupe zot ?***

*Avant, kan mo ti plus tipti li pas ti pe travaille mais seulement mo pas rappelle sipa ça quantité là li ti pe veille nous. Nous ti pé jouer, kot nous envie nous ti pe fini aller mais pourtant mo pas laisse ça banne là. Mo bizin conner kot zot été. Zot l'heure l'école, zot l'heure manger, zot l'heure devoirs tout mo guetter. (Ragini – Vallée des Pretres)*

On the other hand, some of the educated parents of the past generations may not have demonstrated a very child-friendly parenting style. This father from an upper middle class (Franco Mauritian) family, who is quite close to his children and is of the authoritative type speaks of a very authoritarian style of parenting in his own parents' family :

***Vous étiez proche de vos parents ?***

- Non.

***Pourquoi ?***

*Bein, c'était comme ça Les parents pour moi était des étrangers. On ne parlait jamais. Nous étions une famille de 12, ils n'avaient pas le temps de s'occuper de qui que se soit. Dans la semaine on rentrait, on partait, fini, terminé. Bonjour, bonsoir, c'est tout.*

***Votre maman ne travaillait pas ?***

*Non elle ne travaillait pas mais était comme ça et il n'y avait pas de dialogue. J'ai toujours moi, quelque chose qui m'avait frappé toujours quand j'ai connu B....., ma femme. Les premières fois que j'ai été la voir, j'ai trouvé ça sympa de voir le friendship qu'il y avait entre les parents et les enfants mais chez moi il n'y avait pas. était une barrière. Et ce était pas pour ça qu'on ne respectait pas nos parents, non ! Je trouve ça ridicule. Mais je crois que ça a changé un peu.*

***Vous croyez que leurs (vos parents) valeurs étaient différentes ?***

*Non, je ne peux pas vous dire pourquoi c'était comme ça C'est une génération, c'est ma génération Je parles avec beaucoup de copain de mon age plus qu'a ma mère. Il n'y avait pas de dialogue a l'époque pour la plupart.*

***Il y avait beaucoup de discipline ?***

*C'était l'armée. C'était l'armée. Si vous rentrez a table, si vous mettez vos coudes a table ils vont vous dire : ce pas une tenue a table. Aujourd'hui je vois un enfant qui va venir déjeuner ou dîner sans chemise, bein les parents acceptent. Je crois qu'il faut avoir une juste mesure de ces affaires la. Il faut bien donner. Il ne faut pas laisser aller non plus mais de notre temps était l'armée...la cour martiale. Il y avait une heure pour manger et si l'enfant était pas la bien...*

***Il était puni ?***

*Pas puni mais... ....*

Past parenting styles may be having a very strong influence upon the parenting styles of present generations of parents as the above father explains that though he may try to be friendly with his children, they seem to « fear » him as they are reluctant to confide in him but confide more in their mother.

***Mais peut-être que du moment vous vous n'avez pas eu ça avec vos parents, c'est pour ça que vous êtes plus proche de vos enfants ?***

- *Moi je crois que si je vous fais une idée, mes enfants ont un peu peur de moi.*

***Peur ? Pourquoi ?***

- *Je sais pas. Ils vont dire certaines choses a la maman qu'ils vont pas me dire. N'est-ce pas ?*

***Maman :***

*Oui, ils avaient peur. Maintenant...*



It would seem that this father's past upbringing may have had an impact upon his general attitude to his children however hard he may have tried to be more friendly.

These broad patterns of parenting which have been described above, will influence the socialisation patterns in different types of families. The different parenting styles influence the different ways in which parents respond to the needs of the child and contribute to the emotional and social development of the child.

## **Chapter 4**

### **CHILD REARING PRACTICES IN MAURITIUS**

Since the beginning of the human race, mankind has realised that it is only by taking great care of its children who are very fragile at birth and in the very first years of its life, that it will be able to ensure the survival of the race. Mankind does not want to survive biologically alone but wants to have its values, traditions and culture transmitted to the next generations. Different communities, ethnic groups or nationalities have specific ways of taking care of their children which means that there are different patterns of child rearing throughout the world depending upon differences in culture.

Child rearing can be described as a set of practices/activities surrounding pregnancy, childbirth and the treatment of young children. The practices are related to a large extent to the beliefs and the resources available in a particular community.

Child rearing practices include all the activities which will ensure the child's physical well-being, development and survival, that is feeding, bathing, clothing, sleeping in comfort and giving physical warmth. Child rearing also include socialisation activities such as toilet training and how to behave in society while taking care of the emotional and mental development through interaction with adults and other children, stimulation and play. The child rearing practices not only provide physical security from harm but also emotional security which is essential to the proper development of a young human being.

In Mauritius, child rearing may have certain variations depending upon the ethnic belonging of the family but most of the time, variations in child rearing will be due to differences in social class which may determine the availability of resources. Differences will be influenced by the amount and quality of knowledge available to the mother. This knowledge could have been obtained from the older generations, from friends, or through reading or through formal education. The level of education of the mother will influence to a large extent the quality of the child

rearing practices though as we have learned in the previous chapter, parenting style may also play an important role in the child rearing practices.

The socio-economic context and its influence upon child rearing:

Child rearing practices in Mauritius have also been strongly influenced by the economic development of the island since the last forty years, especially since Independence.

Economic development has had repercussions on families which have evolved from being mostly of the extended type to mostly of the nuclear type. With industrialisation, there has been an increasing number of mothers who now work outside the home as this meant a considerable boost to the family budget and a certain economic independence for the women.

In 1972, only 25,854 women were being employed outside the home, while in 2003, there are about 167,800 working women. Whereas in the early seventies most working women were employed in the agricultural sector, today most women are to be found in manufacturing , mainly in the EPZ sector.

**Table 8 -Female employment in 2003**

<b>Industrial Group</b>	<b>No of female employees</b>	<b>% of total female employment</b>
Agriculture, hunting, forestry & fishing	10,300	6.1
Mining& Quarrying	100	0.05
Manufacturing	65,400	38.97
Electricity, gas and water supply	200	0.11
Construction	800	0.47
Wholesale&retail trade	23,400	13.9
Hotels and Restaurants	7,600	4.5
Transport, Storage and communications	4,400	2.6
Financial intermediation	3,300	1.96
Real estate, renting and business activities	4,200	2.5
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	8,400	5.0
Education	13,900	8.28
Health & Social work	6,400	3.8
Other community, social and personal service activities and private households with employed persons	19,400	11.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>167,800</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Economic Indicators March 2004 :5, CSO

As we can see from the above table, the employment sector where women are highly concentrated is the manufacturing sector where nearly 39% of women workers are employed. The next biggest employers of female workers are: Wholesale and Retail Trade (13.9%), community, social and personal activities and private household with employed persons (11.5%), and education (8.2%). As we can see the sectors which employ large numbers of women are limited but these sectors are demanding in terms of time devoted to the work.

Among these working women, about 70 % are married or have been married and divorced or separated. This means that most of these women are mothers who are responsible for the rearing of their children.

Working in the factories means that mothers have to leave the home very early and sometimes come back home very late when there are over- times. Large numbers of those factory workers leave home between 6.00 and 6.30 hour and large numbers return back home after 19.00 and 20.00 hours. This means that when they leave home, some of the children are not yet awake and when they go to school, there may be nobody to see to it that they get a proper breakfast or that they are taking a lunch pack to school. Many parents solve this problem by giving substantial amount of pocket money to the children with the ensuing risk of buying junk food and other junk products. Teachers often report that many primary school children seem to be coming to school with a lot of money, that is more than enough to buy cakes, etc.

On the other hand the parents come home some hours after the children have returned from school. This means that there are thousands of children who are not under any adult care and supervision after school hours. Part of the problem is solved by the private tuition up to 17.00 hours but this occurs only on three days of the week.

The absence of the mother from home when the children are left to themselves either in the morning or in the evening may have considerable negative effects upon the feeding habits, hygiene and leisure activities of the young children.

The absence of the mother from the home at times when he children may be greatly in need of them is being felt in many Mauritian homes because most mothers are now being employed as according to the CSO statistics, though 167,800 women are actively engaged in various fields of employment, the actual labour force for women aged between 15 and 54 amounts to 178,300. This means

that only about 6% of the female labour force, likely to be the mothers of young children is not employed outside the home.

The larger proportion of working mothers since the seventies, is having important repercussions upon child rearing practices in Mauritius nowadays.

Child rearing practices in Mauritius will be examined in different areas of child care and these are :

- 1. Nutrition Patterns of Mauritian Children**
- 2. Health**
- 3. Education**
- 4. Leisure Activities**

## **4.1 Nutrition Patterns of Mauritian Children**

### **Infant feeding**

In UNICEF's report of 1998 on the state of infant feeding in Mauritius, it is reported that :

*“There has been some improvement with regard to breast-feeding. The prevalence of breast-feeding has been kept at a high level at around 90% but there is still a lot of confusion about the meaning of exclusively breast -feeding.”*

During my field-research, most mothers from different ethnic groups and social class, acknowledged the importance of breast-feeding in the growth of an infant. What differentiate the mothers' practices seem to be in the time-span between feeding times, the number of times during a day and the degree of exclusiveness of breast-feeding.

#### **Time-span of breast-feeding:**

The length of time over which mothers breast-feed their babies vary according to the availability of the mothers (working and non-working mothers), the possibility of breast-feeding or the amount of milk available from the mother.

The common practice is to breast-feed during a period of three to five months but most working mothers of whatever social class, exclusively breast feed their babies up to three months. Some mothers stop breast feeding totally (wean) while others continue to alternate with other forms of feeding such as powdered milk and vegetable purées. When the mothers resume work, the infant is breast-fed in the morning and afternoon while powdered milk and purées are given during the day by the care-giver (nanny or grand -mother).

Some young working mothers who have learned about the technique of “milking” themselves and keeping the milk in the refrigerator so that the care-giver can heat and give the mother's milk to the infant. A middle class mother of the Franco-

Mauritian community explains how she continued with breast-feeding while at work:

***Mais comment vous le nourrissez ? Vous l'avez allaité ?***

*Oui. Je l'ai allaité, bon les trois premiers mois pendant que je ne travaillais pas et puis même les deux mois qui ont suivi aussi. Je l'allaitais à la maison et puis c'était toute une organisation parce que je tirais mon lait au bureau, donc pendant les cinq premiers mois au fait il n'a bu que mon lait. Enfin que mon lait, disons qu'à partir de quatre mois il a commencé à manger fruits, légumes et puis jambon, poulet qu'on a introduit au fur et à mesure.*

When the infant continues to be fed with her mother's milk even when the latter is at work, is not only good for the infant but also for the mother who may suffer from engorged breasts

This practice of extracting the mother's milk to feed the baby by means of a bottle is described by another upper middle class mother who gave birth to a premature baby and preferred to feed her child with her own milk while he was still being kept in an incubator at the clinic:

*Donc finalement mone faire comme ça. Même pas appelle allaité li parski letemps ki mone commence mette li au sein, li pas ti ena ça reflex la. Donc mone bizin on dirait contigne ça processus la, tirer, donner, alle quitter. Line habituer ek biberon finalement et pou pas donne li directe du lait commercial, mone contigne tirer. Mo ti ena ene la pompe electrique heureusement, donc line facilite mo tache. Tous les jours, toute longue la journée mo tire du lait mo donne li. Lerla ler line fini sorti l'hôpital mone alle quitte li dans clinique mauricienne, line contigne reste dans incubateur encore ene mois. Ça veut dire pendant presque deux mois li dans incubateur. Tous les jours même processus, tire du lait alle quitter.*

Bottle-feeding by using the mother's milk while the latter is at work, seems to be rare because of a lack of awareness on the part of the mother and some may not envisage such an approach because it demands some organisation and good hygienic conditions.

Some mothers who do not work outside the home, especially among the working class mothers from various places and from different ethnic groups have the habit of breast-feeding infants up to one year and in a few cases up to 2 years old. For those non-working mothers, it would seem that this is the easiest thing to do while others believe that the physical proximity between mother and child is very important in the child's development.

The following transcripts give us an idea of the feeding patterns during the first year in the life of a Mauritian child:

**Comment ou ti nourri li kan li ti bébé ?**

- Li ti boire avec moi jusqu'à deux ans.

**A part ça li ti pe boire lot kitchose encore ?**

- Non.

**Li pas manger aussi ?**

- Li manger, commencement mo ti pe bouilli légumes mo ti pe donne li.

**A partir ki mois oune commence bouilli légumes pou li ?**

- Trois mois. Quand line gagne neuf mois mone commence donne li ene tigitte du riz. Après kan line gagne un an, seki mo manger mone donne li. Tous zaffaire li ti pe manger. (interview of a working class Muslim mother in Camp Diable)

Another mother from Camp Diable speaks of breast-feeding one of her children up to 2 years old :

**Ki ou ti pe donne zot manger kan zot ti bébé ?**

- Ene la ti pe boire avec moi pendant 2 ans et deux la pas tellement, ti pe boire du lait F26.

This practice of breast feeding up to the age of two is again echoed by two mothers of Rose Belle during a group interview :

**Kan banne zenfans la bébé zot ti boire du lait are ou même ?**

1st woman :

- Oui, jusqu'à deux ans.

**Ou aussi deux ans ?**

2nd woman:

- Oui.

**Après a partir ki mois zone commence mange céréales tout ça ?**

1st woman :

- Trois mois.

**Ou aussi ?**

2nd woman:

- Oui.

**Lerla a partir ki mois zone commence prend purée ?**

- 6/7 mois.

Another mother from Grand Gaube also confirms that she was breastfeeding her three children up to the age of three:

**Jusqu'à ki l'age zot boire du lait avec ou ?**

- Trois ans.

**Tous les trois ?**

- Oui.

(Creole , working class mother)

On the other hand middle class mothers do not seem to keep their babies on breast feeding for too long , even when they are not working. For example a



Franco Mauritian mother explains her feeding pattern for her children in the early infancy :

**. Combien de temps vous avez allaité ?**

- *J'ai allaité tous mes enfants. Il y a certains plus que d'autres. Le cadet, j'ai du arrêter a trois semaines, je ne pouvais pas continuer. Euh allons dire une moyenne de deux mois, deux mois et demi a peu près. Un mois je trouve que c'est très bien pour allaiter son enfant ne serait-ce que le rapprochement avec son enfant. Pour la nourriture je dois dire pour la première année, deuxième année j'essaye de donner vraiment le maximum et je vois les enfants grandissent bien la première année. Ils n'ont pas de problème de croissance et tout. Ca va bien. Mais il faut veiller.*

**Lack of milk :**

A small proportion of Mauritian infants have not had the advantage of being breast fed because of the inability of the mothers to breast feed them, as they did not have sufficient amount of milk to feed their babies. Those babies were most of the time fed on cow's milk in powdered form.

**Kan zot ti bébé ki ou ti donne zot ?**

- *Mo ti acheter du lait.*

**Ou pas ti allaite zot ?**

- *Pas ti ena même du lait. Tous les deux ti boire Nursee même.*

**Jusqu'à ki l'âge ?**

- *Deux ans.*

**Lerla li ti pe manger banne zaffaire purée tout ça ?**

*Oui li ti pe manger. Li mange so Phosphatine, Nestum.*

**Feeding after first three months**

As confirmed in the above-quote, the mother's milk was being supplemented or replaced by other forms of milk, cereals as well as puréed vegetables and fruits after the age of three months or thereabouts.

The introduction of meat or fish in the baby's menu seem to be influenced by some ethnic practices. For example among hindu families, the introduction of meat in the menu comes in very late round about nine months or even after one year. This Hindu working class mother from Valée des Prêtres testifies :

**Kan zot ti tibaba ki zot ti pe manger ? Ou ti allaite zot ?**

- *Oui, jusqu'à trois mois mo ti allaite zot. Pou mo tifi là, jusqu'à cinq mois. Après noune servi Phosphatine, Nestum. Mais seulement d'après coutume nous, dans indiens nous bizin attane un an pou donne li banne purée, couma dire banne zaffaire salé pou mo tifi. Pou*

*mo garçon, non, jusqu'à trois mois mone faire li boire du lait avec moi mais li pas ti pe assez, li ti pe ploré. Lerla mone donne li Phosphatine. Ça aussi kan li ti pe mangé pas ti pe assez. Lerla noune bizin faire li faire système coume dire dans Shivala. Nous panne attane un an, noune faire nous la prière tout et après mone donne li purée pou manger.*

*Banne indien pas manger avant un an ?*

- *D'après zot système li coume ça. Mais ena ki pas attane.*

Cereals such as « phosphatine » and « nestum » are very popular among all classes. This can give an indication of the increasing affluence of the Mauritian society when compared to some thirty years ago when we hear that working class mothers of rural communities were giving « *la farine grillé with milk* » as their form of cereal.

On the other hand, we have learned above that the Franco Mauritian middle class mother introduces meat food in her baby's diet some time after the first four months.

Another Franco Mauritian mother explains how and when she was feeding her children after the first three months :

*Mais quand est-ce que vous avez commencé à donner à manger, par exemple les pains, les légumes tout ça ? Au début vous avez donné le riz ?*

- *Oui, mais le riz bien écrasé hein. Peut-être vers l'âge de sept mois.*

***Avant c'était le lait ?***

*Le lait et puis la phosphatine. Et puis les p'tits pots j'ai commencé à 4 mois mais je préférais donner surtout du lait. Surtout pour la dernière parce qu'on nous a dit surtout de ne pas trop forcer avec les aliments parcequ'ils peuvent être allergique. Avec les œufs tout ça. Mais pistaches, ça vraiment là, a partir de quatre ans et demi que je lui ai laissé prendre des pistaches parce que c'est pas bon. Donc une nourriture un peu mauricienne hein. Mais c'est vrai que les enfants si on les laisse, euh ils vont prendre des frites, pas de légumes. Voilà François, je ne me suis pas tellement occupé de lui a partir de l'âge de cinq (FM mother – unemployed)*

This is what a working class mother from Roche Bois says about feeding her children after the first three months :

***Mais kan li pou commence manze bane zaffaire solide la, ki ou pou donne li ? Pou donne li ti pot, ki ou pou donne li ?***

- *Non mo mette du riz dans rice cooker. Du riz cange ek impé legume ek ene boutte la viande ladans.*

***Craze tout ?***

- *Craze tout oui.*

***A partir ki mois ou pou faire ca ?***

- *4 mois.*

***Après c'est tout ? Du lait la poudre ou pas donner ?***

- *La mo pou bizin donne li du lait la poudre parski mo pou alle travail la, mo pou bizin quitte li. Bizin faire li boir.*

-

Another creole mother from Roche Bois explains her feeding pattern over the first year for her children and again we learn about breast-feeding for over one year. :

***Mais banne zenfans la couma zot ine nourri kan zot ti ti-bébé ? Zot ine boir du lait avec ou ?***

- *Oui, zot ine boir avec moi ziska un an et demi tous les deux.*

***Mais en meme temps ou ti pé donne zot... ?***

- *En meme temps oui, zot manze zot ti repas.*

***Apres commié mois zot ine commence manzer ?***

- *Six mois.*

***Ti donne zot manze quoi ?***

- *Du riz cange, legumes, purée. Apres parfois kan mo faire banne grain sec, mo mette dans zot du riz.*

Most of these transcripts are telling us that most Mauritian infants of different social background receive appropriate food for the different stages of the first year of their life. Cultural differences do not seem to be apparent except for the Hindu babies who do not seem to be fed with too much meat in the first year.

Most mothers whatever their social background seem to be aware that the infant should be given more consistent food in the form of puréed vegetables, rice, grain and even meat and fish after months 3 to 6.

However there may be a difference in the feeding habits among the different social classes. Working class mothers favour mostly home-made purées while a substantial number of middle class working mothers tend to favour the potted purées. We can get an insight about the general trend in the feeding of infants over the age of three months when we examine the transcript of the interview of an upper middle class grand mother :

- *. La différence que je vois dans la nourriture maintenant c'est les p'tits pots. Moi j'ai jamais donne de p'tits pots, était comme si un luxe aussi autrefois. Tandis que maintenant est-ce que les légumes sont plus cher aussi aujourd'hui, peut-être que les p'tits pots ne coûtent pas tellement plus cher, c'est plus facile. Mais moi je ne travaillais pas, je faisais des remplacements comme ça, mais j'ai jamais travaille. Quand j'ai eu mes enfants j'ai arrêté comme si le travail que j'avais. Donc, j'avais plus de temps peut-être de préparer.*

***Peut-être que puisqu'il y a plus de mamans qui travaillent maintenant, c'est plus facile pour elles de donner les p'tits pots?***

- *Je pense que c'est ça Et puis les p'tits pots quand meme, ce doit être une nourriture assez balancé justement. Enfin je crois que la nourriture fraîche est meilleure quand même.*

*(Franco- Mauritian grandmother)*

This tendency is confirmed by a middle-aged Chinese upper middle class mother with a baby :

*« Et puis sanne la, mo tende ene paquet banne jeunes, zot tout acheter pots tout ça, ene jour mone gouter, mone trouve so gout vraiment affreux, Ler la mone dire mo pou essaye eviter, foudé kot vraiment li nécessaire lerla mo pou amene so ti pot. »*

She is speaking of the tendency among young mothers of her own « milieu », that is of upper middle class Chinese mothers who work outside the home. Here again we get the impression the upper middle class baby's diet may be different because of a question of financial means. Whether it is of a better quality than the home made soups and purées is disputable.

The use of potted food means the the food budget for the middle class babies may be higher than the food budget for working class baby. The price of these «*petits pots*» give us an indication of the burden they could constitute for a very limited budget. One brand of these type of food costs Rs 19.50 for a pot of 130 grams while the 200 grams costs Rs 35.50.

In fact, caring for a baby for its first year only can be a very expensive affair if the child is not being breast-fed. For example, a tin of powdered milk of 450 grams can cost between Rs 89.00 to Rs 110.00 depending on the brand. The milk firms have devised new brands of milk to cater for the needs of the child who is growing up. For example there is a different type of milk for 5 months old babies, another one for 12 months there is even one for the six year olds called «*Super Kids*» which costs Rs77.00 for 450 grammes while the «normal» tin of same weight is being sold for Rs 47.90. It is obvious that only the well-off parents can afford all these extra expenses. For the poor mother who cannot breast-feed her child, the purchase of tinned milk can be a heavy burden if the child consumes about two tins per week. On top of the milk the child is given cereals with brand names such as «*Nestum*» and «*phosphatine*» which have become almost common names. These are presented in a variety of flavour and for different periods of the first year of life (6 months, 9 months) and can cost between Rs.35.00 and Rs 69.50 for a pack of 250 grams The high price of tinned milk and potted purées can explain why

many working class mothers prefer to breast feed their children for longer periods than the middle class mothers. As we have mentioned above breastfeeding up to 2 years seem to be common among working class mother who do not work but we have heard that some working class mothers vary their baby's diet with cereals mentioned above.

For some mothers, the food preparation for infants is influenced by family traditions, while for others they are following the advice given to young mothers in health centres. Some of the younger generation of mothers who are more educated follow the advice given in books such as Laurence Pernoud's « J'élève Mon Enfant » or a Larousse edition of « Vous et Votre Enfant ». This is what a working class mother of Rose Belle who has studied at a secondary school up to form iv :

***Letemps pou gagne zenfans eski oune lire livres pou gagne informations ou bien ou mama ti pe dire ou ki pou faire?***

- *Non, coté parents mo pas ti pe gagne conseils parents. Mo ti lire et mo ti ena banne camarades ki ti pe donne moi banne ti conseils. Après mo ti pe alle dans banne centre kan ti pe faire banne séminaires. Tout ça ine aide moi bocoup. Et puis à la télévision même ena banne programmes ki gagner, mo ti pe guetter. Après mo pas ti gagne problèmes parski mo ti déjà pe guette mo banne ti nièces tout ça. Même mo pas ti encore marier mo ti aide mo cousine pou guette so banne zenfans.*

A middle class mother from Port Louis also acknowledges that she was informed about child rearing by reading a book :

- *Après mo ti ena ene livre qui mo ti acheté, mo matante ti envoye moi depuis la France. Mo suivre lor lameme, mo faire banne purée etc. Ena ene chart, quand zenfan là ena deux mois, trois mois, ki bizin donner. Mone suivre un peu lor là et puis un peu seki mo mama dire moi.*

The generation of young mothers of different social classes in their twenties do not seem to be influenced by the older generation of mother and mother-in-law in their child-rearing practices. Such an attitude may be influenced by the fact that those mothers have had secondary education, and have access to non-traditional information concerning childrearing from books, magazines, and health centres. Older generations of mothers seem to favour the advice of their mother and mother-in-law as this middle class Muslim mother in her forties, working as a primary school teacher, explains :

- *Mo mama ti pe guette li mais li, line suive un peu banne méthode longtemps.*
- Ki li faire ?**
  - *Mo croire dix jours même li trouve li trop pleurer a soir, mais li pas gagne assez du lait, li cuit banne zaffaire couma laroute tout ça. En cachiete, laroute claire.*
- Mette dans biberon ?**
  - *Oui.*
- Kifer li donne li ça ?**
  - *Li trop pleurer, couma dire pou soutenir so l'estomac. Mais aller, aller nous même nous cuit nous mette dans banne la viande, légumes tout ça, faire ene purée.*
- A partir ki mois oune commence donne li ?**
  - *4 mois. Mette dans purée. Li même li cuit, l'ela mone apprane are li même mone cuit.*
- Mais depi longtemps ou mama ti pe reste are ou ?**
  - *Non, mo ti pe quitte mo zenfan are li. Li même ine guette mo zenfan jusqu'à line bien grand.*

We can note that in this case that the grandmother seems to have the upper hand in all aspects of the child-rearing process. Even among the younger generation of mothers who leave their children with their grandmother while they are away working outside the home, the grandmother seems to have a strong influence in the child-rearing process. This is what I would describe as the « grandmother effect » which is also apparent in **home health care**.

### **The 3-5 period ( attending pre-primary school)**

As the child grows, he/she is being accustomed with more solid food together with the occasional bottle of milk until he/she reaches the age to be sent to the infant school when the child gets accustomed to a new rhythm of feeding.

Most mothers seem to be taking good care of their children during that period when they see to it that the child gets its breakfast mostly in the form of cereals and milk. This is how a Muslim mother from Camp Diable describe the feeding pattern of her children while they were going to the pree-primary school:

**Quand zone alle l'école préprimaire ki ou donne zot gramatin ?**

- *Zot mange Weetabix ek du lait.*

**Après ki ou donne zot pou alle l'école ?**

- *Du pain.*

**Mette cari ?**

- *Ena la mette du beurre et fromage, ene la mette cari.*

**Jus ?**

- *Oui, zot boire Rybina, sirop, tous les jours mélange couma dire. Ena jours Sun Quick.*

(working class mother in CampDiable)

The following transcription of an interview of a working class mother gives us an idea of the way she has fed her children during the period when they were attending pre-primary and primary school :

**Après, l'école maternelle zot ti alle la même ?**

- Oui tout ti alle ici même.

**Mais lerla ki ou donne zot pou alle l'école ?**

- Du pain, parfois fromage, vermicelle, ena jours mo prépare la poudre maille. Mo prépare li bien a ma façon mo donne zot pou amener. Comma dire mo varier mo pas donne zot amene du pain tous jours. Ena jours mo ti pe alle quitter.

**Lerla tantôt zot vini ki zot manger ?**

- Parfois mo fini cuit kitchose mo garder, zot manger. Sipa ene ti peu oat meal mo mette dans du lait mo donne zot.

**Lerla tantôt ?**

- Tantôt zot mange du riz.

**Mais tous les jours mange la viande ?**

- Dans gramatin parski zot papa la pêche, dans gramatin mo cuit poisson. Dans tantôt aussi parfois mo cuit poisson. Mo mélange li seulement, mo cuit ene légume are li. Dans gramatin mo cuit ene grain sec are li, comme ça.

**Aster la aussi kan zot pe alle l'école li plus ou moins pareil ?**

- Oui, pareil.

**Quand zot lever gramatin ki zot manger ?**

- Zot prend zot du pain, du beurre, fromage ou soit si ena jam zot prend. Si pena zot prend du beurre pistache. Zot manger kitchose avant zot alle l'école.

**La viande pas manger ?**

- Manger, mais la mo bonom couma dire pa pé la pêche, nous impé dans difficulté.

(Unemployed Creole mother from Grand Gaube)

## **Feeding Pattern of children of 5-10 years:**

This is the period of the child's life when he/she is attending the primary school . During this period, the child becomes regulated by the school hours and the school time-table. Most children take breakfast before going to school and then at school, they take a light «meal» during the short break roundabout 10.30 hours and a more consequent meal during the recreation time which may last for about 30 minutes, that is around 12.00 hours.

This report will try to show that all children of that age may not be eating the right kind of food for their proper development. The differences will lie mainly in the quality and even in quantity of food depending on the socio economic status of the child. Rich children may be getting more than enough food which may be to their detriment if there is too much accent on fast food. On the other hand the poor children may not be getting balanced diets or even in some cases are

undernourished as some children in the poor suburbs of towns and in squatter colonies.

The following transcript of an interview of a working class mother from Stanley gives us an idea of the diet and eating pattern of a working class family :

***Pou dîner ki zot manger tous les jours ?***

- *du riz et du pain. Kot moi sipa lundi mo cuit ene légume, ene lentille ou ene friture, mardi ene lot légumes. Coume ça.*

***Pas cuit la viande tous les jours ?***

- *Non, zot pas trop intéressé are ça. Juste poisson salé zot ou manger. C'est a dire mone habitude zot... mone habitude donne tout.*

***Et dans samedi et dimanche ?***

- *Plutôt banne plats au pain.*

***Dans la semaine du riz même ?***

- *Oui, mais a cause déjeuner zot pas mange du riz.*
- 

The eating habits described above tells us that the diet is more or less poor in protein foods probably because of lack of financial means (The parents' jobs give us an indication of the financial state of the family). The children may not be liking meat and fish because they have not been accustomed to those foods though they like «*poisson salé*» which is considered as poor people's food.

When we compare the above-eating pattern to the usual diet of a wealthy middle class family, the stark contrast between a working class and a middle class diet is very apparent. This is a description of the usual family diet during a week in a middle class family, by the mother who is being interviewed:

- *Justement li varié. Disons dans lundi nous kapave faire ene plat au pain, sipa ene roti poule avec so salade avec so gratin. Mardi nous gagne poisson frais, sipa nous faire ene poisson bain marée, a ce moment la nous faire li plat chinois avec ene bouillon chinois. Mercredi nous faire spaghetti avec ene lot kitchose, sipa ene bolognaise accompagnée de salade. On dirait li varié. Jeudi sipa nous faire ene plat creole, ene rougaille avec so lentille. Nous varier, ça depend ki nous gagner bazar. Disons nous gagne banne zaffaires faire plats chinois, lera nous faire li. Apres li depanne nous letemps.*
- 

The following transcript of an interview of two primary school pupils (Hindu. Upper Middle class) gives us an idea of the feeding habits of those girls.:

***l'école qu'est-ce que tu emmènes comme nourriture ?***

- *Du pain avec quelque chose dedans, du jus et des biscuits.*

***Tu emmènes jus ou bien tu achètes ?***

- *J'emmène jus et il y a des fois mon papa achète.*



**Mais combien d'argent vous avez pour aller a l'école ?**

- *Quand j'ai leçon, j'ai quinze. Quand j'ai pas leçon j'ai dix.*

(interview of Hindu upper middle class children)

Another middle class mother describes the way she prepares her children's «tiffin» for school

**Mais kan zot alle l'école ki ou donne zot ?**

- *Mo prépare zot du pain moi-même et mo acheter gâteaux. Du pain, ena fois mo faire omelette, thon ou sinon kan carême zot mange brede, banne légumes. Mo faire souvent pâtisson, gratin, poule aussi zot manger.*(Tamil Mother - P.Louis)

A food which is very common for breakfast among young children are the cereals which take many forms such as corn flakes, rice crispies, oat meals or even mixtures of corn flour, wheat flour and oat flour to which other ingredients such as chocolate, honey, malt and syrup have been added to make them more appealing and palatable to the children. Sometimes little reproductions or images of their favourite characters of children's cartoons are introduced within the packet to attract the children.

The following transcripts give us an idea of the popularity of these cereal foods :-)

- *Mo donne zot sandwich parski zot pas ti content mange du pain. Ena fois mo donne zot sandwich, ena fois macaroni.*

**Du pain non ?**

- *Du pain aussi mais dans ene semaine kapave ene fois.*

**Mais le matin ki zot manger ?**

- *Zot mange céréales, zot mange Weetabix, Cornflakes.*

**Avec du lait ?**

- *Oui.*

(Tamil mother Port Louis -Amini)

## **The underprivileged children and food :**

One way of differentiating the children of the affluent families from those of the under privileged is the quality of the food which they eat. The following transcript of a mother's interview gives us an insight into the daily life of a poor family of four young children with their single mother living in one room of a long longere type of dwelling :

**Tous les jours ki zot manzer gramatin ? Zot manze kitchose avant zot alle l'ecole ?**

- *Oui, zot manze du pain, du beurre. Zot boir zot du lait, zot du thé zot aller.*

**Après, midi zot amene zot du pain ?**

- *Oui, zot amene zot du pain.*

**Zot amene jus aussi ?**

- *Oui, jus mo acheter.*

**Mais tantot ?**

- *Tantot, la zot ine vini la, zot ine boir zot du thé, zot ine manze zot du pain.*

**Mais commié du pain ou kapave acheter par jour ?**

- *Le matin mo acheter 5 du pains. Tantot mo pas acheter parcequi kan zot sorti l'ecole, zot amene zot du pain. Lerla zot gagne ca meme zot manzer. Embarrassé meme mais ki pou faire ?*

**Mais dans tantot ki cari ou kapave pe cuit pou zot ?**

- *Ala couma mone fini gagne pension la, mais mo paye imper dette. Mais la mo ena ene ti casse, mais là mo pou alle acheter poule, couma dire faire ene ti la daube mo donne zot. Mais ena jour, couma dire la mo dresser, mo dresse kot ene madame ici là. Couma dire couma mo fini dresser madame la donne moi Rs75. Lerla mo garde ca, mo acheter cari couma dire tous les jours, comprend la. Lot la donne moi Rs50.*

**Couma dire ou faire ene ti dresser pou gagne ene ti casse ?**

- *Oui, lerla ca ti casse la, mo gagne ca a part pou mo acheter ene ti cari pou mo donne mo banne zenfans.*
- *Seulement mo zenfans comprend. Zot manzer.*  
*(creole mother from Tranquebar)*

This above transcript gives us an idea of the situation of a typical poor family which gets its food «au jour le jour». This way of life is characterised by uncertainty and in such a context we cannot expect that the mother is thinking of planning a balanced diet as her main objective is the survival of her children. This is not the worst situation as other children according to witnesses who come into contact with them speak of children who are not being fed at all at home. A teacher working in a suburban government school categorised as a ZEP school gives us an idea of the situation concerning food for some of her pupils who live in a squatter colony in that suburb of Port Louis. These children live in shelters made of pieces of iron sheets obtained from flattened «drums» and are without the usual amenities to be found in a proper house... The following incident, in which the above-mentioned teacher played a role, gives us an indication of the plight of those children :

- *mo travaille la-bas tous les matins. Kan mo rentrer mo mette ene tempo grains secs cuit, après mo cuit du riz avec sipa boîtes conserves. Cuit ça, pena l'ail gingembre, pena oignons. Roussi ça banne zaffaire là, donne zot tous les midis.*

**Commié zenfans coume ça ?**

- *50 – 60, ça dépend.*

**Zot pena manger ?**

- *Non.*

*Ou faire li lor ene base volontaire ?*

- *Oui. Nous gagne banne dons avec banne Sai Baba et après nous aussi nous contribuer la-dans. Tous les mois, cinq professeurs l'école donne casse pou acheter ene bal du riz.*
- *Ena ene chose ki vraitement ine touche moi. Ene jour mo trouve ene ti garçon pe pleurer dans l'assemblée, courte, courte, ene ti créole, li pe pleurer li palé reste dans l'assemblée. Mone dire li : ki tone gagner to pe pleurer. Li dire prend li : mo pou alle assize la-bas. Ine mette li lor ene chaise et tout dimoune ine entoure li pou prend li soin. Lerla moi mone demande li : tone manger ? Li dire moi non. « To panne mange du pain nannier ? » Li dire non. « Tone boire du thé ? » Non. Mo dire li mais de l'eau ? De l'eau aussi li panne boire parski pena de l'eau.*

*De l'eau pas couler ?*

- *Pena robinet, faudé alle dans la cour dimoune pou gagne imper de l'eau. Lerla nounge prend ene du pain l'école, nounge mette imper du beurre la-dans nounge donne li. Line mange ça et li dire sipa commié jours li pas manger. Ene paquet problèmes la-bas. Si ou prend banne linge ki on dirait ou pas pou servi, ou mette ça là, zot kapave touye ou. Zot enragé, lendemain ou trouve zot vini.*
- *Ena ene chose mo ti trouver ti bien.... Ene jour mone amene ene ti soulier pou tifi même mo croire. Lendemain mo trouve ene garçon ine vini ine mette ça soulier dames. Banne là chicane li mais li dire pas faire nannier. Li pena.*

That teacher also gives a vivid account of the way the school's management, that is, the head teacher and teachers taking care of the underprivileged children:

- *Nous ti ena ene bonbonne et moi mo ti ena ene vieux plaque a gaz, li pas vieux, mone amene ça et jusqu'à l'heure nous encore pe servi ça. Nous bizin acheter zot l'assiette, zot cuillère tout zaffaire mais aller, aller cuillère la commence perdu mais commié pou acheter ? Bizin faire zot manger are la main. Là ena ene lotte groupe pe donne banne dons là, Rotary Rose-hill, pé donne du lait tout ça. Tout seki ou donne zot bon même.*

*Mais lerla donne banne zenfans là tous les jours du lait. Pas donne zot pou amene zot lacaz ?*

- *Non. Manger tout la même.*

*Mais banne caretakers là ki occupe tout ?*

- *Non, professeurs tout donne coup de main. Caretakers donne la main cuit, servi. Professeurs bizin veiller. Sipa ine gagne boîte saucisse, sipa nounge acheter les ailes poules pou faire cari, mais l'heure nous tire manger nous tirer nous installe lor la table, letemps zot vini zot coquin saucisse. Ler ou vini ou trouve juste du riz, dholl. Sipa lentille mais ou pas trouve saucisse là. A cause ça même bizin deux trois dimoune pou veiller. Ena professeurs ki sacrifier zot recreation nette, zot reste are banne là jusqu'à zot fini manger.*

(teacher – ZEP school, Port Louis)

A mother of Tranquebar who, in spite of her poverty tries to help the more underprivileged by keeping an eye on her neighbour's children and doing social work by helping in the organisation of the feeding of the school's poor children

- *Pena. Lerla ki nous faire, Monsieur A... (then school HT) acheter jus, acheter du beurre li quitte are moi.*

***Mais kot li gagne casse Monsieur A..., li prend so propre casse ?***

- *Ene deux fois li prend ek li ou parfois PTA. Mais plus souvent li prend ek li.*

***Mais ca banne zenfans la, zot deja pose banne la questions sipa tantot zot gagne manzer ?***

*Ena dire nous zot reste sans manger. Ena dire nous zot pas manger, pena nannier. Ena dire nous zot parents pena... parfois zot apé vine l'école. Ou conner comment noune conne ca plis, tellement ti ena absentisme, noune demande zot : kifer zot pas vine l'école ? Lerla zot dire : pena du pain. Letemps zot dire nous pena du pain, lerla Monsieur A... dire coume ca : mais demain to pou gagne du beurre pou mette dans to du pain. Apres tine arreter. Letemps Monsieur A..... ine aller, ca ti vine imper chose. Ene lot maitre d'école kine vini, li aussi li panne trop prend en consideration. Mais etant donné ki Monsieur ..... ine vine la.....»*

The above transcripts give us an idea of the poverty of some children, belonging to some vulnerable groups who are suffering from malnutrition and who have more pressing needs than to study at school. It is indeed difficult to persuade undernourished children to pay attention in class and to be indeed interested in education at all. The children of the ZEP schools are now getting bread and milk during the day but this does not mean that they are getting a meal in the evening.

### **Religious practices associated with feeding :**

#### **Food Taboos :**

In a multi religious country like Mauritius, the religious factor is bound to influence the eating habits of its inhabitants . Among the various religious practices existing in the island, we must note the fact that there are certain types of food which are forbidden for some religious groups. For example the Hindus generally do not eat beef and pork products while the Mulims are forbidden by their religion to eat pork. At the same time Mulims are not allowed by their religion to eat any meat which has not undergone «Halal».

On the other hand some Hindus do not eat any meat or fish products as for religious beliefs, they have become vegetarians.

These food taboos have a lot of repercussions upon the feeding habits of the children of the island.

It is important for people outside the home, dealing with the feeding of children to be aware of these food taboos in order not to offend any religious sensibilities of the children. Those people concerned are care-givers in nurseries, pre-primary school teachers and helpers, primary school teachers, nurses in hospitals and clinics.

## FASTING PRACTICES :

Among most «communities» in Mauritius there is the practice of fasting which accompanies certain religious events and these fastings may take different forms. For example, Hindus do not eat food containing meat ,fish and egg and some even eat only food with sweet taste. The Muslims fasting during Ramadan means that the child neither eats nor drinks during the whole day until after six in the evening.and they are present at school.

These Tamil mothers explain the usual fasting pattern during a week:

:

***Mange la viande tous les jours ?***

- *Non, parski banne tamils ena jours zot carême.*

***Ki jours zot carême ?***

- *Mardi et vendredi.*

***Ou suive tout traditions tamil ?***

- *Tout traditions tamil.*

( Middle Class Tamil mother – P.louis)

Another Tamil mother explains how it has become a way of life to fast during the week and for some religious festivals like « Govinden » and « Cavadee » and that the children abide by these traditions:

***Tous les jours bizin ena ene la viande dans du pain là ?***

- *Non, parski mardi et vendredi nous carême. Mo faire zot aussi reste carême.*

***Zot pas en colère ?***

- *Non, zot habituer parski « Govinden » nous reste ene mois carême. Mais lerla zot obligé amene légumes.*

(Tamil Mother Port Louis)

It would appear that in most Muslim families the period of fasting which occurs during the month of Ramadan is followed in a very devout way and children start to keep this fast as young as seven years old that is when they are in their primary schooling. A Muslim mother explains about muslim fasting and her daughter:

- *Oui, kan carême li garde so carême.*

***A partir ki l'age line commence garde carême ?***

- *Huit ou neuf ans.*

***Mais si jamais li dire ou li pas envie garde carême ?***

- *Jamais panne arrivé. Faudé moi mo dire li, là li ena deux trois l'examens là, li pe suivre cours ensemble, mone dire li arrêter mais li palé.*

This tendency is confirmed by another mother from Terre Rouge though her daughter started in a gradual way:

**Eski ou tifi garde carême ?**

- Oui.

**Line garde carême a partir 7 ans ?**

- Non kan li ti ena 7 ans li pas ti pe garde tout, mo ti pe faire li reste on and off. Mais là kan line grandi, là carême vine obligatoire aster. Là ine arrive dixième carême line garde tout. Mo bizin faire li garde tout aster.

**Ça veut dire à partir douze ans ki ou pe faire li garde carême ?**

- Non, avant coume mo pe dire ou li pas ti pe garde tout. On and off li kapave ine garde 10, 12, 30. Mais aster careme ine vine obligatoire. A partir ça l'année là mo pou faire li garde tout.

The same mother continues to explain the fasting process for Muslim children in general :

**Mais ena famille ki faire zot zenfan garder à partir 7 ans. Ene madame dire moi à partir 7 ans li vine obligatoire.**

- Non, li pas ça obligatoire là. Faudé ene tifi gagne so periode.

**Mais banne garçons ?**

- Banne garçons pareil, mo penser 11 ou 12 ans. Mais 7 ans li pas obligatoire ki zot garde tout les 30. Ou commence donne zot pratique garder mais kan ine arrive 11, 12 ans l'era zot bizin garde tout. Bizin force zot pou zot garde tout.

**Mais arrivé banne zenfans refuser faire ?**

- Ça dépend la famille. Si ene famille, so mama, papa, sœur, frère toute la famille pe garder banne petits aussi pou rode garder.

**Mais ou tifi pas montrer aucun signe ki couma dire li pas content ?**

- Non, li content. Li ver kan mo lève li so 4 heures du matin.

**Li lever 4 heures du matin ?**

- Oui, mais nous bizin manger 4 heures du matin pou nous kapave garde nous carême. Nous lever, manger faire so la prière. Après si ou envie alle dormi, ou alle reposer.

In some families, the rules about fasting seem to be very rigid and we must note such words as « mo bisin faire li », « bizin force zot ». We must keep in mind that the muslim children come to school while keeping the fast, that is, eating and drinking nothing during the whole day up to about six in the evening. Non- muslim teachers should be aware of these practices so that they can help the children during these difficult times.

### **Resistance to fasting :**

In some families, there may be resistance to fasting on the part of the children as they prefer to eat meat and chicken rather than vegetables. It is noted generally that children nowadays have a tendency to neglect the eating of vegetables as

noted in the UNICEF report 1998. The following transcript tells us about the occurrence of some resistance among Tamil children which is very rare among muslim children:

- *Disons il y a des fois elle va grogner quand il n'y a pas poulet, disons quand on est..... les vendredis ou on est en période de carême : « ah, on va pas manger ça » Mais seulement arrivée à table elle va manger. Ça il n'y a pas de problèmes mais des fois..... surtout qu'elle aime bien manger poulet, la viande tout ça. Et là en période de jeûne, là on a des problèmes à ce moment là. Elle va dire : « ayo, on va pas manger ça »*

**Vous mangez de la viande tous les jours ?**

- *Elle, elle peut manger facilement. Elle aime manger.*

**Papa :**

- *Mais les vendredis non.*

**Seulement les vendredis ?**

**Maman:** *Oui, les vendredis. Mais disons un jour il n'y a pas de problème. Mais quand il y a cavadee, il y a dix jours là..... surtout pour aller à l'école. Si à la maison on prenait beaucoup de trucs, il n'y a pas de problème à ce moment là. Mais si quand pour aller à l'école pour mettre.... on dit : ok fromage tout ça, elle ne veut pas.*

**Que fromage ?**

- *Même pas tous les jours. Disons on peut mettre gâteaux piments ou des trucs pareils ou même on prépare un légume, elle ne va pas manger légume dans son pain. Elle dit non elle veut pas manger ça. Elle veut burger, jambon poulet, saucisses poulet. Elle veut des trucs pareils vous voyez. Mais même on a essayé avec saucisses légumes, elle dit : « non c'est pas pareil, ce n'est pas bon » Elle ne veut pas.*

A Hindu mother from Triolet also speaks of the resistance to fasting and food :

*Mais ki ou donne zot pou alle l'école ?*

- *Zot amene du pain, parfois saucisse poule, chicken burger. Enfin zot pas amene légumes, soit bizin ena ene œuf, salade thon etc. **Zot pas rode mange légumes. Depi tipti zone habituer. Ene jour mone mette légumes parski nous ti carême. Line tire so du pain, line mette lor la table, line fini aller. Li dire : « ça même cari ki to metter ? » Line acheter gâteaux line manger dans l'école.***

How far these children keep to their fasting outside the home , that is, when they are at school, has yet to be researched.

Fasting is not restricted to only Tamil and Muslim children only. Other Hindu children may have to practice fasting together with their parents, for religious ceremonies but more especially for for Maha Shivaratree.

A Marathi mother at La Gaulette explains the fasting pattern in her family :

**Ki carême zot rester ?**

- *Maha Shivaratree nous rester 14 jours. Pou Gunpatee nous reste 15 jours avec pou Doorga Pooja.*

**Lerla zenfan la aussi reste carême ?**

- **Oui.**

**Mais dans la semaine pena jours zot reste carême ?**

- *Juste mo tout seul rester dans mardi, samedi. Mo reste pou Doorga.*

A Hindu middle class family of Riviere du Rempart also speaks of fasting days during week-days it would seem that the whole family has to fast on those specific days:

- *Disons chez moi, après un jour ou deux on mange les légumes. Disons si on mange les légumes le lundi et mardi, le mercredi on doit manger disons la viande, poulet etc. On quitte un ou deux jours et puis on mange. Mais parfois ça arrive que... ça dépend de la situation.*

**Question discipline ou religion ?**

- *Parfois il y a la religion aussi. Quand on doit rester carême, on garde le carême Les lundis souvent on ne mange pas de la chair. A ce moment je jeûne, ma femme elle jeûne le vendredi. Et les autres jours... moi j'aime manger le poisson. Dans une semaine presque deux ou trois jours on mange le poisson.*

All the above transcripts give evidence that fasting is a common practice in most families of Indian origin, whether Hindus or Muslims and that the children of school-going age, most of the time follow these religious practices while they are at school. This means that teachers must be aware of those practices in order to help the pupils in any way and do not inadvertently make these children transgress their religious practices. This might make them at odd with parental rules and practices.

## **EATING OUTSIDE :**

Since the opening of several restaurants and fast food businesses, it has become fashionable for many families to take their children to eat outside the home . The rate at which this outing is practised depends upon the economic means of these families. These eating outings take several scenarios for different socio- economic classes:

- going to the restaurant regularly every week-end or even during week days
- Eating in fast-foods during week-ends



- Eating out in a fast-food once a month as a treat for the children
- Eating out once in a blue moon only because the family has gone out shopping in a commercial centre
- Some very rarely go out to eat

For some families, eating outside, forms part of their eating habits and way of life because they are able to afford these treats for their children and for themselves. A wealthy middle class mother explains when she and her family goes out to eat :

*On dirait pendant un temps c'était surtout le dimanche. Couma dire pou nous c'est ene sortie, arrive tantot... disons l'age kot zot kapave alle diner, 12 ou 13 ans, justement letemps zot rentre dans secondaire lerla nous activités ine changé imper. Nous dire pou nous pas trop reste ici, nous amene zot cinema ou nous alle diner ensemble. Lerla nous manze en dehors.*

Going outside to eat may mean mainly eating in a fast-food where chicken burgers drumsticks steaks and chips are offered as the main food. and many parents confirm the children's preference for these type of food and this is what is explained by a middle class mother from Port Louis :

*Mais pou manger, eski arrivé zot alle manger dehors ?*

*Oui, mais pas souvent. Disons nous aller ene fois par mois parski zot content mange ça banne zaffaire chips, burger etc. Mais kan même zot manger banne manger ki nous cuit, sipa masala tout zot manger. Mais zot préfère mange kentucky, chips sipa ki zaffaire, ça oui. Mais sinon grains, brede, zone gagne l'habitude manger.*

Another mother from Port Louis who belongs to a rather well-off working –class family explains that eating out may occur when the family is out shopping, that is eating mainly fast-foods :

*Alle restaurant ?*

- *Bien rare, faudé ena ene l'anniversaire ou pe organise ene zaffaire. Ene fois letemps.*

***Mais banne zenfans la pas content alle mange burger ?***

*Oui, kan nous sorti. Kan nous alle faire shopping. Semaine dernière noune alle Shoprite, lerla nous faire zot promener imper, lerla mone faire zot mange ene ti peu burger. Mais pas souvent. (Tamil mother – p. Louis)*

On the other hand for this working class mother who cannot afford to take her children to a restaurant the nearest thing to eating outside is to buy some food outside and to bring it home, this practice is commonly known as buying «take - away» :

Other children may not find those fast food shops accessible as well as for some economical reasons, they are accustomed to eat home-prepared food as described by a Hindu mother in Valée des Pretres :

***Mais arrivé zot alle manger dans restaurant tout ça ?***

- *Non, la plupart du temps nous pe manger lacaz. Mais parfois zot prend mine zot amener. (working class mother – Stanley)*

***Mais zot mange banne zaffaire burger tout ça ?***

- *Non, non. Ici pena, pas vender même ici. Fauder ou alle Port-Louis même, lerla ou pou acheter.*

***Mais arriver zot sorti zot alle acheter burger ?***

- *Non, jamais.*

***Zot aller dans Port Louis acheter banne zaffaire Mc Donald tout ça ?***

- *Non, jamais.*

***Zot pas manger dehors ?***

- *Non, so papa pas prend zot même pas sorti. Pas aller même aucune place.*

As we can see eating fast-food is not within the family culture of some children.

On the other hand, for some families, eating outside the home may not tally with their religious beliefs concerning the way the food is being prepared. For example Muslim families may have to make sure that they are going to obtain «halal» meat or poultry. In this rather well-off middle –class Muslim family. with an only child, eating outside is very rare :

***Mais zot alle manger dehors ?***

- *Non. Bien rare pou acheter Kentucky sipa ki, li pas manger même.*

***Mais apart Kentucky li mange tout le temps lacaz ?***

- *Oui. (Muslim mother from Port Louis)*

Eating outside the home for the children does not involve only family eating outings to the conventional restaurants and fast food restaurants but also the buying of fast food during week-days when they go to school. These types of food such as «Dhol Puri», «Roti», «pain fourrés» «mines», cakes, such as «samoussa», «gateau piment» etc. which are usually being sold by hawkers by the roadside or even inside the schools. These food are also being sold in the school canteen. Those parents who do not have the time to prepare a packed lunch for their children, prefer to give to their children a substantial sum for their pocket money to allow them to buy those fast food which in fact the children prefer to the lunch prepared at home.

The following transcript of the interview of a wealthy family gives us an idea of the typical food preferences of young children and adolescents :

**Mother:** .....Mo prefere faire zot mange quitchose ki imper nourrissant ki mange même zaffaire tous les jours l'école. Mais souvent zot prefere mange en dehors. La, avec l'ouverture ene paquet fast food pou zot c'est... par exemple ce matin line alle lecon 8.00 heures, mone dire li mais to pou manger ? Li dire moi : pas tracasse toi mo pou manger. Mais mo supposer line mange en chemin.

**:Qu'est-ce que tu as mangé a midi ?**

**Garçon:** Boulettes.

**Mais souvent arrivé to mange dehors ?**

**Garçon:** Moitié, moitié.

**Ki to banne manger préféré dehors?**

**Garçon :** Mine, boulettes.

**Papa :** Content mange dehors apres gagne diarrhée.

**Apres ki to manger, pizza ?**

**Garçon:** Non, mo pas habituer mange pizza moi.

**Kentucky ?**

**Garçon :** Non.

**ki to manger, mine ?**

**Garçon :** Dans lundi avant alle leçon. Mais sinon mo mange l'école, ena du pain l'école.

**Ki ena dans du pain l'école la ?**

**Garçon :** Ena pain poulet, pain et roti bœuf.

**Mais si to mama prepare li ici ki arrivé ?**

**Garçon :** Non, mo mange juste ene du pain gramatin quand li chaud.

**Li chaud labas. ?**

**Garçon :** Quand zot faire li, zot faire li labas même.

**Apres dans tantot, arrivé to pas mange ici to mange dehors ?**

**Garçon :** Dans tantot mo mange lacaz.

This tendency to eat fast food outside the home has been observed among youths of all social classes but the consumption is heavier for children who obtain a substantial pocket money from their well-off parents. The less fortunate children may be eating less junk food because of lack of means.

UNICEF's report on the rights of children –1998 had already warned about the danger of fast foods for young children :

*At the level of food habits among children, a definite trend was noted in the direction of fast food, pre-packed snacks, more animal foods, more prepared foods and less vegetable (UNICEF report 1998:27)*

In spite of warnings from doctor and nutritionists, this tendency has continued till now and it is being amplified because of the opening of more fast food and other restaurants and also by the fact that that many mothers work outside the home and do not find the time to prepare home-made food.

These feeding habits may have important consequences in the future life of the child when he/she reaches adulthood. This is emphasised by the UNICEF report:

*“ It is important to monitor food habits at this early age not only because of the immediate impact they may have on the growth of children but also because nutritional habits are formed in the early years and poor eating habits are formed in the early years and poor eating habits it has been found can be a very important risk factor for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.”*

The father quoted above is aware of the danger of eating outside the home and is teasing his son about the risks of diarrhea but does not seem to have much control over his child outside the home.

Another practice among young middle class parents who do not have the time to devote to cooking at home and feeding their children balanced diets have found a solution by taking their evening meal at their own parents home.

The following transcript of an interview of a Chinese middle class mother who is speaking of the tendencies in feeding practices among the younger parents of her community:

*Mais mo supposé pou banne jeunes ki fek marier, zot pas trop conne cuit zot pou alle mange dehors.*

***D’après c’est ki ou tender li comme ça ?***

*Mo pas croire bocou la maison, parski maintenant surtout tous les deux travaillent, mari femme. Maintenant banne jeunes zot travaillent, zot ena zot carrière, zot fini tard, mo pas croire zot cuit bocou a la maison. Et souvent zot alle mange kot zot banne beaux parents, zot parents tout ça. Tandis ki nous, nous ti differents. Disons au debut nous ti pe reste kot banne beaux-parents même, apres kan noune move out, c’est mo mari ki ti pe occupe la cuisine parski li conne cuit*

These tendencies may be applied to some families of other communities who have the problem of devoting time to proper food preparation Eating at the grandparents’ place may be fun for some time and they may be eating of more wholesome food than in the fast food restaurants but may entail some form of instability if it is done on a regular basis.

## **Children and obesity :**

A recent phenomenon in Mauritian society is the increasing number of obese children which is rather a problem associated with middle class children who are being over- fed by doting parents and who have a weakness for fast foods.

This recent appearance of fat rosy cheeked little boys and girls means trouble in the future if measures are not taken to curb this tendency. In some localities, the contrast between the parents and the children is striking. Thus in Valée des Pretres, we can observe the mothers being of average corpulence or even thin in some cases but the children are round and bubbly full of energy. While talking to the mothers it emerged that the main preoccupation of these mothers is the feeding of their offspring.

Some teachers working in schools where most of the children come from middle class family, have observed that there is a tendency for the children to show signs of being obese while others are on the way to becoming so.

Not only do these children represent time bombs for the future health of the nation and for the health services, the fact of being obese can give rise to some cruel teasing from their school mates and this can have serious repercussions on their self –esteem and eventually on their performance at school.

Obesity in young children may be due to the fact that parents being more affluent wish to do their best for their children and one of which may be for them to give their children the maximum amount of food without considering the latter's quality . Another reason may be the children's craze for fast food which have a high percentage of fat. The way fast food are being prepared is also questionable. It would seem that the fried cakes are being cooked in the same oil which has been used to fry several other types of food. This kind of practice may produce very unhealthy food which are being sold to children.

## **OTHER PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH FEEDING**

### **Rituals associated with eating :**

In some families there are certain rules which must be respected in relation to meal time, more especially dinner as during the day most members of the family are either at work and at school. The following transcript gives us an idea of meal time in a middle class family which may not be the same pattern in most middle class families :

*Ils mangeaient pas a table avec vous ?*

- *Non, ils avaient faim plus tôt. Comme tous les enfants, quand ils sont petits ils mangent un peu avant. On pouvait pas dîner 6 heures avec eux. Ils mangeait plus tôt, 6 heure 7 heures.*

*Quel age ils ont commencé a manger avec vous ?*

- *6 ans par la. Peut-être plus. On les habitait, comment manger a table.*

*Vous leur appreniez a manger avec les couverts ?*

- *Ah oui. Et nous dînons ensemble tout le temps. Toute la famille, jusqu'à présent. Jamais chacun a son tour, deux avant, l'autre après, jamais.*

*Même quand les enfants vont a l'école, quand ils vont jouer au football ?*

- *Oui, même ça. Nous dînons toujours ensemble.*

This same pattern is reflected in another Franco-Mauritian Family :

***Tout le monde mange a table, ensemble ?***

- *Ah oui, oui oui. Ca c'est assez rare de ne pas le faire. C'est assez rare parce que c'est une façon de se retrouver et de donner un peu de manière aux enfants. Parce que les enfants n'ont déjà pas de manière, ça s'apprend tellement facilement de ne pas avoir de manière et c'est une façon pour leur dire : fais ça, fais ça. Même nous même on se laisse aller, on n'a pas de manière. Il faut qu'on lui dise : Ne fais pas ça. Lui parler.*

***C'est rare que vous vous retrouviez à table ou bien...?***

- *Si, tous les jours. Tous les soirs.*

***Tout le monde est la pour dîner ?***

- *Oui. Mais je dois dire que c'est assez rare chez d'autres personnes non ?*

***Another member of the family :***

- *Moi je crois que ça c'est rare: les enfants mangent d'un coté.*

## **The consumption of drinking water :**

Most parents seem to be aware of the dangers of drinking tap water . Parents of a low level of education seem to have been made aware of the risks associated with the drinking of unboiled water by the awareness campaign in the media, especially radio and television. Others are advised by their doctors and health workers about

the advisability of boiling the drinking water of their children and even for themselves. Parents of different socio –economic groups from the different parts of Mauritius show this awareness of the problems which may be associated with drinking tap water.

This working class mother from Triolet boils water only after heavy rainfall :

*Zot boire de l'eau robinet ou bouillie ?*

- *Robinet même.*

*Zot pas boire de l'eau bouillie ou dans bouteille ?*

- *Non, kan ena la pluie lerla nous bouillie de l'eau.*
- 

This tendency is confirmed by another mother from Triolet :

*Zot boire de l'eau robinet ou bouilli ?*

- *Quand bizin bouilli mo bouilli.*

*Zot pas acheter de l'eau dans bouteille ?*

- *Non, rare couma dire mo acheter.*

A grandmother from that same locality, on the other hand, who takes care of her grand children has another opinion about tap water :

*Zot pas boire robinet ?*

- *Mo pas trop content.*

*Kifer ?*

- *Ena ine trouve la marre, kitchose. Plutot ou bouilli li.*

*Pas boire de l'eau dans bouteille ?*

*Nous acheter parfois. Mais mo bouilli de l'eau. Kot mo travaille aussi là-bas tout le temps nous boire de l'eau bouillie même. Comment nous rentre nous bouilli de l'eu par bouloir et rempli chacun so bouteille.*

A working class mother from Grand Gaube affirms that she always use boiled water :

***Zot boire de l'eau robinet ou de l'eau bouillie ?***

- *Bouillie.*

***Tout le temps ?***

- *Oui. ( Creole Mother from Grand Gaube)*

Another working class mother from the same locality does not take the same precautions :

**Zot boire de l'eau robinet ou de l'eau bouillie ?**

- *Zot boire de l'eau robinet même. Mais kan ena cyclone tout ça lerla nous commence bouilli de l'eau. (Fisherman family)*

This is the transcript of an interview of two sisters from Grand Gaube who have different practices concerning drinking water :

**De l'eau, zot boire de l'eau robinet ?**

- *Mo boire de l'eau bouillie.*

Chris :

- *Mo pas boire de l'eau bouillie.*

A working class mother from La Gaulette, on the other hand ,also never gives unboiled water to her family and even goes to the expenses of buying bottled water :

**Ou boire de l'eau bouilli ?**

- *Boire de l'eau Crystal ou bien Vital.*

**De l'eau robinet ?**

- *Non, nous pas boire.*

**Personne pas boire ?**

- *Non.*

**Kifer, pas gagne bon de l'eau ?**

- *Gagner bon de l'eau mais pou évite problème nous pas boire de l'eau robinet.*

There are some mothers who do not drink boiled water themselves but who take care to give boiled water to her children, especially when they are very young as this transcript informs us :

**Zot bouillie de l'eau ?**

- *Oui.*

**Zot pas boire de l'eau dans robinet ?**

- *Moi mo boire mais pou banne zenfans mo ti pe bouilli.*

**Jusqu'à l'heure zot boire de l'eau bouillie ?**

**La fille :**

- *Moi non, mais l'école mo ti pe amene de l'eau bouillie, mo rempli dans ene bouteille. Mais la pendant vacances non. (family at La Gaulette)*

Boiling water for drinking may not be within the means of some families. This interview of a mother from a squatter colony in Case Noyale tells its own story :

**Zot boire de l'eau robinet ?**

- *Oui.*

**Ena de l'eau ?**

- *Oui.*

**Mais banne ti bébé la kan...**

- *Pou zot, bouilli.*

•



From this same squatter family we have a very hard description of the water situation in that locality, from a grand mother who takes care of her grand children :

***Zot boire de l'eau bouilli ou bien de l'eau robinet ?***

- *De l'eau robinet. Au contraire fek gagner, pas ti ena de l'eau nannier.*

***Mais ki zot faire kan zot pas ti ena de l'eau ?***

- *Ti alle chercher débarquadeur kot garde cote la-bas, ti ena ene robinet. Lerla nous prend ça depi la-bas, nous passe bord la mer nous amene ici.*

We must note that many parents give their children boiled water to take to school :

***Boire de l'eau robinet ?***

- *Non, bouillie. Même l'école mo faire li amene ene gros bouteille de l'eau bouillie.( mothe rfrom Grand Gaube)*
- 

This has also been mentioned by the girl from La Gaulette above.

It would seem that parents, in general are aware of the risks of drinking water which they believe may be contaminated even if it comes from the tap. This shows the concern of the parents towards health hazards in the home as well as in the school's environments and take the appropriate precautions to protect the health of their children. The next chapter will inform us about the various practices concerning the health care provided by parents at home.

### **3.2- Child Rearing Practices and Health Care**

In this part of the report, parental attitudes and practices in matters of hygiene and treatment of medical problems will be described and analysed.

#### **Personal Hygiene:**

As personal hygiene is the basis of good health for all human beings, it is even more so for young children. We shall examine the practices in personal hygiene of the children of Mauritius in general.

In matters of personal hygiene and dental care, the children belonging to different social backgrounds seem to have been trained to acquire habits which promote hygiene and cleanliness. Data from the children's questionnaires (435 children) reveal that 89% of them brush their teeth at least twice a day and some (4.5%) even say that they brush their teeth at least 3 times a day and some individuals even brush their teeth more than 3 times a day. A very small percentage (5%) of them did admit that they brush their teeth only once.

Apart from dental hygiene, the children have been socialised to take regular baths and to wash their hair regularly. According to the quantitative data, 69% of my child -respondents take a bath twice a day and some 14% even take 3 baths a day. Though a small percentage (14.9%) take only one bath a day, we can say that the children of Mauritius are highly conscious of the importance of personal cleanliness. Sixty-two per cent(62 %) of these respondents wash their hair twice a week and a few (11%) wash their hair three or more times a week. For the rest of those children, some 21%, indicate that they wash their hair once a week .

Practices associated with personal hygiene may be influenced by cultural attitudes, more especially family cultures. and the perception of childhood within certain ethnic groups. Talking to mothers of the Hindu community, I discovered that many mothers have the tendency to give their children at least one of their baths because they believe that the child will not be able to see to their personal hygiene.

The following transcript of an interview gives an idea of the attitude and perceptions of a working class mother of Vallée des Pretres (Hindu) about the personal hygiene of her children:

**A partir ki l'age zone commence baigne zot tout seul ?**

- *Imper longtemps mone reste baigne zot même. Mo pas satisfait kan zot baigner par zot.*

**Jusqu'à l'heure ou baigne zot ?**

- *Oui. Disons ene semaine trois jours li baigne par li même, mais ene jour mo bizin baigne li.*

**To mama baigne toi ?**

Garçon :

- *Oui.*

**To content ?**

Maman :

- *Non, li content baigne tout seul li. Li pou sauver, rode baigne tout seul.*

**To brosse ledents to tout seul?**

Maman:

- *Ledents oui. Mais seulement mo bizin veille li.*
- 

This concern about the cleanliness of their children is echoed in the words of working class mother of Grand Gaube (creole):

**Zot baigne tout seul ?**

*Deux grands I conne abaigner, ti garçons la so papa ine montrer li comment li bizin baigner parski line gagne 10ans. Motipti mo encore baigne li. Toujours mo pe montrer li parski li ena 6 ans.*

Another mother (working class- Tamil) from Stanley, Rose Hill shows the same attitude about the children's hygiene :

- *Mo garçon cinq ou six ans, quand li sorti l'école li tire so linge li baigner mais kan ene grand bain mo donne li. Mo montrer li. Mais aster la li palé. Mo tifi même lot fois mo dire li mo frotte so le dos mais li palé.*

Most of the children (80%) take warm baths which gives an indication that families in general have become more affluent and take care of the comfort of their children by equipping their bath room with a electric showers. The difference in the nature of the bath,( in terms of warm or cold baths)among the children coming from different regions of the island give an indication of the economic differences. For example about 50% of children from Grand Gaube ,Roche Bois and Stanley take cold baths .This may be because of a preference for cold bath but it may also be because they do not have access to warm water in their bathroom.

Body and dental hygiene may have a direct incidence upon the health of the child and we can take stock of the fact that personal cleanliness is generally highly valued in all social groups, except for some small pockets of extreme poverty in which cases, water is not easily available.

## **Treatment of children's diseases in the family:**

The practices in connection with the treatment of diseases in different families seem to be influenced by factors such as social class, economic status and family traditions in various ethnic communities.

Thus, through interviews, we learn that the higher the socio economic status of the family of whatever ethnic group, they have recourse to orthodox medicine. They take their offspring to the private paediatrician and buy and administer the medicine prescribed.

Working class parents usually take their children to the nearest dispensary or hospital and if they see that the problem may be more serious, they have recourse to the paediatrician as the following transcripts give an idea of the reasons why those people do not have recourse to the paediatrician.

**“ Docter privé ou pas alle guetter?**

- non , mo pas aller

- **Pena aussi par ici?**

- -ena, goodlands. Kapave alle guetter mais dans ca l'heure la mo mari pe traavaille et li coute cher.

- **Commié li couté?** Parfois Rs 200 ene consultation ek so medicine ek tout

(working class mother – Grand gaube )

**“Kan zot malade ki ou ti faire?**

Si zot pe gagne disons ene colique mo pas acheté medecine. Ti ena yapana, bergamote tout ca. Pas ti ena ca létemps pou aller, vini kot docter la. Si mo trouver ena la fieve imper trop, mo amene zot dispensaire ou l'hôpital. Pas ti kapave aller vini kot docter particulier.” ( working class mother Stanley)

The working class parents prefer to take their sick children to dispensaries because they can also obtain free medicines but in some villages, the services of the dispensary may be poor so that they prefer to take their children to further villages where the facilities are more readily available:

*“Oui donne médicaments mais nous choisir dispensaire aussi pu aller parski Goodlands nou gagne plus bon médicaments ki ici. Goodlands tous les jours gagne docteur. Sept heures et demie docteur fini vini labas, Ici attane neuf heures, si zenfants la pé malade, mo fini amene li labas.,”* (Working class mother – Grand Gaube)

Among upper middle class families, most ailments of children are treated by the private paediatrician. The least fever is a good reason to take the child to the private doctor: They never or very rarely take their children to the hospital and in cases of serious illnesses, the children are taken to a private clinic.

**“ Mais pou tous banne ti bobo la, ki ou faire?**

*Nous ena en docteur dans coin chemin, B..... Disons couma nous trouve li commence faire la fièvre nous galoper nous alle kot docteur.....Disons comment par exemple ene jour mone alle cherche li leçon, lerla mone trouve li fievreux, la fièvre lor li. Mone dire li: to pas pou kapave passe to la nuit comme ca, Au lieu mo retourne lacaz mone alle direct kot docteur la.*

**L'hôpital non?**

**Non, jamais mone amene zot l'hôpital**

**Clinique?**

**Clinique en cas de nécessité. Normalement mo alle kot zot docteur meme, apres docteur la guetter ki li pou faire” ” (Chinese – Upper Middle Class mother – urban)**

The practice of taking the child to the paediatrician or the family doctor for the least fever is reflected in this response by an upper middle class mother of the Franco-Maurician community :.

**Sur la santé qu'avez vous à dire ?**

- *Ah la santé, ça je dois dire quand un enfant est malade, peu importe, le petit bobo...chez le docteur. Chez le docteur, il me dit ce qui doit être fait. Je ne laisse pas une maladie euh...couver. Pourquoi ? Parce que je réalise que c'est mieux de finir une fois parce que ça peut dégénérer.*

**En principe ça veut dire que vous allez toujours voir des médecins privés ou c'est à la clinique que vous allez emmener les enfants.**

- *Oui. (Franco-Mauritian Mother from Curepipe)*

The fact that the parents of the middle class families take their children to the family doctor as soon as they detect what they think to be a health problem may also be due to the fact that they possess the financial means to do so without a second thought about the family budget. For the working class parents, taking the sick child to the private doctor means a big hole in the already restricted budget.

Though economic reasons may have a strong influence upon the decision to take the child to the doctor or not, the parents' character and attitude towards sickness may also be a strong factor in decision making. This is explained by an upper middle class grand mother of the Franco-Mauritian community:

- *Oui, mais ça dépend je crois du caractère des parents. Le caractère même, je prends l'exemple de mes deux filles qui sont mariées, il y a 4 ans de différence entre les deux, elles ont eu la même éducation, les mêmes parents et tout. Il y a une, comme l'enfant a p'tit peu de fièvre, elle téléphone au pédiatre. Elle emmène voir parcequ'elle a peur que ça se... parcequ'elle a eu des bronchites etc. Il y a l'autre qui va le moins souvent voir le*

*médecin Elle attend que vraiment l'enfant ait de la fièvre très forte pour aller. C'est parcequ'elle s'inquiète moins que l'autre. C'est son caractère qui la fait agir comme ça je crois. (grandmother – The Mount)*

A woman of La gaulette, employed as maid with a upper middle class Franco-Mauritian families of Riviere Noire explains the difference between working class and upper middle class attitude towards children's sickness :

*«...Comment zot (Franco Mauritians) zenfan gagne ene ti la grippe, ene ti chose zot pe alle guette zot pédiatre. Zot gagne ene ti rougeur, zot aller, bizin amene zot zenfans. Ou, ou bizin l'argent pou alle paye consultation, medecines. Mais zot, medecines lors medecines. Et puis pou zot c'est couma dire ene nannier du tout. Ou, ene ti la grippe ou pe prend ene ti sirop panadol oooooou pe donne ou zenfan, ene ti lafiève ou pé amene li dispensaire. Si ou pas kapave meme, lerla ki ou alle kot ene docter payé. Mais comment zot, zot zenfans pé pleurer pas conner ki pe gagner, bizin telephone zot (the employer) et zot déranger zot amene zot kot pédiatre.»*

### **The home pharmacy:**

There seem to be a common practice in most families of whatever social class or ethnic group, and that is, that of the home pharmacy with mainly children's medicine which are always kept handy in cases of mild ailments such as the common flu , fever, or tummy aches or headaches. The most common medicine seem to be “panadol” syrup or “ brufen”:

*“Kan li malade mo acheter ene medecine Brufen. Tou coup kan li malade mo faire li boire ca meme. Couma li vini coume ca la, so papa fini trouver et li alle acheter de suite.*

***Mais ou pas amene kot docter?***

*Non juste ene seul fois mais apres jamais*

***Depi ti baba?***

*Oui panne amene li/ Juste ene seul medecine line boire et depi l'heure li boire*

***Mais couma oune conner bizin donne Brufen?***

*Mais au commencement docteur ti pe dire , kan alle faire vaccin tout ca, docteur dire bizin donne li ene medecine ki appelle Brufen ( Muslim Mother – Plaine Verte)*

As we can see that among some groups of people, more especially among working class, the parents seem to substitute for the doctor and do not seem to wish to seek expert advice for the treatment of her children's minor ailments.

The following transcript gives us an indication of what may be common practices among the economically disadvantaged groups:

*mo craze panadol mo donne zot, Ene sel fois mo ti amene mo garcon kot docteur particulier. La plupart du temps mo amene zot dispensaire ou sinon mo ena panadol lacaz. Mo garcon ti gagne bronchite mais sinon zot en bonne santé*” (working class grandmother /mother – Stanley)

Evidence of home treatment of minor ailments is brought by the school children .(question 8.10 of children’s questionnaire) . 44% confirm that “*maman/papa me donne des médicaments*” such as “Panadol”, “Efferalgan”, “Brufen” among others. For 19% of those children, home treatment seem to be the only form of treatment while for 24% of them, they are also taken to the dispensary (26%), hospital (8%) or the private doctor(16.7%) or the private clinic(1%). These figures confirm what has already been explained by means of the qualitative data, that is, working class people choose medical treatment which is free or not too expensive because of their limited economic means.

It must be pointed out that home treatment of certain sickness in the child may be a form of dangerous practice in some cases which may prove fatal if medicine are not appropriately administered. This has yet to be researched.

### **The use of traditional medicine**

Traditional medicine seem to be very popular among the lower socio economic classes. The reason for the use of these types of medicines may be due to economic reasons. This is highlighted by Wong Ting Fook:

*“ The economic importance of medicinal plants may be analysed in terms of their uses or potential uses. They are widely used by people of the rural areas and the less fortunate ones for curing or alleviating a wide range of ailments wuch as common cold, influenza, diarrhoea, dysentery, fever, etc.”* (Wong ting Fook, 1980 :5)

These plants are sold at the Port Louis Central Market and in the Rosel Hill market where they are bought by those who live in the towns but in rural areas, people usually know where to find them, in people’s backyard, garden or some even go to find them in the wilds.

On the other hand traditional medicine may be used in also the middle class people because of family traditions and beliefs. During the course of my research, I have discovered that very often with the presence of a grand mother in the family,

especially those of Asian origin, the use of medicinal herbs is very common. The following herbs seem to be very common,: Yapan, citronnelle, grain de lin, baume du peru , camomille.

*Ou servi banne la tisane tout ca?*

**Oui**

*Ki qualité?*

*Ala couma fleur camomille dans de l'eau, de l'huile camomille si zot ventre fer mal,*

*"Ena citronnelle, ca banne zenfants enrhumés ki boire"*

.....

*"La grain de lin, ou grillé li, apres mo craze li, mo mette li dans ene cuillere et mo mette li dans impé de l'eau et mo donne li boire ca, Arreter derangement."*

(grand mother – stanley)

If the young mother (mostly of Indian origin) lives with her mother or mother –in-law or is in daily contact with her mother, she seems to leave matters of children's ailments in the hands of her mother:

*"Mo maman ine aide moi parski li conner, kan zenfan malade tout ca alle acheter medecine ,o pas acheter parski mo mama femme-sage. Li ti pe aide moi lor abbe zafaire medecine. Parski ena fois mo acheter medecine la pharmacie et pas servi meme. Lerla li faire loc, lot kan zenfan gagne la fievre tout ca mo pas acheter medecine" (urban Muslim mother)*

In this case of a Sino-Mauritian family, this grandmother affirms that she uses traditional Chinese medicine:

***Quand zot gagne la grippe ki qualité la tisane ou faire ?***

- *Mo ena ene potion ki mo acheter et mo garder kot moi.*

***Comment apelé potion la ?***

- *Ene potion jelly. Ene medecine chinois ça, et puis mo garde du miel pou zot. La grippe la mo pas laisse zot gagner moi. Comment zot gagne ene tigitte la, mo fini control banne la de suite.*

It would seem that the Creole working class mothers also use the same medicinal herbs which are used by mothers from other ethnic communities. These Creole mothers from Grand Gaube confirm that they use "citronnelle", "yapan" to cure their children's ailments:

*Silvie: "A la Citronnelle. Si disons li gagne colique, ene ti feuille apana."*

**Corinne :** *"Ou bien kan ena ene l'influenza, boui citronnelle, pou boire"*



The treatment of the common cold is usually through the infusion of “citronelle”, ginger and lemon. This is commonly administered to children among mostly working class and lower middle class families who do not find it necessary to take their children to the private doctor for minor ailments. In many cases, in working class families, the use of traditional medicines may be due to a lack of financial means.

The use of traditional medicine may be influenced by the age of the mothers or the presence of a grandmother in the household.

Young mothers of whatever ethnic group and locality do not seem to favour the medicinal herbs. This young mother from Camp Diable does not seem to show any interest in the traditional “tisanes” :

*“ Ou pas servi la tisane?*

*Non, moindre ti zaffaire amene kot dispensaire. Mais apres, sipa kan gagne tousser bizin sonne du miel, mais zot pas lé boire. Zot prefere medicine tousser.*

*(Muslim working class mother – Camp Diable)*

The use of traditional medicine is not very popular in upper middle class families. There is even a feeling of distrust among those mothers for the medicinal herbs

*C'est toujours les medecins. Vous n'utilisez pas les tisanes de grand-mère tout ça ?*

- *Ca, non. Je ne fais pas confiance dans le sens que euh, si on prend ça trop tard ça peut être grave. Je préfère avoir l'avis d'un médecin. Lui il me dis : tu fais ça, ça, ça (Franco –Maurician Mother)*

There may be a small percentage of upper middle class families, especially those of Asian origin who still prefer traditional as well as orthodox medicine:

*“Si zot suive banne coutume longtemps oui*

*.....*

*Bien ena bien un peu, ene ti pourcentage ki encore suive ca ( chinese grandmother)*

Here again the presence of a grandmother in an upper middle class family may have an influence upon the use of traditional medicine.

There seems to be a strong association between culture and the use of traditional medicine. This association is explained by Wong Ting Fook (1980):

*"The medicinal plant lore of Mauritius constitutes an aspect of our culture and is verbally transmitted from generation to generation. With the changing mode of life, some of this knowledge is being lost with time."* (p. 5)

### **The medicinal properties of plants commonly used in the treatment of minor ailments of children:**

The medicinal properties of the plants used commonly in traditional home medicine is recognised by biological experts. These plants are described by Ameenah Gurib Fakim in her book "*Maurice a travers ses plantes Medicinales*" and the three volumes of her work entitled "*Les Plantes Medicinales de L'Ile Maurice*" She also gives scientific explanations of the medicinal properties of those plants. Another interesting work is that of Wong Ting Fook (referred to as W.T.F. below) entitled "The Medicinal Plants of Mauritius".

I am giving a list of the medicinal plants commonly used to treat children's ailments, and their medicinal properties as described by the experts. These experts seem to support the popular beliefs about the healing properties of these plants. Therefore it would be interesting to compare the experts' explanations with those of the parents above. These plants are being listed here in the way as they are commonly called in Mauritius and their scientific names also.

Ayapana (*Eupatorium ayapana*): The leaf decoction of this plant is probably the most reputed in Mauritius for the treatment of stomach upset and indigestion. (Wong Ting Fook :13)

Citronelle(*Cymbopogon citratus*):The decoction of this plant is very commonly used in Mauritius against cold,influenza and fever.(WTF:17)

Saffran (*Crocus Sativus*) The rhizome decoction in milk against rheumatism, cold and influenza. It is also used as an emmenagogue and as a pultice against pains. P.17

Baume du Perou (*Plectranthus rotundifolium*): The plant is locally used against cough and cold.

Sensitive (*Mimosa pudica*) : “Infusion of its leaves is used to promote sleep and to soothe the nerves “.(WTF.:19). Usually given to hyperactive children.

Mazambron (*Aloe Barbadensis*): The leaves used as a poultice against bruises and sprains.

Betel (*Piper betle*): The leaves are used as a powerful remedy for cough, influenza, asthma, bronchitis and fever(WTF ) and Gurib-Fakim enlightens us about it is used in treating children’s respiratory problems: “

*Les feuilles de cette plante sont surtout utilisées quand les enfants éprouvent des difficultés à respirer. Dans ce cas, toute la poitrine de l’enfant est couverte avec les feuilles de Bétel, chauffées et huilées.”* (Gurib-Fakim,2002:39)

Gingembre (*Zingiber Officinale* ) Is decoction is used to treat bronchitis, asthma, cold and influenza p.28

Bigarade(*Citrus Aurantine*): The peel and leaf decoction are used locally against cough, fever, influenza and as a bitter tonic

Plantain(*Plantage Major*): Infusion of leaves and inflorescence is used as a very good eye wash and as a drink to stop the bleeding of gums.

Camomille (*Tanacetum Parthenium*):Flower infusion is used against colic and indigestion in children

*“Une infusion réalisée avec 10 fleurs dans un demi verre d’eau à laquelle on ajoute un peu de sucre est donnée aux enfants souffrant de coliques.”*(Gurib-Fakim,2002: 75 )

The “Loc”

Very often, in the treatment of children’s symptoms of influenza, fever and coughing, a mixture of different types of leaves which have been crushed together with a liquid such as honey, ghee and lemon juice to produce a maceration which

is given to children. These mixtures are known as “loc” locally . An example is given by Gurib-Fakim : “

*L'équivalent d'une cuillère de jus extrait des feuilles (de betel) , mélangé avec le miel est absorbé deux fois par jour contre la toux et la grippe (Gurib-Fakim ,2002:39)*

Another example of a “loc” is made up with the juice obtained from crushed “Baume du Pérou.:

*“Le jus extrait des feuilles, mélangé avec le miel et du jus de citron, est absorbé contre les grippes, crise d'asme, et la toux”.(Gurib-Fakim ,2002.: 40)*

Other ways of treating fever and flu is to give a decoction, that is a hot liquid obtained through the boiling of certain leaves in water.

A decoction consisting of “citronelle” leaves, “patte poule Piquant” (*Toddalia Asiatica*) and a piece of ginger is used against fever. Another decoction is made up of “citronelle” leaves and those of “bigarade” and again used to cure fever.

Decoctions of the leaves of some types of plants are also used to give baths to children with skin problems such as “ tambave”.This is confirmed by Gurib-Fakim:

*“Contre le “Tambave” chez l'enfant, une décoction préparée a partir des feuilles( ‘Annone’ or ‘Attier’- Annona Squamosa) est indiquée en bain et concuremment par voie orale.” (Gurib-Fakim,2002:85)*

Tambave is also cured bathing the child with a decoction of the leaves or sometimes roots of the following plants: ‘Bois Lousteau’ (*Antirhea Borbonica*), a decoction of the roots of ‘Bois Carotte’ (*Pitosporum Senacia Putteri*), ‘Langue de Boeuf’ (*Asplenium Nidus*), ‘Reine des Bois’ (*Dianella Ensifolia*), ‘Fanor’ (*Gomphocarpus Fruticosus*), ‘Badamier Sauvage’ (*Quisqualis Indica*), a decoction of the bark of ‘Bois D'Olive’ (*Cassine Orientalis*), ‘Bois Banane’ (*Gaertnera Psychotrioides*), ‘Poc Poc Sauvage’ (*Cardiospermum Halicacabum*).

In some cases, a decoction of a mixture of leaves such as ‘Faham’(*Jumella Fragrans*), ‘masson’ (*Ziziphus Mauritania*) and ‘Liane cacapoule’ (*Mussaenda Arcuata*) is used as a bath for children with skin problems such as “tambave”. Another mixture of leaves to make decoctions for baths is that of ‘Bois Fier’,(*Bakerella Hoyifolia*), ‘Liane Cacapoule’ and ‘Bois de Chandelle’ (*Dracaena reflexa*).

The list of plants used in the treatment of minor ailments among children is not exhaustive but it is not within the scope of this research to produce an in-depth study of the different plants used by some parents in Mauritius to treat their children's illness.

It must be pointed out that the medicinal proprieties of the plants commonly used among local people is becoming more and more acknowledged through research such as that carried out by Dr Gurib-Fakim who has also attracted attention to the side-effects of some of those plants.

These plants seem to be of a certain importance for working class parents with limited resources and who cannot afford the high cost of medicines and as we have seen they seem to be highly convinced of the medicinal virtues of these plants.

### **3.3 - PARENTS, CHILDREN AND EDUCATION**

Parents generally play a major role in the development and socialisation of the child especially in the early years through their child rearing practices. In other words, parents “educate” the child informally into the cultural norms and practices of the community and into different types of social skills. In the two previous chapters we have learned about some of the socialisation patterns in families belonging to different social classes and ethnic communities. In this chapter, the main focus will be the role of parents in preparing and supporting the child home in his/her efforts in the whole process of formal education.

It is being widely recognised that the “home background effect” plays a highly significant role in the educational achievement of children. The home background effect does not only involve a satisfactory level of provision of the basic needs of the child in terms of food, health care, but also in direct involvement in the learning process of their children by the parents. This direct involvement may take various forms but in the Mauritian context, the “parents’ effect” is felt in the following ways:

- helping with the children’s home works
- the choice of school
- the choice of tuition teacher
- the ability to pay for more than one tuition
- keeping an eye over the report books and taking necessary actions in connection with the quality of the school report.

The degree of parental involvement in the above list of attributes to the educational process in Mauritius will be influenced by several factors such as:

1. level of education of parents and the cultural capital
2. family values and social capital
3. socio-economic background of the family
4. perception of parents about issues in education.

An important point which has emerged from this piece of research is that to a large extent, for most parents of whatever social class or ethnic group, the education of their children is a priority and education in itself has become an important value in Mauritian society. In most families interviewed for the research, it would seem that most of the parents' main concern during their daily preoccupations is geared towards the education of their children and this may sometimes involve a lot of sacrifices on the part of parents while seeing to the educational needs of their offspring. The degree of sacrifice is relative to the degree of affluence of the family. For a working class mother, the "sacrifice" may take the form of foregoing the purchase of a small clothing item while another mother from the upper middle class, the sacrifice involved abstaining from acquiring a leather sofa set like her friends, instead of "this"(which is a beautiful chintz-covered sofa set in a large drawing –room). Other forms of sacrifices may be that of the parents' time, that is, the parents are at the disposal of their children during the afternoons and even week-ends to take the children to tuition class and fetch them back. In fact, a lot of family members' movement to and from the home during the day may revolve around the educational activities of the children whether in the context of the formal system of education and private tuition or in the context of tuition related to the learning of ancestral languages. All this time management on the part of parents in Mauritius, in order to be able to help their children in their educational endeavour, speak volumes about the pre-eminence of **education** amidst all the family concerns.

Though the provision of education to their children seem to be important to all Mauritian parents, there are different degrees of commitment among the different socio-economic groups who make up the Mauritian society. This will be evident as I discuss the different types of parental support to children in Mauritius.

### **Parental support for children's school work:**

The most common way in which parents have a direct involvement in school work is their constant monitoring of the primary school child's school work.. This kind of support will take different forms such as:

- explanations on a particular problem

- giving the right answer to stop the child pestering the parent
- helping with revisions, making the children recite their lessons on the eve of exams
- being only a supportive presence for the child who has to stay up late.
- Acting as a watch-dog for the lazy student who skips home works.

The quality of this kind of support will vary in different families depending upon the level of education of parents and also their degree of commitment. Children getting help from educated parents will be advantaged over children who are being supported by parents with low academic background or even by illiterate parents. Therefore the quality of parental support will be examined in the different socio-economic classes.

### **The Middle Class Parents:**

The middle class parents have generally an average to high (SC, HSC, degree) level of education and through the interviews we feel a great determination to make their children achieve academic success which will ensure that they will have access to the best secondary institutions and hence to the better paid and high status jobs.

The upper middle class want their children to remain in the top socio-economic strata through high educational achievement while the middle class and the new middle class work hard so that their children will have access to the best type of education which will ensure their social mobility to the higher socio-economic classes.

The educated middle class parent seem to know the “tips” which will ensure a good quality education for their children. Among these tips we find the following:

- Knowledge and skills to give a high quality support to their children at home
- Financial means to provide the best of equipment, especially books and additional tuition.
- Choosing the best schools for their children
- Extra-school activities such as music and dance and sports
-



The upper middle class parents have discovered that the only way to improve school achievement of their children, is to constantly monitor the work of their offspring. The following mother speaks of the importance of constantly monitoring her children's progress:

*“Si les parents ne s'occupent pas, il y a des moments ou je ne me suis pas occupée, les résultats tombent. On s'occupe, ça monte. Il n'y a pas de secret, il n'y a aucun secret. A moins qu'on ait des enfants exceptionnels mais ça j'ai vu un enfant sur peut-être 200. C'est rare. Mais si on s'occupe, forcément le niveau monte.*

The following parent explains that her help is to see to it that the children are getting the right answer :

*Mais malgré leçon ou ti pe aide zot dans lacaz ?*

- *Mo aide zot pou faire zot devoirs, pou guetter sipa zot pe faire li bien.*

« *pou guetter sipa zot pé faire li bien* » means that she is directly involved in the « homework session » of her children. She does not allow them to go back to school or tuition with the wrong answer. This means that apart from the private tuition, the middle class child has an additional advantage with an educated parent helping with the homework as this constitute individualised teaching. This same parent continues to explain that apart from giving direct help for the homework, she is also a moral support for her daughter who needed it in order to be able to work till late :

*Couma dire c'est ene follow-up ?*

- *Oui, mo tifi surtout li lente dans ecrire. Li faire devoirs jusqu'à li gagne sommeil lor so cahier. Alors mo bizin tout le temps avec li on dirait pou supporte li, pou donne li ça courage la. Mais bon line travaille bien, CPE line travaille bien. Tous les deux ine travaille bien. Heureusement zone gagne bon professeur tout ça. Mais noune bizin donne ça coup de main là.*

The above transcript tells us that the middle class child has at her disposal three adults to support her and these are : the school teacher, the tuition teacher(who very often is not the class teacher), and the parent( in some cases both parents). This parent seem to believe that her children's success at the CPE exams depends mainly on her own efforts rather than upon the teacher's , as this transcripts seem to suggest :

- *Mais premier la, le fait ki li premier mo pas on dirait conne so la force. Mo pas conner ki li pou rank, mo pas ti sûre ça l'époque la. Après kan mone trouve li ine rank, line rank 161 mone dire mais bon ça veut dire li ok. Lerla travail deuxieme la mo panne tracasser, **parski tant ki ou pas conner ki niveau zot demander ou pou penser tout le temps séki ou pé fourni pas assez.***

Other parents speak of homework time as one where the parent has to control the child rather than support. The following parent seems to believe that if left to himself the child would not do his homework, and he needs to be controlled and helped by both parents:

*Mais ou aide li quand li faire so devoirs ?*

- *Oui.*

*So papa aussi ?*

- *Oui.*

*Couma dire li senti ou présence là ?*

- *Oui. Si pas assize avec li coume ça li pas pou faire. Par li même li pas pou faire, li pou tourne tourner. Tous zenfans coume ça mo croire. Enfin la plupart bizin derrière zot a chaque fois.*
- ***Dans l'école zot pas faire même devoirs. Juste lacaz zot gagne devoirs. L'école nek juste expliquer après faire lacaz.** (Peggy)*
- 

The last line seem to suggest some sort of criticism towards the school teacher whom she does not seem to believe is doing his best for her child. This kind of attitude is common among middle class parents.

The following parent, who is herself a teacher, tells us about her strategies to help her child, in spite of the class teacher and the tuition teacher. There is a division of labour between her husband and herself in their responsibilities for monitoring their child's work:

*So papa (who is not a teacher) guette so EVS et moi mo ti pe guette Anglais, Français, Mathématique tout ça. So papa faire li lire, lire ene passage, explique li tout ça..... li ti pe jette ene coup d'œil lor li, faire li reciter, lire.*

*Tantôt li faire so devoirs, lerla mo jette ene coup d'œil. Week-end lerla mo guette so EVS, li reciter lerla....*

For this parent, it is also not a mere supporting of her child during the home-work time or even make her recite her lessons, it is also teaching the EVS programme all over again in her own way as she explains here :

*Mo préfère faire ene lotte devoir are li, couma dire pas suivre trop seki professeur pe faire. Mo suivre programme là mais mo pas...*

***Mais ki zaffaire par exemple ki ou faire en plus ?***

*Mo refaire so EVS.*

***Pas seki ena dans so livre?***

*Dans so livre mais mo pas prend professeur so notes. Moi mo faire mo notes par moi.*

***Ou faire ou propre notes ?***

*Oui, lerla mo pose li question lor la même. Après pas ti gagne trop problème are li parski tout le temps li ti pe sorti premier dans classe.*

Doing the programme all over means that she does not trust the school teachers' way of teaching and this is what she confesses though she diplomatically says that had the luck to have a « good » teacher whom her daughter liked a lot :

***Du moment ou pe refaire programme EVS là, mais ki ou penser lor manière pe enseigner la-bas ?***

- *Mo trouver chance ki line gagner, line gagne ene bon professeur. Tous les deux professeurs ti bon.*

***Oui, mais ou dire moi ou refaire programme là.***

- *Oui, mo pas donne entièrement confiance professeur, attention ki ena banne ti boutes ki manquer. Surtout avec ça zaffaire CPE là, mo ti pe peur.*

***Mais letemps ou regrette li ou trouver ena banne zaffaires manquer ?***

- *Oui, ene deux ti zaffaire mais kapave li même ki panne capter. Mais so deux professeurs ti vraiment deux bons professeurs.*

***Kan ou pe aide li couma dire li pe prend ene lot leçon encore ?***

- *Oui.*

*Mais pas ti nécessaire li prend leçon mais couma dire pou li pas senti li imper en dehors. Après li ti bien content so professeurs. (Muslim mother – Port Louis)*

In this case, the CPE student has been having private tuition with her teacher in order not to be marginalised by the teacher and not to feel excluded from some of the class activities which continue into the private tuition time according to some reports.

The middle class parent not only has academic knowledge but also the skill to know when to give support and when not to give support. There are some children who are independent and dislike the presence of the parent to help her with her homework. The following excerpt gives us an inkling into the different approach to helping children with their schoolwork This mother tells us of the different attitude of two of her children to her interventions in their work:

*Oui, je les aidais. Ca aussi certaines aimaient que je les aident, d'autres n'aimaient pas, rentraient sous la table, c'était toi ça (speaking to her daughter). Tu rentrais sous la table quand je te faisais réciter tes leçons parce que tu n'aimais pas que je m'occupe de tes affaires. Elle n'aimait pas. A cote de ça, S.... qui était plus âgée, elle avait trois de plus qu'elle, tout ce qu'elle faisait jusqu'au*

*bac : hein, lis ce texte la avec moi allons comprendre ça ensemble. J'essayais de faire ce que chacun voulait un peu.* (Upper middle class mother interviewed in the presence of her daughter)

This attitude can also be observed from another middle class mother of QuatreBornes – Sodnac, who also shows differentiation in the degree of help she give to both her children though she believes that there should be a strong follow-up of her children's school work in order for the child to achieve high academic success at school :

*« primaire mo ti pe assez assize avec zot, guette ene ti peu cahier, tire ene ti peu banne fautes tout ca, corriger.*

*Mais quatrième, cinquième, CPE disons mo ti faire un peu plus surtout pou S.... parce que li ti ene ti peu... ???*

*Pou l'examen CPE mone assize avec li. V.... li ti plus confiant, li ti plus a l'aise avec so avec so groupe camarades, avec so professeur. Li ti gagne ene professeur ki ti conne vraiment manage the class et give them confidence. Alors pou V..... pas autant, et li ti pe faire so travail. Huit heures trente li ti pe fini alle dormi pou CPE, li lever six heures. Tout le temps mo ti pe dire li : mais to conner, eski tone fini faire to révision ? Oui, mami ine fini. » (Hindu –middle class- quatre-Bornes).*

In spite of the fact that this mother allows her son to work independently, she is always worrying about whether he has done his homework. This means that the parental control and monitoring is constantly present in this family. This kind of parental presence in the background is also reflected in the accounts of parents who boast of leaving their children to work independently.

This kind of attitude of the middle class towards the education of their offspring is not unique to Mauritian society. This kind of parental practices in relation to the child's education, by the middle class parents, is described by Rogoff :

*« In middle –class families, adults often structure young children's learning by organising children's attention, motivation, and involvement. They frequently structure adult-child engagement in child-focussed activities, such as child-oriented conversations and play, and attempt to motivate the children's engagement in lessons that they provide, removed from the context of ongoing mature activities (Rogoff et al., 1993). Such interactions resemble the type of interactions for which the children are being prepared to participate in school. » (Rogoff, 2003 :301)*

There are other parents who seem to strongly believe that their children must be given a certain degree of freedom in the accomplishment of their home work as testified by this parent :

***« Mais pou devoirs, ki sanna ki aide li ?***

*Devoirs mo laisse li travaille par li. Si li gagne ene probleme, lerla li vine demande moi. Devoirs mathematique li pou alle demande so papa, devoirs anglais, francais, EVS, hindi li pou vine demande moi. Mais li travaille assez bien. » (mother – middle class hindu -Riv du Rempart)*

This other parent who is himself a teacher speaks of allowing the child to work and develop independently :

*Moi je ne veux pas que l'enfant depende sur moi. L'enfant depend sur lui meme et il doit se debrouiller par lui meme. C'est ca mon principe. Je laisse l'enfant se debrouiller par lui-meme. Parce que chaque enfant a sa personnalité, son caractere. Il faut les laisse s'épanouir. Parce que moi je leur dit si demain papa n'est pas là qui va se debrouiller ? C'est vous. Mais commencez maintenant.*

***Mais votre femme aussi s'occupe des etudes des enfants ?***

*Oui, elle aussi. Mais plus, moi. Elle prepare les gateaux, n'importe quel gateau s'ils veulent manger : des rusgoulla, n'importe quel gateau. Ma dame s'occupe aussi des repas. Oui, elle aussi s'assoit avec eux mais plus, c'est moi. S'ils sont malade c'est moi qui les emmene chez le medecin.*

***Mais le soir qu'est-ce qui se passe ? Ils font leurs devoirs. Est-ce que papa, maman et les enfants s'asseyent... ?***

*Non, ils font leurs devoirs mais moi je ne les regarde pas. Simplement ce que je fais, je regarde la note, s'ils ont fait : apportez vos cahiers je vais voir et ok, c'est tout. (father- Hindu middle class - Riviere du Rempart)*

At the same time we feel that there is the constant presence of the parents who act as supports and guides to the children in their studies while at the same time providing all their basic needs, such as taking them to the doctor whenever the need arises and the mother cooking the food and cakes which the children prefer.

The above accounts give an insight into how family life present itself during week days after school hours. The parents' energies and attention seem to be focussed upon the children's studies. This is more remarkable in middle class families as exemplified by this upper middle class mother who while taking care of her children's education here again speaks of 'sacrifice' :

***Mais vous surveilliez leurs devoirs ?***

- *Oui, ah oui. Et on se privait beaucoup, on ne sortait pas a cause d'eux pour qu'ils puissent travailler.*

***Vous étiez la a coté de lui ?***

- *J'étais toujours là. On se privait beaucoup.*
- *On n'est pas un couple qui aime tout le temps sortir a droite et a gauche. On s'est beaucoup sacrifié pour nos enfants, voilà. (Franco –Mauritian mother- The Mount).*
- 

This parent whose children study in a private school is still concerned about providing all the necessary support to her children in their studies after school hours.

For children who study in the government primary schools, the parents' main concern seem to be that their children should score high marks at the CPE examinations in order to be able to have access to a « good » school. In spite of regionalisation, there are still « good » schools and less good schools in the parents' perception. Most parents' ambitions, (especially middle class parents) are that their children should be able to have access to the high status schools.

Apart from direct support in performing the home-work, the middle class parent generally through financial means can afford to give more than one tuition to the primary school children and can buy additional books for work and for leisure also.

### **Choice of schools :**

Middle class parents are on the look-out for the best schools for their children because of the following reasons :

- they have the means to pay for the high-fees school and so they can pick and choose schools to a certain extent
- through their level of education, they can make critical appraisal of the different types of schools and teachers.
- They can make projections into the future about the possible benefits of sending their child to such a particular school,
- They possess a social capital consisting of a network of connections with the appropriate people who can pull strings in some instances.

In other words the middle class have as assets the different forms of 'capital', that is :economic, cultural and social (Bourdieu)

Since the child is at a very early age, the middle class parent is on the look out for a 'good' pre-primary school. In many cases, there is the case of reserving the school since the child is still a baby . This upper middle class mother has already reserved a place for her baby son in a « posh » pre-primary school and this has

been facilitated by the fact that the teacher and herself form part of the same network of 'friends' (in this case a prayer group).

*Sanne la ine fini inscrire dans ene maternelle, Port-Louis.....*

*Oui, mais M..... dans même groupe de prière ki moi, donc mo fini mette so nom. Bizin inscrire depi avant sinon pena place. Mais la-bas mo conner li prend Rs1600-1800 et zot dire moi li raisonnable. Li très raisonnable pour la qualité, hein. Parski ena plus cher ki ça.*

Again she explains how she has had her elder daughter transferred from one pre-primary school for another where she thinks that her child would be more advantaged as the teacher in the new school spoke French and this would be of an advantage for access to a 'good' primary school where it is difficult to have admission as there is a high demand from middle class parents and the number of seats are limited. It would seem that here again her social network of friends have informed her about the advantages of this new school.

***Ki l'école li ti aller ?***

*Le 'B.... C....'..... Et puis plus tard mone transfer li kot madame Annie, kot « L... D... » . Kot « L'... D'... » ça l'époque la, tous banne séki ti bizin alle Lorette Vacoas zot alle la-bas. Donc so banne camarades, zot alle la-bas parski madame la faire zot apprane cause francais bien. Après zot developpe zot langage parski kan pou rentre Lorette Vacoas zot bizin passe dans interview tout ça.*

This kind of attitude is typical of the affluent middle class parents who can afford to send their infants to the expensive pre-primary schools which act very often as feeder schools for the private fee-paying primary schools like Lycée du Nord , Ecole du Centre, North Fields , Lycée Labourdonnais, the International Lycée du Nord etc. As the parent is explaining, going to a particular pre-primary has certain advantages for the child as it is presumed that the child is going to learn the language codes which will give him access to the select private primary school and hence to the exclusive private secondary school.

This same parent is going through the same process of reserving a private primary school for her son who has not yet even entered the pre-primary stage of education. Reserving a seat in such a school entails the deposit of a sum of money

which may vary from school to school and which will be lost if ever the parent changes his mind or if a seat cannot be secured because of high demand for the school. Children whose parents who are not the habitual sponsors of the private school are put on a waiting list and can only hope that somebody will desist and they will be able to obtain a seat for their child. Mainly wealthy parents can afford to lose the deposit of such a substantial sum of money. With reform in education and 'regionalisation' in the context of access to government primary and secondary schools, the strongholds of middle class education (the star schools) will become form VI schools and so in order not to run the risk of having their children educated in schools which are not of their liking, they prefer to register them in private schools even though these schools are very expensive as they can afford them. The following transcript gives an insight into the process of reserving a seat in a private primary school.

***Avec regionalisation...***

*Oui, nous pou prefere envoyer kot l'école ou plus sûr on dirait.*

***Oune reserve ou place dans C..... la ?***

*Mone gagne ene forme mais mo pas encore rempli. Mo pe réfléchi même. Mais mo penser éventuellement si par ici li pas vine aussi satisfaisant que mo ti penser li pou été....*

***A partir l'année prochaine ou pou commence conner ki banne trends.***

*Ça même mo dire laisse mo guetté ça banne choses la pé changer, laisse mo guette ene coup comment li aller. Mone prend ene forme C... toujours, li pas coute moi nannier mo rempli, mo donne zot, mo lor la liste d'attente jusqu'au jour zot appelle moi. Zot pas pou appelle moi aster. Zot pou appelle moi disons un an avant li rentre la-bas.*

***Mais mo croire ou pou bizin payer ene somme.***

*Oui, ena Rs2500 depot mais c'est un an avant li rentre l'école. Ça veut dire line fini appelle parents la, du moment line fini interviewer ou, lerla couma dire ou pou sur l'école la.*

***Rs2500 ? Rendre après ça ?***

*Non, quand même ou pas aller aussi li pas pou rendre. Ça même li coute banne parents bien bien cher pou aller C..... Mais mo ena ene camarade ki ena ene seul tifi, li aussi li pe aller kot M..... Donc li dire moi li fek aller interview la-bas, li dire li pou bizin éventuellement payer so depot. Mais lerla mone dire li : mais faudé ou sur ou pe aller kan ou pres pou rentre primaire. Mais li ena ene seul zenfan donc mo supposé li pou prend tous les moyens pou envoyer li la-bas.*

From this excerpt of an interview of the mother from an affluent family, we learn that choosing a school for the children gives place to a lot of research from friends and other connections and a lot of discussion among members of the family. Durubellat and Van Zanten explain this process in middle class families :



*« Il serait faux d'assumer que dans les familles disposant de plus de ressources, le choix se fait sans hésitation, ni sans angoisse. Il exige d'abord d'un véritable travail de prospection, le plus souvent dévolu aux mères, impliquant notamment le recueil d'informations auprès du réseau de relations, souvent considéré comme plus fiable que les sources officielles pour tout ce qui concerne « l'atmosphère » et la « discipline » dans l'établissement, et des démarches pour se faire accepter dans l'établissement choisi et pour obtenir les autorisations officielles (Pinson-Charlot et Rendu, 1988 ; Ballion, 1991 ; Ball et al., 1995) . (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten ,2002 :180)*

The « new middle class » will have only its 'economic capital' to depend upon in their choice of school. To cater for the needs of this new middle class who has the means to invest in the education of their children, there are new private primary schools which are being set up in certain rural areas such as Triolet, Coromandel etc. where this new middle class are settled. This mother from Port Louis is ready to send her son to a private school in Triolet where the fees are rather high (but not as high as the older private schools) but the child does not take private tuition :

*Li, li pas prend leçon. Li alle l'école privé, li alle O... K.... Li ti là mais mone tire li (school in Port Louis).....Li alle l'école dans van, ena ene van ki vine cherche li et vine quitte li.*

***La-bas ou trouve plus bon ?***

*Oui. Ici bann professeurs là pas travaille du tout. Mais par contre Yo... ti gagne bon professeur au début, ti ena madame R..., ti pe bien travaille. Sanne là deux ans line tappe avec ça .....là, li pas travaille du tout li ena ene problème cardiaque missier là. Li pas kapave mette discipline ek zenfans, li pas kapave contrôle ene classe de 50. Lerla mone tire li.*

***Mais ou satisfait la-bas ?***

*Oui.*

***Mais ki qualité zenfans alle la-bas ?***

*Ena beaucoup étrangers et après ena bann zenfans mauriciens même.*

***Mais commié ou payer la-bas ?***

*Transport tout li faire moi Rs3200. L'école même coûte moi Rs2500, manger tout dedans. Et transport Rs700.*

Other members of the traditional middle class and the new middle class have found it more convenient to "colonise " some government schools by sending their children massively to a particular school in a region or locality. These schools known in the Mauritian context as 'star schools' are mainly the preserve of the middle class though there are also working class children in those schools. In these schools perceived as high performing schools by parents because of their high percentage of pass at the CPE examinations but also the high number of children who are « classés ». The following transcript gives an idea of how a particular school of Riviere du Rempart is gradually becoming a school being 'taken over' by the middle class children of « fonctionnaires ». On the other hand

this same middle class is abandoning the oldest school of the locality as with the new delimitation of the catchment area of the school, children of the working class from the 'cités' are having access to this high status school.

**Ki l'école ?**

- Ici, le Ravin. L'ainé li alle B. Mahadoo, mo cadet li ici SAJ.

**Oui, banne la pe explique moi ena deux...**

- Oui, ena deux l'école. Mais nous nous trouve lor boundary.

**Oui, ena catchment area ? Ici aussi li catchment area ?**

- Partout, entier l'île.

*Mo pas ti realise ca. Mo ti croire juste dans banne l'école couma dire, star schools...*

- Mais so l'école B Mahadoo li soit disant ene star school dans la region.

**Mais SAJ pas encore vine star li ?**

*Non, mais tout doucement. Li nouveau. Là, l'année derniere mo croire ti so deuxieme batch CPE, mais li pas trop ancien. Mais zot travaille. Mais d'après ranking l'année derniere, banne la ti ena assez bon resultats.*

**SAJ ek B Mahadoo pe vine a peu pres pareil. Meme clientele ?**

*Meme clientele. Mais disons B Mahadoo mo croire li pe changer parski tous so clientele, ena ene banne EDC, ene cité ki pres avec ca. Mais disons ca ki faire la difference mo penser maintenant. Auparavant nous ti pe gagne un peu partout, zot ti pe sorti sipa L'Amitié, Belle Vue Maurel, Esperance, tous dimounes ti pe envoie zot zenfans la, li ti pe gagne best. Mais maintenant niveau pe baisser avec, bon catchment area c'est juste banne dimounes dans les parages mais ici mo penser ena plus fonctionnaires ki B Mahadoo. Ena beaucoup fonctionnaires, ca veut dire nous pou gagne ene grandnombre de fonctionnaire zot zenfans par ici. Nous péna acces labas mais disons banne derniere année toujours zot ine reussi faire ene percée labas aussi.*

The ethnic factor may play a role in terms of the clientèle of the school. This will be influenced by the location of the star school. A school, located in an urban locality such as Sodnac, Quatre Bornes has a school population which consists mainly of the Hindu upper middle class, whose members have found it more convenient to « colonise » a state school rather than pay for private schooling. Such a phenomenon is not particular to Mauritius. Durut –Bellat and Van Zanten describe such a situation in France, where in an upper middle class locality (Neuilly), the inhabitants have chosen to patronise the public school rather than the numerous prestigious private schools :

*« Ici, L'appropriation quasi privée d'un espace public s'intègre dans une stratégie globale des classes supérieure visant à la fois une reproduction sociale qui passe de plus en plus par la légitimation par l'école et un maintien de leur cadere de vie en évitant l'entrée des éléments socialement étrangers » (Duru –Bellat and Van Zanten, 2002 : 98)*

The middle class parents' influence in the formal education of their children may be far-reaching. They not only 'take over' the school but try to meddle in the internal running of the school through its PTA. The primary school PTA's, especially the

'star' schools have members who may have political backing and so can wield a lot of power in the local community. In such circumstances the parents may exercise a lot of control over the head teacher and teachers. This kind of situation is not to be found solely in Mauritius but also in other countries such as France, as testified by Durut-Bellat and Van Zanten :

*« Les parents interviennent de différentes facons dans la marche de l'établissement ; ils n'hésitent pas à demander spécifiquement telle classe ou tel enseignant, à intervenir sur le contenu du travail scolaire – domaine réservé aux enseignants s'il en est- à critiquer les manuels, à demander sans cesse des classements pour évaluer les performances scolaires de leurs enfants. Pour influencer sur l'école, ces parents disposent de moyens importants : municipalité, inspection académique, préfecture, cabinet ministériel sont à leur portée » (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten, 2002:99)*

The interference of parents in the running of the school is strongly felt in the allocation of classes to teachers. Some parents want to have their say in the choice of the teacher who is going to teach especially CPE students as that teacher must be perceived by the parents as being hard-working and dedicated so as to be able to give private tuition to the children. In such a context, the parents do not favour lady teachers who, it is feared may be more occupied with her domestic concerns rather than upon dedicating the maximum time to giving tuition. One of the reasons why most CPE teachers in government primary schools may be due to parental influence.

### **The middle class and private tuition :**

Parents acquire the right to control school teachers through private tuition. Primary school teachers are often complaining about parental « interference » in classroom matters. They complain but they cannot do much because through being paid directly by the parents, they become *de facto* their employees. The most common practice in the star schools is to give tuition to the whole class so that this activity is highly remunerative. The paying agents do not hesitate to be critical of the teachers' work. The more highly critical of parents are the educated middle class who though they seem to be grateful to some teachers, cannot refrain from criticisms also. These criticisms transpire throughout the interview transcripts quoted above. At CPE level almost all children, whatever the social class, who have the means, have the tendency to take private tuition with their class teacher.

What differentiates the middle class child from the working class child is that the former can afford to have additional tuition from a teacher outside his/her own school. The following transcript gives us an idea of the amount of tuition a middle class child goes through because of her parents' apprehension about her performance at CPE examinations :

**Après l'après-midi quelle leçon qu'elle prend ?**

La fille :

- Leçon avec l'école.

**Avec le prof de l'école ? Tous les jours ?**

Maman :Non, trois fois par semaine.

Papa :Lundi, mercredi et jeudi.

**Mais tu prends aussi avec Monsieur F..... ?**

Maman :Oui Lundi, mercredi, vendredi l'autre. Ça veut dire lundi et mercredi c'est...

Elle se réveille depuis cinq heures et demi et elle va rentrer a.... elle termine a cinq heures moins quinze, elle arrive a la maison à cinq heures. Mais seulement disons au départ je lui ai dit, parce que je trouvais que c'est dur, je lui ai dit : « écoutes deux leçons, une le matin et une l'après-midi c'est dur pour toi. If you can't cope, on va If you can't cope, on va supprimer celle de l'après-midi » J'allais parler avec le prof de l'école. Mais elle m'a dit que la leçon de l'après-midi c'est pas vraiment lourd pour elle. Et disons le matin she is fresh et là c'est plus intéressant pour elle.

**Mais pourquoi vous lui donnez toutes ces leçons ?**

Mais disons que moi personnellement, surtout avec la réforme maintenant, mais disons que moi, même quand elle était encore petite je suivais la performance de l'école surtout avec les résultats de la CPE.

The above - transcript tells us about the hardship which a child of ten or eleven years old has to go through in order to satisfy the expectations of her parents for her educational achievement at CPE level.

The following case informs us about the extent to which a parent is ready to make her child endure a lot of hardship through travelling a long distance and having his tuition at unusual hours, that is, between half past five and half past seven in the evening. Apart from being tutored by the class teacher, he had to take an additional tuition with another teacher :

**Maman** :Mais primaire la même ki li pe dire toi là. Dans primaire so leçon commence sept heure et fini neuf heures du soir.

**Garçon** :Commencer cinq heures et demi.

Ah bon ? Are ki sanna to alle prend leçon la-bas ?

**Maman** :J.....

**Mais couma tone alle gagne ene professeur la-bas ?**

Maman :Mais li ti travaille .....(name of school).

**Mais comment to aller, dans bus ?**

**Garçon** :Dans van

**Mais ou pas gagne tracas ?**

**Maman** :Mais mo conner banne la pou vine quitte li. Fini négocier

**Mais letemps to retourner to pas gagne letemps faire devoirs. To alle dormi ?**

**Garçon** :Manger, dormi.

**Li ti fatigant ?**

**Garçon** :Oui.

**Maman** :Oui, CPE la ti fatigant ça. Juste CPE.

This is the fate of a good number of primary school children whose parents have chosen to give them additional tuition because they wish their children to have access to a good secondary school. It is hoped that with regionalisation, there will be less pressure on children to take more than one private tuition though the tuition with the class teacher still continues.

### **The Purchase of Reading Materials :**

The middle class knowing the importance of reading in the development of language and also general knowledge, invest large sums in the purchase of reading materials in the form of story books, books on a specific subject and even encyclopedia. The parents not only have the financial means but also the knowledge about the most appropriate books to buy for the different stages of development of the child. This mother who is a secondary school teacher knows that buying books for the child to read so she buys series of books which will motivate her child to read :

***Vous achetez des livres pour elle presque tous les mois ?***

*La maman* :Non, pas tous les mois mais quand je vais acheter par exemple, là j'achète une série là.

***Une série de quoi ?***

*De livres. Comme si quand je vais achète, ce n'est pas un. Disons je vais acheter par douzaine. A ce moment là c'est là en permanence and she can read. Mais bien rare que je vais acheter un livre. C'est là, je sais qu'il y a un stock là.*

In the following family from Riviere du Rempart, the mother explains how she has developed reading skills among her children since an early age and developing this habit of reading has continued as her children grew up and even the gifts to the children for birthdays and other festivals would be in the form of books even though they may not be able to afford expensive hard cover books:

*Bon, disons kan zot ti petit mo ti habituer lire banne ti zistoire are zot, mo acheter banne livres coloriage, banne ladybird.*

***Ou acheter banne livres ?***

*Oui. Pour l'ainé surtout disons li ti on a monthly basis, depuis li bébé bizin acheter ene livre. Chaque etape nous bizin acheter ene livre. Mais disons kan banne livres la là, pou deuxieme mo panne acheter. Mais pou lui aussi kan ena ene l'anniversaire, ene fete, sipa noune alle Winners nous bizin acheter ene livre pou li. Nous pas acheter disons banne grands grands livres. Banne hard cover ene fois letemps mais banne soft... banne séki nou gagner, banne sorti l'Inde qui expliquer comment faire alphabet, gribouillage tout ca.*

***Mais kan li pe lire, ou aide li ?***

*Oui, mo aide zot.*

For this family the purchase of books is not limited to colouring books and story books only but also to the purchase of encyclopaedia to reinforce the knowledge of the children :

***Mo trouve ena encyclopédie tout ca.***

*Oui, zot ena zot encyclopedie mais ca pou l'ainé so bureau. Ca latale la pou li ca. Tous so banne livres sixieme lor la, disons li handy kan li bizin la. Mone installe li là, mo pas pe servi, mone dire personne pas faire desordre li ziste pou li parski li vini, li fatigué et aster là, depuis ene mois nous pe faire revision.(midle class mother – Riv du Rempart)*

The reading habit is usually reinforced when the parents themselves are regularly reading themselves and reading becomes part of the family culture as this midle class mother from Quatre Bornes explains:

*Parce que moi, même kan mo ti ene housewife mo ti pe lire beaucoup. Magazine, mo ti abonné avec XXX ça l'époque là, ti ena ene magazine anglais. Tout le temps mo ti content lire. Mais li possible ki tellement zone trouve moi lire ki zot aussi zot ine gagne ça habit la. Et aussitôt ki zone commence, arrive ene l'age ki zone commence développe the ....., noune lire beaucoup. Au début nous ti ena membership .....*

*Jusqu'à l'heure Shivani encore acheter livre. Zone fini développe ça...*

*Alors on dirait ça reading habit has been inculcated et comment mo pe dire ou noune encourage zot acheter livres. Alors zot acheter zot même any novel that zot trouver, anything that they like, even history books.*

The middle class children develop such a habit of reading that sometimes they may go to extremes to be able to read and this may land them into troubles as this little girl explains :

*N'importe. Je prends des livres sur l'étagère de ma sœur, je mets dans mon sac et j'emmène a l'école et je lis. Une fois je lisais des livres tranquillement et ma maîtresse m'a mis dehors parcequ'on n'a pas le droit de rester en classe a midi. La dernière fois je me suis cachée sous un pupitre pour pouvoir lire un peu. Je n'aime pas jouer. Dans notre école il y a la bibliothèque...*

This disposition to read has been developed by the highly educated parents, who regularly purchase books for her and this pathetic little phrase : « *J'aime lire je ne sais pas pourquoi.* » make us reflect that if more children could be encouraged to

develop such a disposition for reading, a lot of progress would have been accomplished in the field of the development of education more than some million rupees project.

The importance of reading in the education of a child and the advantage which it provides to the middle class child who is encouraged to read at an early age is highlighted by Rogoff :

*« Children with experience of books and literate stories develop a sense of how text should sound (such as how short and long sentences should alternate for variety and what sentences with subordinate clauses sound like). They imitate the narrative framework, at first without coherent content. » ( Rogoff-2003 : 303)*

### **Extra-school activities :**

Upper middle class parents' contribution to the education of their children is not limited to only school learning. As most schools, especially the state schools do not engage children in other activities than the academic ones, upper middle class parents having knowledge of the importance of the all round development of the child which can be completed through the practice of non – academic activities such as dance, music, theatre, and sports are investing a lot of money in order to cater for the needs of their children in these domains. As teachers in these fields are rare, the fees for practising music, dance and sports such as tennis are very expensive which means that only the affluent families can afford to pay for these extra-school activities. This upper middle class parent explains how her children who had been educated in a private fee-paying school used to engage in those activities rather than in the traditional private tuition in academic subjects:

*Oui, bien souvent les devoirs sont faits à l'avance et tout. On s'organisait mais c'était pas systématique. De temps en temps il y a eu des leçons de tennis, des leçons de danse, c'est un peu des trucs comme ça. Mais jamais elles n'ont pris des leçons d'anglais, de français, de tout ça, hein. Elles allaient à l'école, ça suffisait. Jamais tu n'as pris de leçons*

**Daughter:** *Non, c'étaient des activités extra -scolaires.*

**Mother :** *Il y avait le théâtre ou des choses comme ça qu'on faisait à l'école ou ailleurs. (upper middle class family –Franco-Mauritians)*

It must be pointed out that in many cases, it is the parent who asks the child to engage in these extra school activities and again these parents gain information about the whereabouts of the teachers of these various disciplines through their

network of connections . This mother affirms that she was the one to encourage her daughter to learn the piano,danse ,etc. :

*Et puis mone dire li alle faire danse, alle faire natation, piano tout banne activités ki li lé. Mone dire li profiter bien faire tout activités ki to lé. (Chinese upper midle class)*

If all the children are engaged in extra-curricular activities, it means that the parents,but more usually the mother has to transport the children to and from the various paces where these activities are taking place. Verey often these children are taking tuition in thse extra school activities on Saturdays when the parent are more free. Many parents are often complaining of their exhausting Saturdays. This mother tells us how she acts as the chauffeur for the children :

*J'étais là, des fois je faisais le chauffeur, j'allais déposer à une leçon euh de mathématique, une leçon de danse, euh je bougeais beaucoup, je regardais et ça on ne peut pas... (Upper middle class mother- Franco-Mauritian)*

From the questionnaires of the children of the Ecole de Sans Soucis, we learn that for most of them the only tuition which they take is in extra-curricular activities such as horse-riding, tennis, piano, « theatre », foot ball, swimming, Karaté, guitar. Dancing etc. .

As we can notice, the middle class parent can afford to not only pay for these extra activities which have an important role to play in the full development of the child but can also afford to devote time to facilitate the practice of these activities. It is difficult to imagine a working class mother who must very often work on Saturdays or do her house work be able to give her time and money for her children to engage in activities which to her may not be essential. This is where the State could play an important role to help in the all-round development of the working class children.

### **The working class and Education**

Working class parents are also looking for the advancement of their children through education and they try to do their best to cater for the basic needs of their children as well as try to provide help in the academic field but they do not seem to



have the proper keys to lead them to high levels of achievement and very often failures are associated with working class children, a situation which is not particular to Mauritius though.

Working class parents are not able to help their children in the same way as the middle class parents because of the following reasons :

- poor level of education and in some cases they may be illiterates
- poor knowledge about what is going on in the field of education
- lack of means to support additional expenses in education such as the purchase of books and provision of private tuition

### **Support for Home work :**

The following transcript from an interview of a working class family from Cote d'Or gives us an idea of what may be going on in terms of parental support for school work. This family is what we can describe as the affluent working class , both parents are factory workers with a fully furnished comfortable concrete house. The parents are catering for all the basic needs of the children in a satisfactory manner and yet when it comes to parental support for the children's school work, there are deficiencies which highlight the working class home environment. Both parents come home very late and do not seem to have time or the energy to devote to their children's school work though they may be keeping an eye on the progress of the children. The children 's last resort is to seek help from their elder sister who herself is still in standard VI. This interview of the grand mother, from Côte D'Or gives us the general picture in terms of the family support for school work at home :

***Mais ki sanna veille zot, ki sanna ine faire devoir la ?***

- *Bé parfois zot faire ici. Parfois zot papa sorti travail cinq heures et demi vini. Lerla, veille zot.*

***Li verifier ?***

*Oui.*

***Li guet zot devoir ? Mais kan disons zot pé faire devoir zot pa conner, ki sanna zot alle demander ?***

*Bé parfois zot demande sœur la.*

***Mais sœur la meme li, kan li faire so devoir ?***

*Parfois li faire, parfois li pa faire. Bane tipti la, zot pa ecoute li.*

**Zot papa aide zot ?**

So papa, parfois li sorti travail, li aussi li travail dan l'usine, li fatigué. Li fatigué mais parfois li guet zot.

**Mama la non ?**

Mais so mama parfois li vini, li aussi sorti travail tard ! So mama aussi guet zot.

**Comment zot faire dan l'école, zot travail bien ?**

Zot travail bien

**Mais ca tifi la , comment li travail ? Ki so rang dan l'école ?**

Tifi la couma dir, pa conner la ki li pou chose la.

From this transcript of the interview of two mothers from Grand Gaube we learn that these mothers are doing their best to support the children's education by paying for private tuition and also supervising their home work but these mothers' level of education is very low and the kind of support which they can give to their children cannot be compared to that given by the educated parent who has studied up to secondary level or to degree level. Again as we have seen in the family from Cote D'Or, the younger children seek help from another older sibling, that is, in this case from the brother :

**Banne zenfans la prend leçon ?**

Sylvie :Oui, zot rentre cinq heures, seki dans sixième la mo pe dire ou la, li vini li prend so bain, li manger et lerla li assizer li faire so devoirs jusqu'à six heures et demie.

**Quiquaine aide li ?**

So frère aide li.

**Papa, mama ?**

Parfois mo aide li ene ti peu.

**Jusqu'à ki classe oune faire ?**

Sixième.

**Ou aide ou banne zenfans?(addressed to the other mother)**

Corine :Moi plutôt mo assizer. Si pas assizer, pas pou faire devoirs la.

**Jusqu'a ki l'heure ou kapave assize are li ?**

Jusqu'à sept heures des fois.

There are extreme cases among the working class families where parent is illiterate but there is still the wish to help the child in his studies. In these families school failure is very common. This situation is illustrated by this transcript of an interview of a mother in the squatter colony of Case Noyale :

**Mais ki l'école to pe aller ?**

Son :Mo pe redoubler.

**Mais kan li faire devoirs, ou aide li ?**

Maman :Moi mo pas conne lire, mais li pas lé. Quand ou aide li li pleurer. Li pas lé apprane. Dans l'école même li pas lé apprane. So professeur même appelle moi dans l'école. Li dire moi li kapave apprane mais seulement li pas lé apprane.

**Mais ki ou ti a content ou banne zenfans faire kan zot vine grands ?**

Pas conner.

***Ou pas pense ça ?***

*Non.*

***Mais kan li fini sixième ki l'école ou pou envoye li ?***

*Si li fail même, ena ene l'école pou seki fail Tamarin mais mo pou envoye li. Mais li pas pou reste laçaz.*

This parent is speaking of total resistance to help from the mother in his academic studies, on the part of her child, who does not see the relevance of studying fields of knowledge which are not meaningful to him. The parent does not even expect any educational success at all for her child and does not have any expectations for her child's future. Such situation has a certain whiff of hopelessness.

On the other hand this working class Muslim mother from Camp Diable, who herself has studied only up to standard VI, is fighting for her daughter to be able to succeed in life even though she has not been successful with her son. The daughter has been admitted to a state secondary school which means that in spite of economic hardships, she has attained a certain degree of success in her primary schooling and now the mother is struggling hard to allow her to have her necessary equipment

***Ki l'école li aller ?***

*Ene collège d'état Fance Boyer de la ...*

***Mais banne zenfans la zot l'étude ki sanna guette zot ?***

- Mo même. La même mo bizin faire zot l'école la. Ça tifi la même, kan mo gagne ene travail, ça l'argent mo gagner la mo bizin conne casse li pou li tini so l'école.*

***Mais ki sanna acheter so livre ?***

*Mais lerla mo faire mo banne démarches. La même line dire moi dans Form 3 li bizin livres, mais mo bizin faire démarche dans centre sociale pou faire li gagne livres. Parski mo pena moyen pou acheter. Mais seulement li content pou apprane. ....*

A perfect illustration of what may be happening in some very poor families where education does not seem to be a very important concern in the family and school failure seem to be natural for the mother who seem to be helpless, is the situation in this family of Roche Bois who lives in a sort of hovel. This helplessness is reinforced by the fact that, as she admits herself, she is illiterate.

***Ki classe li été ou dir moi ?***

*Cinquième la. Nannier li pas conner.*

***Mais comment ou conner li pas conne nannier ?***

*Mais 4 F. Chaque coup li amène 4 F are moi. Mo pou dir ou li conner, hein? Li pas conne nannier nannier li pas conner.*

***Mais ou pas guette so miss ?***

*Chaque coup mo alle guette professeur la. Professeur la dir moi li... ou conner line faire l'operation commié fois dans so lizié.*

***Ah bon, li ena probleme lizié ?***

*Probleme lizié, mais mo dir kit fois ca meme.*

***Garcon la li ?***

*Garcon la li alle l'école. Li dans Form 2.*

*Mo pas trouve li amene devoir pou faire moi.*

***Mais li pas amene so resultat ?***

*Oui, li amener. Mais mo pas conne lire mo pas conner kine marquer lor la. Li faire moi signer.*

Though she goes to school to speak to the teacher, one cannot help thinking that in such a poor physical and social environment, education is in state of total neglect because of the illiteracy of the parents who may also have other priorities, such as survival in a context of destitution which usually prevails in squatter colonies.

On the whole we can gather from this above analysis that in spite of their willingness to help their children in their educational endeavour, working class parent' quality of contribution in their children's educational achievement may be very limited in many cases because of economic and cultural constraints.

**Tuition :**

Another way in which the affluent working class wish to bring their children at par with the middle class children is by paying for private tuition. The educated parents can be highly critical of the teachers though, as critical as the middle class parents which attitudes has been described above. This mother from Tranquebar (has studied up to form V) points out the weaknesses of the tuition received by her son and questions the effectiveness of that tuition:

***Malgre so leçon, to prefere guette so travail?***

*Oui, seulement mo pas trouve leçon servi a grand chose, moi mo trouve li ene perte de temps. Si mo ti kapave arrete donne li leçon, mo ti pou arreter. Parski moi mo trouve leçon, mo pas trouve li ene plus pou li parski li faire devoir, li aller nek alle corriger dans leçon. Li faire devoir la lacaz, mo trouve li alle corrige ca dans leçon, mo pas pe trouve...*

***Avec ki professeur ?***

*Avec so professeur l'école meme mais ena bocoup kitchoses qui mo pe trouver mo meme personnellement mo pe bizin montrer li. Comment so banne verbes, ena bocoup kitchoses mo trouver mo bizin montrer li. Li pas conner. Mais moi mo pas trouve leçon la tellement important mais le fait ki tous zenfans pe prend leçon, bizin donne to zenfan. Mais mo pas conner mo pas trouve leçon, peut-etre en sixieme kitfois li important. Ou bien mo penser peut-etre si ene professeur a part, pas banne professeurs l'école, banne professeurs a part ena fois zot ena ene lot style montrer banne zenfans leçon. Mo pas trop conner. Mais pou li meme li, mo trouve li ziste faire devoirs et letemps mo dire li : dans leçon ki tone faire ? Li dire moi : ine corrige devoirs. Mais panne montrer nannier dans leçon la. Et to pe bizin paye Rs250 par mois pou leçon.*

Her interest in what goes on during the tuition hour is evident from her constant questioning of her son.

This parent is critical enough to realise that she may be trapped in this system of tuition because if her child does not take the tuition from the class teacher, he may be marginalised in class in some way by both class mates and teacher. : « *Mais moi mo pas trouve leçon la tellement important mais le fait ki tous zenfans pé prend leçon, bizin donne to zenfan* »

To parry to the deficiencies of the tuition, she tries to give her child additional work at home and helps him along just like the middle class parent (the teacher) above who taught the whole programme over in her own way to her daughter.

This same kind of attitude towards the lack of effectiveness of the class teacher's tuition is observed from this mother from Plaine Verte and she understands that she has to intervene in order to try to have her child improve in his primary education :

**Ça deux là prend leçons ?**

*Maman :Oui.*

**Avec zot professeur l'école même ?**

*Sanne là non. Li ti pe prend avec professeur l'école mais ti ena ene désavantage, professeur l'école là facon li ti pe montrer, li pas pareil. Après li pas ti pe kapave adapter. Sanne là li ene ti peu faible, coté éducation li imper faible.*

**Ou pas donne li leçons en plus ?**

*Si, lerla mone donne li ene leçon en dehors.*

**Aster ou trouve li faire progrès ?**

*Auprès d'avant pas tellement mais kapave ene 25% coume ça mais pas ça quantité là.*

This mother from Roche Bois tells us of her determination to make her child succeed in spite of her own poor education and the child's meagre performance during term examinations :

***Ki sanna guet li kan li faire devoir ?***

- *Parfois mo guette li mais mone faire sixieme, mo pas trop comprend banne devoirs aster, couma avant.*

***So papa non ?***

- *So papa non. Li debrouiller, oui.*

***Mais li travaille bien dans l'école ?***

- *Ene coup li monter, ene coup li baisser. Mo pas conner. La li pé faire sixieme, premier terme so resultat ti assez bon, line tire A ek B. La deuxieme terme line tire deux D avec deux E.*

***Li prend leons ?***

- *Oui li prend lecon.*

***Commié ou payer lecon ?***

- *Rs150.*

***Ene seul lecon avec ene seul professeur ?***

- *Oui, ene seul professeur.*

***So professeur l'école la meme ?***

*Non, avec ene lot professeur reste par ici meme. (Interview – Roche Bois)*

This same determination is expressed by another mother from Vallée des Pretres who shows awareness of the low ability of her child at school and pays for additional tuition on Saturday and Sunday for her child while seeing to it that the elder brother helps the younger one even though she herself cannot do so :

***Mais dans l'école ou ti garçon là, li travaille bien ?***

- *Li imper faible mais line passer seulement.*

***Mais ou donne li leçons ?***

- *Oui, li prend leçons.*

***Are ki sanna ?***

- *Dans l'école meme. Après li prend samedi, dimanche avec ene professeur.*

***Ou trouve li pe faire progres depi li prend leçons ?***

- *Oui, ene tigitte.*

***Mais ou kapave aide li ?***

- *Moi, non. So frère là aide li.*

***Ou grand garçon là ?***

- *Oui.*

***Mais seulement ou veille li ? (interview – Vallée des Pretres)***

It would seem that the affluent working class parents, who can afford to do so, are ready to invest in additional tuition in order that their children may be able to score good marks at the examinations and succeed in their primary education.

On the other hand there are parents who though they feel the necessity to have their children take private tuition but cannot afford to pay for that tuition as this mother from Grand Gaube :

**Li pas prend leçon la ?**

Ça l'année la mo pas encore faire zot prend leçon la parski parfois kan ine arrive la fin du mois pas conner ki pou payer, ki pas bizin payer.

**Ki classe li été ?**

Sixième. Mo pé guetter jusqu'à lot mois ki mo pou faire, mo pou obligé seulement.

**Ou vini kan appelle parent tout ça ? Ou vine cause ek banne professeurs la ?**

Oui, mo vini. So professeur ine demandé si li prend leçon.

**Commié zot prend pou leçon ?**

Rs250. (mother from Grand Gaube)

The problem of making ends meet at the end of the month and the incapacity to afford private tuition for the children, is met again in a poor working class family of Tranquebar :

Mais leçons, mo envie envoie zot leçon. Mo tifi dire moi donne zot leçon anglais parski zot imper faibe dans anglais ek maths. Line dire moi : mamie mo envie alle leçon. Parfois mo dire oui li bon mais letemps mo faire l'inventaire, mo dire : mais sito commence alle leçon, leçon la coute Rs150, premierement premier mois mo pou kapave payer mais apres si mo pas kapave payer lerla ki pou arriver. Mone dire li mo pou senti moi gauche.

**Mais la CPE la aussi pas prend leçon ?**

Non. Enfin li prend leçon complementaire.

**L'école complementaire la ?**

Oui.

In spite of the « école Complémentaire », poverty coupled with a poor cultural environment can only lead to failure as the mother confirms when speaking of her son who is illiterate and seems to refuse to do any homework:

Oui, zot faire.. Par contre sanne la non hein, sanne la zero.

**Ki sanna ?**

Willy. Sanne la depi maternelle...

**Dans ki classe to été ?**

Willy :Sixieme.

**To conne lire ?**

Willy :Non.

**Kifer to pas conne lire? Miss panne montrer toi ?**

**Danielle** :Li paresse li. Kan li envie, par li meme li pou alle guette so professeur, li pou dire : monsieur donne moi devoirs. Li pas faire so devoirs meme, Willy. Ena des fois, kan li dire ou non, non meme. So qualité meme coume ca li.

## Choice of Schools :

Though the working class parent cannot afford to send her child to private fee-paying schools, they differentiate between the various government schools available in or near the locality where they live. This mother from Tranquebar prefers to send her son to a school in central Port Louis rather than the one in the locality and she tries to give an explanation for this preference in her choice of school:

### ***Kifer to pane envoie li ici ?***

*Guy Rosemon ? Peut-etre parski so l'environnement pas bon. Enfin c'est ce qui nous, nous ti trouvé avant : so l'environnement pas bon, banne professeurs meme... So taux de reussite meme tres tres bas.*

This mother from Roche Bois also prefers to send her child to a school outside the locality where there is already a government primary school because she does not trust the quality of teaching and she does not appreciate parents' interference (which she calls the school environment) and according to her she is not the only parent in Roche Bois who sends her child in the other school further away. It would seem that parents of Roche Bois who have a certain amount of ambition for the future of their children, prefer to send their children to the other school which is perceived as having a school climate more conducive to educational achievement.

### ***Ki l'ecole li aller ?***

*St Francois Xavier.*

### ***Mais comment li alle loin la bas ?***

*Mais l'ecole Roche Bois pas trop... mo pas trouve li couma dire... couma pou explique ou. Parfois parents meme gatent facon ene l'environnement. Li gate l'ecole la. Couma dire ena parents, zot pas pou d'accord ki ene professeur crie ek zot zenfans. Ou dans lacaz ou conner couma ou zenfan été. Ou conne so maniere. Mais quand ene professeur aussi pe mette so droit, bizin facon ki li pe cause are zenfan la, aster ou aussi ou bizin guetter sipa ou ena ene maniere pou cause ek professeur la. Mais ici bane parents la leve la voix ek professeur, lerla mo croire ena professeur pas trop content montrer, couma dir zot vine la ziste a cause zot travail. Mais mo prefere lerla envoie...*

### ***D'apres ou professeur la pas montrer, pas assez montrer li ?***

*Oui, parski quitfois si zot crie ek zenfan la, zot pe peur tension zenfan la alle guette so parents, parents la vine guet zot.*

### ***Mais labas dans St Francois Xavier ou trouver li plis bon ? Mais li loin. Mais lerla banne la ine donne ou admission la bas ?***

*Oui.*

### ***Meme ou pas dans ca region la bas la ?***

### ***Pane bizin faire demarche tout ca ?***

*Non.*

### ***Mais kifer oune choisir St Francois Xavier, pas ene lot ?***

*Mais li plis pres St Francois.*



**Ah bon ?**

*Mo trouve li plis pres en place pou alle ene lot l'école dans Port Louis. Et li plis facile ici, mo gagne transport. Beaucoup zenfans ici alle St Francois.*

**Ena bocoup zenfans ki alle la bas ?**

*Oui.*

**Pas ziste ou tout seul ine choisir ca ?**

*Non.*

**La bas bane zenfans la travaille pli bien ki dans l'école Roche Bois.**

*Oui.*

It would seem that there is an upper layer of the working class which possesses a certain level of education and a network of information about the qualities of schools and teachers in a particular locality and with these advantages over the lower layers of the working class, are able to « highjack » a government or aided school for the use of their own children just like the middle class does. They are able to do this in spite of the system of « catchment area » where each school recruits mainly children who live in its « catchment area » as determined by the ministry. It is a common practice for parents to bypass this and are able to have their ward admitted in a school labeled as « star » school.

### **Purchase of books :**

The purchase of reading materials does not seem to form part of working class culture though many seem to acknowledge that it is important to encourage children to read by buying story-books but there does not seem to be the same respect for books as in middle class families where a bookcase with reading materials for the children is a common feature. The following transcript of an interview of a working class mother from Beau Bassin gives us an idea of the status of books in the family. This mother is ready to buy books for tuition every month but buying books for reading as a hobby is not a common practice :

**Mais dans primaire là, tout le long de l'année zot servi différents qualité livres non ?**

*Oui. Mais ena fois mo tifi commence faire so banne devoirs, couma dire letemps li nannier a faire, li assizer li faire so banne test papers, line fini li, tous les mois bizin acheter.*

**Tous les mois ene livre ?**

*Oui, bizin acheter.*

**Banne livres zistoires ?**

*Oui, banne livres zistoires, sipa banne test papers sipa ki zaffaire, ça mo acheter.*

**Banne livres zistoires ?**

*Banne livres zistoires aussi zot lire.*

**To acheter ?**

*Oui, anglais ek francais. Et couma zot fini lire zot mette dans coin, lerla mo lever mo donne dimounes. Mo pas garder.*

This excerpt of the interview gives us an insight into the attitudes of both the parents and the children to books. This same type of attitude transpires from the following transcript . This family from Triolet, take a lot of care about the education of their children, sitting with them when they are doing their homeworks but when it comes to the purchase of story books, there is a lack of enthusiasm and even indifference :

***Ou acheter banne livres zistoires pou banne zenfans ?***

*Oui.*

***Ou acheter beaucoup ?***

*Non, pas trop.*

***La gazette ?***

*La gazette oui. Chaque dimanche nous acheter*

Reading does not seem to form part of the family culture and even the news paper is bought only once during the week.

The same situation prevails in another working class family in the south – Rose-Belle), where the mother is not too literate but sees to it that her children gets help from aunts and cousins but does not see the importance of buying reading materials , nor encouraging the children to borrow books from lending libraries.

***Mais to acheter banne livres zistoire tout ça ?***

*La mo panne acheter mais l'année dernière mo ti acheter.*

***Zot lire ?***

*Oui.*

***Mais zot pas prend livres dans bibliothèque aussi ?***

*Non.*

We meet the same situation again in another family in Rose-Belle :

***Ou acheter livres pou banne zenfans la ?***

*Professeur la même acheter après nous donne l'argent.*

***Banne livres l'école ou banne livres d'histoires ?***

*Livres l'école. Mais ine dire nous nous bizin acheter livres d'histoires mais mo pas encore acheter.*

***La gazette zot acheter ?***

*Non.*

The above analysis has given us vivid pictures of the reality of the home background of children coming from different home backgrounds. This is a feature of education which has the tendency to be ignored by teachers and educational planners. The poverty or the wealth of children in economic, social, and cultural

capital will play an important role in the educational achievement or failure of the children at school.

## Parents and Ethnic Education

Apart from supporting their children's efforts to be able to achieve in the official system of education, many parents belonging to certain specific ethnic groups also encourage their children to follow courses which will help them learn about their ancestral language and culture. This attitude is more marked in some rural communities where children of the Hindu community are encouraged to go to the "baitka" in the afternoon. The 'baidka' is a school belonging to the community where Hindu religion, as well as ancestral languages of the Hindus are taught to children. From the village of Rose Belle, a mother explains the 'baidka' system:

***Pou Baidkha presque tout zenfans l'école aller trois jours la semaine ?***

*Oui. Kot moi zot fek commence aller.*

***De quelle heure à quelle heure ?***

*Lundi et Jeudi zot aller 4 hrs à 5.30 hrs et puis samedi de 9 hrs à midi.*

***Tous classe ena dans Baidka la ?***

*Non, tout presque banne tipti même ki aller. Maternelle, first, second et troisième. Quatrième, cinquième ek sixième ça donne cours dans l'école.*

***Même banne ki riche ou misère, zot aller ?***

*• Oui.*

According to reports from key informers, it would seem that children of the Hindi/Bhojpuri speaking groups may not be attending courses at the « Baitka » too much but are taking private tuition in Hindi from their school teachers or other teachers in premises which have been constructed for this purpose. Most children from Vallée des Prêtres have confirmed that they take additional tuition in Hindi and in other also schools such as Raoul Rivet, the children included this additional information that they are taking tuition in Asian languages.

Children of the Muslim community have to go to the "Madrassa" or "Macktab" where they have to learn about the Quran and the Muslim religion. A Muslim mother from Beau Bassin explains this practice:

***Ki lezot pratique zot ena disons dans communauté musulmane ki banne zenfans bizin faire ?***

*Zot dire ou bizin envoye zenfan mosqué pou li apprane. Zot bizin conne lire zot la bible.*

***Obliger ça ?***

*Mais tous zenfans aller depi tipti.*

***Depi ki l'heure zot alle ça banne classes la ?***

*Kan l'école fini, 4 heures.*

***Pas gramatin ?***

*Non, le matin non.*

***Mais si ena pe prend leçon ?***

*Mais lerla zot pas aller ça banne jours zot prend leçon là. Lezot jours zot aller.*

***Zot alle apprane Arabic ?***

*Oui. Aster zot copier li en Arabe et zot traduire li en Ourdoo. Ena traduire en francais.*

***Mais zot apprane seki ena dans Coran là ?***

*Oui.*

***Ena zenfan recite Coran par cœur ?***

*Oui, mais pareil comment la prière ou bizin conne li par cœur.*

.....

This practice of Muslim children is further explained by two mothers from Camp Diable:

***Mais ki l'heure zot Makhtub la ?***

*3.30 p.m. l'école larguer, lerla li alle la-bas.*

***Pou ou aussi pareil ?***

*1 :Pou moi li vine lacaz après so papa alle quitte li Mosquée.*

***Jusqu'à ki l'heure zot reste la-bas ?***

*Six heures, quatre heures rentrer.*

***Gramatin zot pas aller ?***

*Mo deux grand la alle gramatin parski tantôt zot prend leçon.*

***Pou banne grand Makhtub gramatin et pou banne tipti Makhtub tantôt ?***

*2 :Oui, parski zot bizin prend leçon.*

Data from pupils' questionnaire confirm that most Muslim children go to the Madrassa. Most Muslim children from a school near the Plaine verte region confirm that in addition to taking tuition in the core school subjects, they also go to the Madrassa. Muslim children from other schools also specify that they take tuition in Arab and Urdu.

In La Gaulette, the Marathi community of the village, which belongs to the Hindu religion, also has quite an elaborate organisation of afternoon classes for their children to learn the Marathi language outside school hours. The children together with their families are also often engaged in activities related to the local Hindu temple. The following transcript from an interview of two parents in La Gaulette gives us an indication of the attitude of parents to cultural and religious issues in that locality:

**Ou amene zot mandir ?**

*Oui, bizin amene zot parski zot bizin aprane imper coté zot culture aussi.*

**Zot alle prend cours marathi ?**

*Oui.*

**Commié fois par semaine li alle suive cours ?**

*Deux fois, plus dans l'école aussi. Et zot commence fare banne danses tout ça.*

**Tout ça dans ça centre la ?**

*Oui, dans mandir la.*

**Papa :**

*Mais pas tout les jours ki li aller. Ena evening class marathi pour les enfants.*

This practice is confirmed in another interview with a mother and daughter:

**Maman:**

*Oui, line faire marathi ici.*

**Banne tipti garçons aussi alle la ?**

*Oui, dans l'école et lot la, li aussi li alle Louis Nellan (Govt.School) dans samedi. Couma dire la, li fini primaire mais si ou envie continuer ou alle la- bas.*

**La plupart zenfans dans l'endroit alle suive zot cours marathi ?**

*Oui.*

Data from the pupils' questionnaires from La gaulette also confirm that the children are taking additional tuition in Marathi.

This tendency for parents to invest in private tuition for the Asian languages also is confirmed by interview data obtained from the parents. Thus, from the children's questionnaire, about 50% of the children of the school in Stanley (Rose Hill), where there is a concentration of people of Tamil origin, confirm that they are taking tuition in Tamil. The following Tamil mother, living in Port Louis, explains the reasons why she sends her children to take additional tuition in Tamil which is being dispensed within the premises of a Temple's grounds :

**Zot apprane tamil ?**

*Oui, li li alle l'école Kailasson dans samedi. Y..... aussi aller.*

**Apart seki li apprane dans l'école ?**

*Oui, apart seki li apprane dans l'école li alle Kailasson.*

**Jamais ine passe dans ou la tête dire li pas apprane tamil, mais mette plutôt l'emphase lor lezot...**

*Non, li content de toute façon. Moi mo pas conne nannier dans tamil, li envie apprane li apprane. Li apparane danse tamil, mo laisse li. Mais mo pas empêche li pou alle faire tamil, non. Mais par contre sanne là, li pas pe faire tamil dans l'école, lerla mo faire li apprane la-bas, dans l'école tamil. Mo lé li continuer même li pas trop conne li.*

This mother also informs us that Tamil tuition at the temple is becoming more and more popular as children from other neighbouring areas are coming to the same place as her children to learn Tamil and that tuition is being dispensed at all levels:

**Ena beaucoup zenfans ki alle apprane ? Oui.**

**Commié zenfans ?** Kapave ene 200 élèves ena la-bas.

**Enfant :** 300 élèves.

**De tout age ?**

**Maman :** Oui, ena jusqu'à Form 5. Ena first, maternelle mo croire pena beaucoup. Par contre quatrième, cinquième, sixième tout ça, ena pas mal.

**Tout ça samedi même ?**

Oui, ena ene groupe ki vine samedi matin et ene groupe ki vine samedi après-midi. Mo croire banne first, seconde, troisième faire le matin et banne grand classe l'après-midi.

**Ena banne zenfans ki sorti dans Port-Louis ki alle la-bas ?**

Oui. Ena Coromandel aussi, ena Terre Rouge, Baie du Tombeau.

**Mais ou, jamais oune apprane tamil ?**

Non, mo ti l'école RCA. L'époque ki moi mo ti l'école pas ti ena tamil. Quatrième, cinquième, sixième noune apprane tamil l'école RCA mais panne conne nannier. Après noune arrête apprane. Moi mo pas conne nannier.

This above transcript gives us an idea of the revival of the promotion of the ancestral language among members of some of the ethnic groups mainly among people of Indian origin.

Beyond economic factors, it would seem according to some parents, that educational success of children may be influenced by the type of attitude adopted by the parents and by the type of ambiance developed by the parents which is conducive to educational pursuits. This middle class mother attempts to explain this :

**Vous voulez dire que les enfants, depuis qu'ils sont petits ils comprennent que l'éducation est importante. Dans la famille c'est important ?**

Oui, ils comprennent.

**Ils reçoivent un message...**

Ils reçoivent, ça c'est sur. Si les deux parents ont plus une vision, forcément les enfants vont les suivre.

## **Chapter 8**

### **4 - Child Rearing Practices and leisure activities of the children**

Leisure activities have an important role to play in the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor development of all human beings and even more so in that of the child. In this report, more emphasis has been put on the leisure activities of the child aged between five to twelve as data for the younger ones are scarce.

Time allocated for leisure activities for children of 5 to 12 vary according to the free time during the week, during week-ends and during holidays, that is time free from studies and household chores and even for some, working in their parents business (shop, fields, informal trade)

Most of the children seem to enjoy some free time between returning from school and having dinner while others enjoy some free time after having completed all their home works and having dinner.

The after-school hours are not the same every day. There are two types of after-school hours during the week. There are days when the children return home early, that is when they have no private tuition and during the days when they take tuition, they return home late. Most of the children of the samples taken, return home between 15.00 and 15.30 hours on tuition-free days and between 17.00 and 17.30 hours on tuition days. In exceptional cases, the children are returning home at 18.00 hours and even in some cases at 19.00 hours. Those who return home late may be living outside the catchment area of their school while others may be returning before 18.00 hours because they have a means of rapid transport.

Most children seem to be taking tuition on only three days of the week but for some of the children they may be having tuition on all days of the week This is the case for the Sino- Mauritian children of Notre Dame de la Paix school. These children belong to well-off middle class families where the parents can afford to pay for tuition with more than one teacher.

## **Leisure activities during the school days:**

During week days the little free time that the school children have is mostly devoted to playing with their neighbours and/or siblings or watching the television.

Most children seem to be following a more or less similar pattern of activities after returning from school or after the tuition hours and these activities are the following: taking a bath, watching television, playing, doing their homework. Though most children seem to be engaged in more or less the same activities after school hours, there are some marked differences between children of the middle classes and children of the working classes. This became apparent after an in-depth analysis of the answers by the different groups of children to the following question in the children's questionnaire:

*“Raconte-moi en quelques lignes ce que tu fais d'habitude apres l'école jusqu'à ce que tu ailles te coucher le soir”*

If we have a look at the answers of children from the “Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo government school and those from the Raoul Rivet School where most of the children of my samples belong to the middle class families we find a certain similarity in the pattern of activities. Most children from those schools do not seem to have time to play. Only four children from SVR school mention some sort of play after homework or dinner which lead us to believe that play can only consist of indoor games such as “play-station” and “game-boy”, the favourite games of well-off children. The following transcript gives us an idea off the enthusiasm of some children for those games:

**Zot ena computer ?**

*Maman :Oui.*

**Computer game tout zot jouer ?**

*Oui.*

**Belle-mère :Sanne la li bien content game li.**

**Ki banne game to ena ?**

**Boy:**

*Jackie Chan, ena la guerre, ena pokemon.*

**Mais toi ki game to content ?**

**Boy :Teken, la guerre.**

In fact most of the children, sampled for this research do not seem to have time to play after school hours. Their main leisure activity seem to be watching television



at certain fixed hours. The rest of the time is devoted to the “*devoirs*”, that is school work. The following extract of an interview of a boy (in the presence of the mother), from Plaine Verte, gives us an idea of the activities of primary school children after school hours:

**Ki l'heure to retourne lacaz ?**

**Enfant :**

*Kan mo prend leçon mo retourne cinq heures.*

**Commié fois to prend leçon dans ene semaine ?**

**Enfant :**

*Trois fois.*

**Ki jour ?**

*Lundi, mercredi, vendredi.*

**Mais si pena leçon ki l'heure to rentrer ?**

*Trois heures.*

**Lerla ki to faire ?**

*Mo faire devoirs.*

**Couma to retourner to faire devoirs ?**

**Maman :**

*Parfois couma li vini li trappe so cahier, so livre, ene coté li mette so ti comique après ene coté li faire so devoirs.*

**To guette télévision to faire to devoirs en même temps. To parents pas dire toi nannier ?**

**Enfant :** *Non, ena fois li crier.*

**Mais jusqu'à ki l'heure to faire to devoirs ?**

*Jusqu'à six heures, sept heures.*

**Après lerla to manger ?**

*Oui.*

**Après ?**

*Après mo baigner.*

**To baigner kan to fini manger ?**

• *Non, mo alle baigner après mo manger.*

**Après ki l'heure to alle dormi ?**

*Huit heures.*

**To pas guette télévision encore ?**

**Maman :**

*Non, du tout. Nek laisse li guette information après so papa dire li alle dormi.*

Children (from samples for this research) who seem to have time to play are those from places like Cote D'Or, Grand Gaube, and Roche Bois and those attending the “Ecole de Sans-soucis”.

The children from Cote D'Or, Grand Gaube, and Roche Bois are from poor working-class families whose parents are labourers, fishermen, masons, carpenters, factory workers. A mother from Grand Gaube describes her son's routine after school:

***Jusqu'à ki l'heure li pou assizer li pou faire devoirs ?***

*La li pou alle lacaz, li pou baigner, li pou tape ene tigitte boule, li pou boire ek mange ene zaffaire après li pou faire so devoirs jusqu'à six heures quinze.*

***Après ki l'heure li alle dormi ?***

*Nous manger sept heures, sept heures vingt nous fini, nous pou cause causer, ena ene ti mimi nous jouer are li, après nous dormi huit heures et demie par la.*

In many poor working class suburbs or villages the children spend a good part of their afternoon from school, outdoors, mainly playing with other children of the neighbourhood. In these places, there are no fences or walls around the houses and properties and children of the neighbouring houses join together to play in the afternoon and week-ends. Their main form of play is "hide and seek", riding their bicycle or even playing with the football (*batte un ti pé boule*). A working class mother from Beau Bassin gives an idea of the games played by some children at home:

***Kan zot libre, kan zot pas alle l'école, comment zot passe zot letemps ?***

*Zot jouer, zot faire ti l'ouvrage. Ena fois zot trouve la cour salle, zot balier la cour après zot jouer.*

***Zot balier ?***

*Oui, zot balier kot zot pou jouer. Après zot jouer mo pas empêche zot jouer.*

***Ki zot jouer ?***

*Zot jouer couk-cachette, ena fois zot range cerf-volant zot jouer.*

***Zot jouer zot tout seul là ? Pena camarades avec zot ?***

*Non, ena deux garçons la-bas, li jouer are zot. Zot jouer boule ena fois. Seki vine dans zot la tête zot jouer ça même.*

Some of the mothers who do not work seem to be keeping an eye on them from time to time. Most of the time the children seem to be roaming around without any form of control. The following extract of an interview of a grand mother at Cote D'Or gives a vivid picture of the children playing outside the home riding their bicycles in the village:

*Lerla donne zot. Zot fini boir, change zot linge lerla zot commence faire zot desordre. Bizin criye are zot. La kan zot vini la, ayo ! Bizin crier meme are zot. Couma zot regler television zot trouve ticomique pa bon la, zot pou teigne la, zot sorti. Prend bicyclette. Chacune ena ene bicyclette. Zot pou prend zot pou monter.*

***Mais pena loto tous ca ?***

*Non, mais pa laisse zot sorti couma dir dan lot coté la. Nek zot faire ca boute la. Parfois zot fini aller ! Ou dir zot meme, zot fini aller.*

***La vacances la, ou pou gagne boucou tracas la !***

*Ayo, oui.*

***Ena bocoup zenfans dan l'endroit ki zouer ensam tout ca ?***

*Oui, ena ene la plaine football labas, mais ti garçon la, li ena 6 ans mais li rode gran zenfans 5eme li zouer. Mais pena so groupe. Dans l'ecole la meme, ena 6, dan first ena 6, ene seul garçon. Abé li rode zouer avec banne 5eme, 6eme.*

The grand mother continues to describe the children's habits after playing outside :

**Ki l'heure zot faire devoir lerla ?**

*Parfois cinq heures et demi, six heures zot assizer zot lire. Parfois kan grand la...*

**Kan zot sorti l'ecole couma dir ?**

*Oui, oui. Sa aussi bizin criye are zot. Bizin criye are zot. Parfois zot badiner.*

**Guet television, ziska ki l'heure zot guetter ?**

*Television zot pa guetter trop tard. Zot papa pa laisse zot guetter depi trop tard. Ala pa gagne ca banne ti program la tou ca ? Zot guet guetter. Apres lerla zot alle dormi mo croire 8 heures.*

**8 heures zot alle dormi ?**

*Oui, zot alle dormi.*

**Zot fini faire devoir tout ?**

*Oui.*

About 50% or even more of the parents of Roche Bois and Tranquebar acknowledge(in the questionnaires) that some of the children are out in the streets playing with their friends. In fact according to some informants (parents) living in the area, the children of those above-mentioned suburbs seem to have developed a street culture of their own where, without adult supervision, they develop some sort of autonomy and learn to fend for themselves. The lack of supervision may be due to the fact that most of the parents work late hours and leave the house early in the morning before the children go to school. In this kind of set-up, children are able to watch television before going to school: thus about 60% of parents of Tranquebar confirm that their children watch television in the morning.

The children as well as the parents mention their doing homeworks but there does not seem to be any stress to the children's life. Very few of the parents of Tranquebar mention that their children do their homeworks in the afternoon. We can get an idea of the relaxed atmosphere of the home of this little girl from Grand Gaube who says that her activities in the afternoons consist of the following:

*"t.v , jouer, danser, bavarder, faire la vaisselle"*

Two other little boys speak of listening to music after doing their home work. Children listening to music after school hours seem to be very rare among the children of Mauritius, according to my samples.

Children from L'Ecole de Sans Soucis, who come from upper middle class White families seem also to enjoy some stress-free afternoons, practising sports, bathing

in their swimming pools, playing with their dog and even one mentions “*taquiner mon grand frère*”

The activities of the children of my samples from Grand Gaube, Côte D'Or, and Roche bois and those of École de sans Soucis seem to reflect the family values which are related to class culture. The activities of the children of different socio economic classes seem to reflect some of the dynamics of social mobility in Mauritius. The hard work of the children of the lower middle classes and the middle class may reflect the pressure of the parents for their children to climb the social ladder through education while the children of Grand Gaube and Roche Bois may have parents who do not care about climbing the social ladder. On the other hand the children of the White middle class families do not have to strive to climb the social ladder as they are already at the top and they just have to do the minimum to remain at the top of the social ladder

There seems to be more free time during the week-ends when there is no tuition. Some primary school children may be having their tuition time on Saturdays or even Sundays depending upon the availability of the teachers (who are not usually their own class teacher).

More free time is available during the holidays though even then there is tuition during the morning for one week during the Easter holidays and two weeks during the July/August holidays.

The children seem to be free from tuition during the month of December.

### **Ethnicity and Leisure Activities:**

In certain areas, it has been observed that sometimes ethnic or even religious practices may impinge upon the free time which children may enjoy in Mauritius. This type of influence upon leisure activities of children is very striking in localities where there is the predominance of a particular ethnic group. For example in La Gaulette peopled by the Marathi community and in Camp Diable peopled by people of the Muslim community, children do not seem to have time to wander in the streets in the afternoon, as their respective community see to it that they are

kept busy with activities which are ethnic or religious in nature. From the parents' questionnaire (question 10.2), we learn that in La Gaulette and in Camp Diable, together with other activities, most children are also engaged in "religious activities" in the afternoon and during the holidays. Through interviews we learn that these religious activities involve mainly going to the "madrassa" or "baitka".

The muslim children are really engaged in religious activities such as going regularly to the Mosque as explained by this Muslim mother:

***Presque tous les jours li alle mosquée ?***

*Oui, depi carême ine commencé.*

***Mais kan pena carême ?***

*Kan pena carême li pas aller li. Ziste kan ena carême lerla li aller.*

***Mais dans lezot famille, banne zenfans là aller ?***

*Oui, zot bizin aller.*

***Commié fois zot aller ?***

*Cinq fois.*

***Mais si zot alle l'école ?***

*Mais lerla zot pas aller dans l'heure l'école mais kan l'école fini lerla zot aller. Ala banne ki alle mosquée là, zot bizin faire li. Couma vendredi banne la apprane faire namaz, mais zot bizin apprane depi tipti. Mais ce qui ena dans Coran, banne boute, boute, zot faire ou recite ça par cœur.*

They also have to do the "namaz" at home for the girls and to the Mosque for the boys. These kind of practices have also been observed among the children of Plaine Verte in Port Louis and in fact it may be the practice among most children of Muslim origin.

### **Television watching and children's habits:**

Watching television seem to be an activity common to all children of Mauritius during the evening on school days, during week-ends and during the holidays.

Their most favourite T.V. shows are the cartoons which are "played " every morning between 6.00 and 8.00 hours and in the afternoon between 15.00 and 17.00 hours. And in the morning on Saturdays and Sundays, between 6.00 and 9.20 hours

According to the children's answers to the questionnaires, most children of the upper primary do not watch the cartoons in the morning. There are some exceptions however: most of the children of the Roche Bois sample do watch TV. in the morning before going to school. and a few of the children of Grand Gaube as well as those of Rose Hill (Jules Koenig) and Beau Bassin ( P. Rivalland) schools also watch TV. in the morning What is interesting is that a good proportion of the children of L'Ecole de Sans Soucis also watch the TV in the early morning.

One of the reasons why some children are watching TV in the morning may be that the parents ( whether the working class ones or the higher executives of the private or public sector) have left home for work before the children leave for school while in some other cases the mothers allow the children to watch TV. in order to have them occupied when they are busy with the housework.

Even though the favourite cartoons of the children are being played in the afternoon, only a small proportion of children watch TV in the afternoon. This may be because most of them are out taking private tuition. According to information gleaned from children and parents, a good proportion of very young children of the lower primary may be watching their cartoons in the afternoon.

A good proportion of the children of all the places where samples have been taken, admit to watching TV in the evening after having completed their home works. It seems to be a confirmed habit among some of the young children of Mauritius: Only 42% seem to watch the news but there are variations in intensity, for example there is as a high percentage of young viewers in places like Rivière du Rempart, Plaine Verte, Cote D'Or during the news hour.

Some may be watching the "News" page only as those from Bheewa Mahadoo. In fact about 42% of all the children surveyed admit to watching the News hour whether the French "informations" or the Hindi "Samachar" with a very high percentage of young viewers in schools like Bheewa Mahadoo, Raoul Rivet, Notre Dame de la Paix (Muslims)and Cote D'or. It is so important in some families that dinner time has been scheduled to coincide with the news hour as the following transcript seem to indicate:

**Zot guette information ?**

*Oui, parski ça même l'heure nous pe dîner. Sept heures et demie nous dîner, nous écoute information jusqu'à huit heures et puis si ena ene ti film... Mais par contre li, huit heures et demie li fini alle dormi. (middle class mother – Port Louis)*

In working class family of Stanley-Rose Hill, the same ritual about the news hour of 19.30 hrs, seem to be observed.

:

**Jusqu'à ki l'heure to guette télévision ?**

**Grand-mère :**

*8 heures. Parfois li alle dormi mais parfois li apprane mais faudé so papa la seulement. **Mais seulement kan ena l'information zot tout pou quitte zot livre pou vine guetter.***

**Banne films zot guetter ensemble ?**

**Mother :**

*Oui, alla la ti ena congé l'école, zot guette film indien*

The news hour seem to be popular with the children of the primary sector from different social backgrounds as this transcript of the interview of a mother of Grand Gaube shows :

**Information tout ça pas guetter ?**

*Information mo ti garçon la guetter dans tantôt. Juste ça li guetter. Après mo banne zenfans, zone gagne l'habitude dormi bonne heure. Plus de sept heures et demie zot pas guette télévision.*

A Muslim mother from Camp Diable also testifies to the habit of watching the 19.30 news :

**Zot pas guette télévision ?**

*Zot guetter.*

**Jusqu'à ki l'heure ?**

*Sept heures et demie zot guette information jusqu'à huit heures, lerla gagne programme huit heures et demi, lerla teigne, zot assizer zot lire lerla zot alle dormi.*

This may be because in these middle class or even new middle class families' emphasis is on making the children learn as much as possible to pass examinations. Watching the News will give the children more knowledge to answer examinations questions which are of a general order. It is mostly the children from those schools, where the clientele is more middle class, who are more numerous to watch documentary programmes ( 90% from Jean Lebrun G.S; 60% from Bheewa Mahadoo G.S, 75% from Notre Dame de la Paix RCA, 70% from Raoul Rivet, and 80% from Stanley ) though as we have learned above, children from working class families also watch the news hour on MBC t.v..

There are also some other T.V. programmes which are educational in nature and which are favoured by some of the children such as those of Jules Koenig, Grand Bois, Philippe Rivalland, Camp Diable, and Cote D'Or. For example, programmes like "Questions pour un Champion", "Pyramide", which can enrich the general knowledge of viewers, are projected in the afternoon between 17.00 and 18.00 hours during week days when the children generally watch TV while waiting for the return of their parents from work or are just relaxing.

It would seem that some children are not allowed to watch T.V on week-days. Even during week-ends they do not seem to be allowed to watch TV, it is only during the holidays that they seem to be allowed to watch television.

In fact there are some (about 16% of samples) children who admit that they watch television during the week-ends only. This may mean that they are not allowed to do so on schools days and may denote strict parental control. This practice is not confined to a particular group, it cuts across social class and ethnic group. The following answer of a middle class mother of Port Louis gives an idea of influence of television on the waking time of children during the week-end :

***Maman:***

*Samedi, dimanche pena l'école, mo pas bizin alle leve zot. Mais samedi tous zenfans fini lever six heures et demie, zot devant télévision devant moi. Mo pas bizin lève zot, zot conner zot bizin lever. Mais en jour de semaine mo bizin alle lève zot des fois. Mo bizin crier Y..... deux ou trois fois, Ish..... non, ene seul fois crier, li lever.*

**Children's preference in movies:**

It has been thought interesting to investigate the kind of movies which children prefer to watch and in that way it could be possible to glimpse into the inner world of the child. This inner world of the child could have a strong influence upon the cognitive development of the child and hence performance at school.

**Cartoons**

The favourite movies of the children are the cartoons.

Among these cartoons, there are:

From **monday to thursday**: TO3 (a series of Cartoons – Sourire d'enfer, Marsupilami, Hamtaro, Oui-oui), C'est pas Sorcier (educational)

**Friday**: Oui-oui, Ekchart, Street fighter Tibere et la Maison Bleu



**Saturday:** from 6.00 to 9.15 : *Disney, La legende de Blanche Neige, Animax – (Jackie Chan, Ghost Busters), KD2 A*

**Sunday:** From 6.00 to 9.20 hours : *Les Marsupilami, Disney, Les aventures de Robin des Bois, Bunny et tous ses amis, Oui-oui, KD2 A*

In fact More than 80% of all the children admit watching the cartoons but there are variations in the type of cartoons which the children of different places prefer. Thus we learn that the children of Grand Bois and Bheewa Mahadoo (Riviere du Rempart) have a preference for “*Pinocchio*”, “*Robocop*” and fairy story – “*Blanche Neige*”. Children of Stanley have a preference for “*Minikeums*”, “*teletubies*” and “*Sis*”. Again in Triolet, the children prefer “*Sis*”, “*Cendrillon*”, “*Robocop*”. In Roche Bois, there is a strong preference for “*raz-moquette*”.

The children of those rural and suburban places have a preference for fairy tales and simple and funny cartoons like “*teletubbies*” and “*raz-moquette*”.

These children’s tastes in cartoons is confirmed by this mother from Grand Gaube:

***Ki qualité film zot guetter ?***

*Ene ti comique ou soit ene film ki pe déroule lor la famille.*

Another mother from Camp Daible says almost the same thing :

***Zot ena banne film préféré?***

*Oui, zot guette Toolsy. Après banne ti programme la zot guetter.*

.....

*Trois heures comment zot vini zot guette comique*

These cartoons are projected mainly on MBCt.v. and they do not seem to have access to foreign T.V channels except for the children of Roche Bois..

A favourite theme which the children of Mauritius seem to favour is the theme of “magic” which is central to cartoons like “*Princesse Starla*” and the film “*Les Jumelles S’en Melent*” in the “*Minikeum*” programme.

This minikeum programme which also contains baby stories like “*Tom, Tom et Nana*” and “*Denis La Malice*” is a favourite among the children of rural and suburban areas.

On the other hand children coming from upper middle class families such as the children of “Notre Dame de La Paix” (Chinese) and those from “Ecole de Sans Soucis do not seem to be watching too much MBC cartoons. They seem to be watching more of those from “Canal Satellite” “Canal Plus” etc.

The series programmed on these foreign channels are of the French version of Japanese “Mangas” such as “Dragon Ball”, “Chevaliers du Zodiaque”, “YU-GI-Ho” , “Pokemon”, “Digimon”. These cartoons are available in video clubs or CDs and DVDs are bought by the affluent parents.

The main theme in these “mangas” is the concepts of “power” and “good” and “evil”. While using concepts from traditional tales and legends such as knights, witches, demons, dragons and even Greek and Roman gods and monsters, these stories depict characters who use modern technology like electronics and IT. The main characters in these serials are either exercising superior power, fighting to gain or maintain their power and the “good” are fighting the “bad” with electronic gadgets. These stories have a futuristic and science-fiction flavour .How far these types of stories are moulding the conscious and unconscious mind of the child has yet to be researched but those who watch those cartoons and read the magazines and books which reproduce those stories are fascinated by them.

The factor influencing the installation of these foreign channels may be of cultural or economic nature. The availability of the foreign channels necessitates the installation of a “dish aerial” and subscription to these channels are quite expensive for working class families though there are sometimes exceptions such as that of Roche Bois. Some of the children of Roche Bois admit to watching Canal Plus and Parbole Maurice. This may be the case in other poor suburban areas such as Tranquebar, where the parabolic aerials on top of some of the slum dwellings made of pieces of iron sheets can be observed. The Hindu rural middle class families who can afford the installation and subscription to the foreign channels may not be interested in the type of films projected on these channels as their favourite movies and serials are Indian. We shall see that this is reflected in the taste of the Hindu and Muslim rural children in the types of films which they watch.

## Movies:

The children's preference may vary according to whether they are of urban or rural origin and this may coincide with ethnic belonging. There is evidence of this difference when we analyse the data obtained from children's responses for the types of films that they watch. Children from rural areas seem mostly to prefer to watch Indian films and their favourite actors and actresses are Indian actors and actresses.

The following table demonstrate that in certain rural and suburban places which are inhabited mainly by people of Indian origin, the children watch mostly Indian films, after their cartoons.

School	% watching Indian films
Triolet Govt School	70
Grand Bois	55
Jean Lebrun (P.Verde)	65
.B Mahadoo(R.d.Rem)	100
Notre Dame de la Paix(Mus)	80
La Gaulette	80
Valee des Pretres	90
Cote D'Or	95

Mus. = Muslim children

This mother from Triolet confirms that in some rural areas, most children may be watching mostly Indian films:

### ***Ki film zot guetter ?***

*Banne films indiens dans jeudi. Après film français zot pas intéresser, information zot écouter.*

### ***Banne ti comiques zot pas guetter ?***

*Ti comiques, oui. Ça la journée depi bonne heure même zot commence guetter.*

### ***La plupart zenfan ki reste Triolet guette film indien même ?***

*Oui.*

### ***Français pas trop guetter ?***

*Non, mais après banne films aussi dépend l'âge. Ena ki pou banne la haut 15 ans.*

For these above –mentioned places, very few children watch English films. In fact English films are not favoured by most children of Mauritius. Only about 21% of all the children surveyed seem to like English films On the other hand, there seem to be a preference for French movies of all types. 50% of all the children (with Ecole

du Centre) watch French films. If we disregard École de Sans Soucis, only 44% watch French films.

Among the reasons for this situation, are the following:

- films and cartoons projected on MBC T.V. are mostly in the French language. Even for American movies only the French versions are projected.
- Children do not seem to like English (American) movies as they do not understand the language.
- **Cultural background of the family:**-In places where Indian films are favoured by the family, children do not have a chance of viewing English movies and hence cannot have the opportunity to choose. The same situation prevails in families where the French culture predominates, for example in families of French origin and upper middle class families. For example at L'Ecole du Centre, 74% of the children watch mainly French films. At Philippe Rivalland School with a dominance of middle class creole families, 75% prefer French films.

On the other hand, in places with a pre dominance of children of Indian origin, only small percentages of children seem to watch English or French films. For example, only 30% of children of Triolet, 35% of children of Grand Bois, 30% of children of Bheewa Mahadoo and 20% of children of Cote D'Or etc. watch French movies.

This tendency is confirmed by their naming their favourite movie. Most of the children from the following schools such as Triolet G.S (100%), Grand Bois G.S (80%), Jean Lebrun G.S (40%), Bhewa Mahadoo (95%), Camp Diable(40%), Notre Dame de la Paix (Muslim) (45%), Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo (45%), Vallée Des Pretres (60%), and Cote D'Or (77%) state that their favourite film is an Indian film such as those being projected at the time the survey was being carried out:

*Kaho Na Pyar Hai, Tum Bin, Lajja, Ajnabee, Chori Chori Chupke Chupke, Lagaan, Mohabatein, Mission Kashmir.*

These preferences are admitted in schools where the target groups were mostly children of Indian origin whether Hindu or Muslim though there seems to be less children of the Muslim community who watch Indian films.

These children's preference for Indian films is confirmed by their preference in actors and actresses who are all the main figures of Bollywood. Thus, the children's favourite actors are Indian: Shah Rukh Khan, Hrithik Roshan, Salman Khan, Bobby Deol, Sunil Chetty, Aftab Shivdasani, etc and their actresses are Aishwarya Rai, Preity Zinta, Kareena Kapoor, Karishma Kapoor, Sushmita Sen, Kajol, etc. Even their favourite singers are Indian and they named singers such as Sonu Nigam, and Shaan.

On the other hand for the children of Grand Gaube, Philippe Rivalland –Beau Bassin, Notre Dame de la Paix (of Chinese origin), Roche Bois and those from Ecole de Sans Soucis, their favourite films are mostly French. The reason for this preference is evidently ethnic and economic as the children of Grand Gaube and Beau Bassin and Roche Bois are of Creole origin and have more affinities with the French language while the majority of the children of Ecole de Sans Soucis are of French origin.

Even among those fans of French films, there are subtle differences: the working class children prefer to watch the soap-operas which are daily serials such as “Catalina et Sebastien” and “Secrets de Famille” which are also very popular among the parents. The children of Notre Dame de la Paix and Ecole du Centre have more sophisticated tastes in watching films such as: “Harry Potter” “Seigneur Des Anneaux”, “Asterix and Obelix Mission”, Disney films, Mission Cleopatre, La Momie 2,, “L'étalon Noir”, “Le Dernier des Mohicans”

Their favourite actors are : Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, Arnold Schwarzeneger, Bruce Willis, Eddy Murphy, Leonardo Di Caprio, Ben Affleck Jackie Chan and Sylvester Stallone. Among their actresses there are Kate Winslet, Anjelina Jolie, Sophie Marceau, Julia Roberts and “Catalina” (the character in the soap-opera “Catalina et Sebastien”). These children of Grand Gaube do not know the name of the actress) The children of Grand Gaube seem to show a certain preference for only Jean

Claude Van Dam and Arnold Schwarzenegger, both actors are commonly seen in action films with a lot of fights. Most of the Chinese children of Notre Dame de la Paix do not seem to have any preference for actors and actresses.

It must be pointed out that some children who love watching Indian films have a preference for some of the action men of Hollywood screen such as Schwarzenegger, Tom Cruise, and Jackie Chan and Leonardo di Caprio

Children who watch more English and French films prefer the European and American actors and actresses and their favourite singer is European.

This situation lead us to reflect on the role of the English language in the primary school. Would exposition to the English language through movies have improved the quality of children's learning of the English language in our schools.

### **Reading habits:**

Another striking feature in the taste of schoolchildren in reading is the difference between urban and rural school children, in their preference for books which they read. Children from rural schools seem to prefer to read traditional French stories like " Petit Chaperon Rouge" and fairy tales like "Sleeping Beauty" and Blanche Neige"

Children from the following schools in places like Grand Bois, Camp Diable, Rose Belle, Cote D'Or , Triolet, Bheewa Mahadoo etc in answer to the question:

*"Quel sont tes livres et bandes-dessinées préférés?"*

The children answered that their favourite books are the following

*" Pinocchio", "chaperon Rouge", " Les trois ours et Boucle D'or", " Le Chat Botté", "Le Petit Poucet", "Les Trois Petits Cochons", "La Petite Sirene", " La Belle au Bois Dormant", "Ali Baba", "Blanche Neige" and others*

From time to time there is one child in those government rural schools who mentions that he or she prefers to read the following books: " *Superman, Batman, Robocop, X-men, Le roi Lion* "

On the other hand, children from some urban schools like “ Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo (Quatre Bornes),” Jules Koenig (Rose Hill), Notre Dame de La Paix (Port Louis) prefer books such as “ *Harry Potter*”, *Dragon Ball Z*, *Mikey Parade*, *Pokemon*, *Digimon*, *Christopher Pike*, “*Chair de Poule*”, “*Super Picsou*”.

The same trend can be observed at L'Ecole de Sans Soucis where the children read cartoons such as “ *Boule et Bille*”, “ *Gaston La Gaffe*” “ *Lucky Luke*” “*Cedric*”, “*Marsupilami*”, “*Astérix et Obélix*”, “*Picsou Magazine*”, “*Super Picsou Géant*”, *Mikey Parade*.

Apart from cartoons, they also read books such as “ *Titeuf*”, “*Sabrina*”.and in some cases even novels and adventure books such as “*l'Île aux Trésors*”, “*des livres de connaissance générale*” and “*contes d'horreur*”. It must be pointed out that the “*Harry Potter*” adventure books are very thick books of more than five hundred pages going up to nearly one thousand pages for the last one (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*). These young children seem to be seasoned readers for their age. According to some of those children, they were reading the fairy tales when they were in the pre-primary school and in the lower primary school

It would seem that most of the children of present –day Mauritius prefer stories such as those read by the children of L'Ecole de Sans Soucis, Jules Koenig GS and Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo GS. This is proved by the fact that most children seem to highly appreciate those cartoons which depict heroes such as *Mikey*, *Cedric*, *Titeuf*, *Asterix and Obelix*, and films such as “*Harry Potter*”. These films and cartoons are regularly projected on the national television and the children also have access to these films through their buying or borrowing video-cassettes or VCDs.

Most of the stories which are very popular among the children are fantastic stories such as those found in “*Harry Potter*” Series, *Superman*, *Batman*. Another type of stories which the children favour are “ghost stories” and other terrifying stories dealing with witches and demons.

Interviews with some of the children (in the presence of parents) and parents reveal that the children of today are crazy about those kind of stories rather than about fairy tales. The fact that children of government schools of rural areas and

suburban schools list among the books which they prefer mostly fairy tales, prove that these children may have access to only these types of books and do not have access to books which they would have preferred to read. This is confirmed by the following transcript of the interviews of a mother from 'Triolet:

***Ou acheter livres tout ça ?***

*Oui.*

***Ki qualité livres ?***

*Banne livres zistaires. Dans l'école même li gagner li lire.*

If we analyse this transcript correctly we discover that purchasing reading materials for the children may not be a priority for the family as books are obtained from the school.

Having access to reading materials which they like would have perhaps encouraged more reading and thus led to improvement in written and even spoken language.

The reasons for the difference in access to publications for children between middle class children and working class children are numerous:

The cartoons listed above are very expensive , Super Picsou Geant and Mikey Parade cost Rs168.50 each. A harry Potter book costs between Rs 300 to Rs 800., the most recent one being the most expensive. This means that poor parents cannot afford to buy those books when sometimes they cannot even afford to buy text-books. The samples of children from Ecole de Sans Soucis , Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo GS and Jules Koenig GS come mostly from well-off middle-class families who can afford to buy those books which are imported mostly from France and are very expensive.

The PTAs (consisting of wealthy parents) of those schools have an important role to play in financing the purchase of books and other school equipment.

Evidence of the importance of *economic capital* which can boost *cultural capital* can be demonstrated by the example of the two samples which were taken at Notre Dame de La Paix RCA school where the two dominant ethnic groups are the Chinese and the Muslims. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 20 Chinese children and a sample of 20 muslim children. The difference in reading



tastes of the two groups of children from the same school was very pronounced. Most children of Muslim sample seem to favour the fairy tales while most children of the Chinese sample read the expensive cartoon books, as listed above. It would seem that most children from Chinese families were mostly from the wealthy families while the Muslim children were from working class families living in Plaine Verte and have to depend only on the books provided by the school.

The economic capital of schools also has a role to play in the provision of books to school children. Government primary schools, usually having a large school population do not have the financial means to purchase large numbers of those expensive publications. On the other hand, the richly endowed (by PTA) schools can afford to buy the popular but expensive books.

Children's access to books which they like may be influenced by the cultural capital of the parents. Middle class parents who are mostly educated seem to understand the importance of buying those publications to give to their children a taste for reading. On the other hand, many working class parents may not be able to appreciate the pedagogical importance of those publications. For some parents, these publications are not worthy to be bought. They are considered as "comics" which children should not be encouraged to read.

This latter perception of those publications as "comics" may also be that of the people who buy books for the children of primary schools. They are middle-aged head teachers or deputy head teachers who also do not consider these publications as serious enough to be placed in a school library and at the same time may not be really aware of the children's preference in reading materials.

An analysis of those "comics" have shown that they do not contain only "comic" stories but also a lot of pedagogical materials such as quizzes, history, general practical information for children, games, cross-word puzzles, etc. in between the various stories. These pedagogical materials are presented in such an attractive manner that the children are encouraged to read further and tackle the games and cross-words. For example in "Mikey Parade" the cartoons are interrupted twice by the pedagogical pages.

Through their access to books more in line with 21<sup>st</sup> century tastes and thinking, the middle class children are accumulating a cultural capital which may be of a better quality than that of the working class children.

Most lower primary school children, that is, from standards I to IV of the Government schools, do not have access to books at school as the latter is reserved mostly for the upper primary children. This is confirmed by head teachers and teachers from various localities, urban and rural. This kind of practice in the schools is to the detriment of the poor working class children whose parents cannot afford to or do not see the importance of buying books at an early age. On the other hand middle class parents invest a lot in reading materials since an early age and this cumulate in later years in the appropriation of the school language and better performance in reading and language in general by middle class children. This trend is noticeable in many parts of the world and this is confirmed by Barbara Rogoff:

*“ The extent of involvement in picture-book reading differs between middle class and low-income U.S. preschoolers. Picture books made of durable materials are offered to middle-class babies, and bedtime stories are part of their daily routine. Upper- and middle –class Canadian parents reported starting to read storybooks to their children when they were 9 months old, on average; their young children had 61 to 80 children’s books in the home (Sénéchal & Lefevre, 2002; Whitehurst et al., 1994; ..(Rogoff-2003:303)*

The traditional and the new middle class parents are investing more and more in reading materials for their children. From a very early age, plastic books for baby’s bath and thick cardboard books with very big prints which have been on the market since recent years, are being bought by these well-off parents. This trend is more apparent among parents who work as teachers.

A very striking feature of children’s taste in reading in the Republic of Mauritius is that most children from rural or from urban areas, of working class or of middle class families read largely French books. Very few are the children who seem to have a preference for books in English. Among the rare English books, the most common ones seem to be *“The Jungle Book”* *“Beauty and the Beast”* at Cote D’Or

GS and “*Jack and the beanstalk*” at Bheewa Mahadoo GS. Even for the adventures of “*Harry Potter*”, children seem to read the French version mainly.

The reasons for this preference may be because:

- Most of the books available in the primary schools are in French.
- Even if there are English books they may not be to the taste of the children. Here again it is very important for the person who chooses the books to think about what may interest the child by asking them about their preferences rather than to think that adults know better than children. . (child-centredness)
- Mauritian children being more exposed to the French language through the children’s films and cartoons being projected on the national television as mentioned above, find it more easy to read books in that language rather than in English which is the official language and one of the languages which they have to study at school. This may be one of the reasons why children perform poorly in the English language generally and very few young people who leave the secondary school are fluent in English.

Most working class children seem to depend on the school to provide them with books to read. Otherwise, parents with a low level of education do not see the importance of buying books for the children to read. The following extract of an interview of with a mother of Grand Gaube gives an idea of the parents’ attitude of reading books:

***Zot acheter livres ?***

*Seulement livres leçon, mais lezot livres non.*

***Zot prend livres bibliothèque tout ça ?***

*Oui, parfois. Zot gagner dans l’école et lerla zot varier li entre camarades*

For most Mauritian children, English books do not seem to figure among their favourites.

There seem to be a strong relationship between the reading habits and the TV watching habits of the children of the upper primary schools of Mauritius.

Most children read mostly French books and watch mostly French movies whether cartoons or films. Being more exposed to the French language may have important repercussions in the ability to write and speak English. There is evidence of this in the CPE examinations results in The English language.

### **Children's taste for "horror" films and books:**

This tendency has been observed among children who like to watch Indian movies as well as non- Indian movies.

One of the favourite serial of children among the Indian films is "Khauff" which is frightening and give goose'flesh.

Among the books which they like to read there are those by Christopher Pike which are also of the "horror" type.

### **Children's leisure activities during Holidays:**

The economic and cultural factor will play an important role in determining the type of holidays which the children will enjoy. Among the favourite activities of primary school children during the holidays are the following: Going to the sea-side, going out with friends, watching television or video (or VCD/DVD), being with their friends( talking, playing), doing shopping, reading books but there are about 40% of all the children admit that they are also studying during their holidays.

### **"Aller a la Mer":**

Going to the sea – side has become a very common practice among the inhabitants of this island. With the development of our transport system and the establishment of public beaches with facilities, it has become very easy for families to find their way to the one of the numerous spots along our coast where they can picnic for a day or even more. At least 84% of all the children confirm that one of their favourite activity during the holidays is to go to the sea-side.

**Dans week-end zot alle la mer ?**

Nous sorti. Bien souvent nous alle la mer, nous plus grand sorti ki nous faire dimanche. Samedi pas gagne letemps, ena travail bazar, moi mo dans lacaz pas kapave sorti.

**Mais kan zot ti bébé, petits zot ti alle la mer ?**

Oui, et nous pas ti ena l'auto en plus. Ti alle dans bus. Y..... ti bébé, nous pas ti ena l'auto mais kan même nous ti aller. Nous prend ene taxi amene nous la garre, la garre nous prend ene l'auto nous re-retourner, coume ça.

Going to the seaside may be the favourite outing of the children, but according to information gathered from interviews, it does not seem to be a regular feature of poor working class families who do not have the time for it, if the parents are working on Saturdays or who may not have the means for these types of outings. In some cases it may not form part of the family culture to go regularly to the seaside.

For working class children, going to the sea side may be very rare depending on the proximity to the sea or on family culture. Thus for families living in a coastal village like Grand Gaube, going to the seaside does not entail any additional costs and it is a regular feature of their leisure activities. These two transcripts of interviews of Creole working class mothers of Grand Gaube illustrate the leisure habits of the people of that locality :

**First mother:**

**Week-end zot sorti ?**

Parfois nous alle la mer, parfois nous alle jardi.

**Juste ou avec ou garçon ?**

Non, mo tifi tout. Mais parfois arrivé nous nek alle l'église après nous reste dans lacaz.

**2nd mother:**

**Dans week-end ki zot faire ?**

- La mer.

**Zot pas sorti alle cinema tout ça?**

- Non. Si mo ena ene promenade dans mo club, kot mo pe aller mo pe amene li.

**Li content ?**

Oui. Ene de semaine comme ça noune alle Le Val, mone amene li après noune alle Blue Bay.

**Dans week-end ki zot faire ?**

La mer.

**Zot pas sorti alle cinema tout ça?**

Non. Si mo ena ene promenade dans mo club, kot mo pe aller mo pe amene li.

**Li content ?**

Oui. Ene de semaine comme ça noune alle Le Val, mone amene li après noune alle Blue Bay.

On the other hand, for this Hindu working class mother from Triolet (not very far from several public beaches), spending a day at the seaside does not seem to form part of the family rituals:

**Commié fois par semaine zot kapave pe sorti ?**

*Bien rare ça.*

**Dans la semaine non ?**

*Non, samedi ou dimanche mais ça aussi bien rare. Mais kan zenfans alle l'école nous pas alle promener. Dans congé l'école nous alle la mer tout ça.*

**Dans ene mois commié fois zot kapave alle la mer ?**

*Kapave dans trois mois ene fois.*

**Zot alle dans l'auto ?**

*Non, par bus*

A working class mother (creole) from Stanley explains also that going to the seaside is not a priority of her family :

**Zot pas rode sorti banne zenfans la ?**

*Non, disons mo garçon li plutôt content jouer so game, jouer boule.*

**Dans bord la mer tout ça zot pas aller ?**

*Nous aller mais li bien rare.*

**Reste lacaz même ?**

*Oui, parski mo travaille disons samedi.*

In this case it would seem that for economic reasons (with parents busy working inside or outside the home), she cannot afford to take her children to the seaside regularly. This may be the for the same reason why the members of this working class family from Plaine Verte do not seem to be going to the beaches for their family outings :

**Mais dans week-end ou amene li promener ?**

*Oui, so papa.*

**Kot amene li ?**

**Enfant :**

*Caudan, Reine de la Paix, après kot mo nanny ena fois.*

**Tous les week-end to sorti ou bien ena week-end to reste lacaz ?**

**Maman:**

*Non, là pour le moment nous fek faire lacaz là, nous fek arranger mais so papa pas gagne letemps. Mais avant ça, tout les week-ends amene li.*

**Ou pas aller ?**

*Moi aussi mo aller mais parfois ena l'ouvrage tout ça, mo occuper. Lerla mo dire li amene zot ene tigitte promener. Li amene li Caudan, li amene li jardin d'enfants.*

This type of attitude to going to the seaside is observed again in a working class family of Cote D'Or :

**Zot pa alle la mer, amene bane zenfans la mer ?**

*Kan ena ene fete coume ca, prend zot aller.*

**Pas dan dimanche ?**

*Non, non. Be pena transport, pena nannier. Bé kot ou louer transport ca quantité la ? Faudé ou ena ca casse la aussi.*

Many of those parents interviewed, whether of working class or of lower middle class origins speak of the difficulty to find time to take the children to the seaside during week-ends. Such an outing may be a rare treat for working class children.

On the other hand, children in the upper part of the class pyramid, go to the seaside regularly though occasionally they may stay at home (For working class children, it is the reverse situation). The following transcript illustrates this:

***Les week-ends vous allez a la mer ?***

*Les week-ends a la mer si on peut. Une ou deux fois les dimanches nous restons la. Meme les enfants eux aussi quelques fois les dimanches disons ils peuvent rester la. Nous sommes bien...très famille, hein envers nos enfants. Tres proches. Il y a le dialogue, une bonne communication ici.*

(upper Middle Class (white) mother )

This feature of rich children's way of spending their week- end is confirmed by parents' questionnaire where they state that their children may be staying in bungalows during the week-end.

**Travelling Abroad:**

One of the activities determined by the economic factor is travelling abroad. The tendency to go abroad for holidays has known a lot of democratisation during the last two decades owing to the fact that Mauritian society has become more affluent economically and there are direct flights to many more destinations than before and air fares may be cheaper. There is also a good number of people who go abroad to work and sometimes welcome their relatives to their home so that travelling does not involve paying for expensive lodging. In this way travelling abroad has become affordable to a class of the population in which parents are also taking their children to accompany them during their travels to foreign lands.

According to the children's questionnaires, a good proportion of children have experienced travelling abroad. Travelling to other countries inevitably enhance the learning experiences of children to a large extent. The following table gives an idea of the proportion of children who have traveled in certain types of schools:

**Table Showing % of children (within the research samples) who have traveled abroad**

<b>Schools</b>	<b>% of children (from research samples) who have traveled abroad</b>
Jules Koenig	75%
Philippe Rivalland	55%
N. de La Paix (Chi)	67%
Raoul Rivet	75%
Ecole de Sans Soucis	67%

A deeper analysis show that there is a subtle difference between what the children of affluent parents experience and what the young travellers from working class background, experience.

It would seem that some of the children from schools like Jules Koenig (46%), Philipe Rivalland, Raoul Rivet (30%) the Chinese of Notre Dame de la Paix (76%) who travel, fly to mostly places which are farther from the Mascarene islands. Many have visited traditional destinations for Mauritians: Britain, France, South Africa and Singapore.

On the other hand children from L'Ecole de Sans Soucis where the parents are more affluent, they state that they have visited a lot of more exotic countries like Egypt, Dubai, Morocco, Spain, Namibia, Italy as well as Britain, France and South Africa. What is more striking is that travelling abroad may be a regular feature of the holidays of a good proportion of the children from affluent backgrounds.

In the rest of the schools, about 75% have never travelled abroad and those who have, have gone no further than Rodrigues and Reunion Island.

Foreign travel is one way of enhancing the cultural capital of children. Acquaintance with new social and physical environment helps children to acquire new knowledge outside the four walls of a classroom, it consolidates some of the



existing knowledge by making it become more meaningful. Travelling also help to acquire social skills and develop autonomy in the children.

### **Leisure Activities of the Very Rich Children:**

Data obtained from a certain school with a high percentage of children coming from the upper middle class white families inform us that their leisure activities are much more sophisticated than the average middle class child of Mauritius.

According to the children's questionnaire, the children state that they practice sports such as -, tennis , hunting, roller, karting, "bricolage" apart from the common activities of other children such as going to the seaside, watching video or T.V, reading or going out with friends.

These kind of expensive sports practised by the children is confirmed by the parents who also mention, (in their questionnaire) that their children are involved in the above –mentioned activities. Practising all those sports may not be within the means of all the families of the upper middle class. The following transcript gives us an insight into a parent's view about the practice of expensive sports:

*Naturellement il faut avoir pour pouvoir payer. Je vois disons des leçons d'équitation pour les enfants, surtout les dernières étaient... toi je ne sais pas, mais Alice mourrait d'envie de prendre des leçons d'équitation. On ne lui a jamais donné des leçons d'équitation, c'était un peu trop compliqué aussi et ça coûtait bien cher aussi pour prendre des leçons d'équitation Et on ne trouvait pas que c'était indispensable. Je ne sais pas, mais je pense que disons qu'il y a beaucoup de parents de notre société hein, puisque vous me demandez ça, qui trouve qu'il faut que l'enfant connaissent monter a cheval, qu'il faut que l'enfant connaisse faire un minimum de danse ou de musique, comme si pour avoir une bonne éducation il faut savoir un peu tout faire. ( Middle class- Franco-Mauritian mother)*

Though she may have found learning horse – riding too expensive, she informs us that her children were engaged in other less expensive activities which may not be within the means of the common child:

*De temps en temps il y a eu des leçons de tennis, des leçons de danse, c'est un peu des trucs comme ça.....Tous les mercredis il y a des fois tu faisais des sports aussi : le volley etc. .... Et puis je me rappelles avec Pricil, vous faisiez un genre de bricolage, un atelier ? Comment on appelle ça ? Atelier même non ? était plutôt des travaux manuels tout ça mais ça aussi je ne payais pas. Je crois pas, peut-être lui donner de l'argent pour acheter le matériel peut-être, je ne me rappelles pas. Les leçons de dessins éventuellement on payait, tennis vous faisiez sur la propriété même Pendant un temps Sophie prenait des leçons a Grand Baie, on devait payer... c'était plutôt des sports éventuellement et puis a école c'était pas payant.*

With social mobility for other ethnic groups, since Independence, there is a class of people who have attained the upper middle class group and have the means to spend money on expensive tuition for their children and are able to send their children to dance lessons, tennis lessons and even in some cases to horse-riding lessons. The latter practice is very limited to a few individuals.

### **Shopping:**

An activity engaged by the very rich children is shopping. According to the children's questionnaire, some 80% of the children of the posh private school are engaged in shopping during their holidays. Most of their shopping may consist of buying clothes and other equipment which are branded and are highly expensive. Buying brands has become fashionable among the well-to-do in other schools also.

## **Chapter 9**

### **The State and the Child**

Traditionally, it has always been the family who has been the main provider of all the needs of the young child in terms of nutrition, clothing, health care, education, and leisure activities but with the great economic and social changes which are occurring in most societies, the responsibility of the parents is diminishing even in the early years. One of the main partners to take charge of the welfare of the children is the State. In most modern societies the State, the state is increasingly involved in child welfare and protection.

The principle that government should intervene into social and economic conditions on behalf of 'the public' has become the norm among nations of the world ever since this kind of approach on the part of the State started in countries like Britain and the USA in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of progressive thinkers. In fact , the most important forms of "intervention into the family were in the forms of the abolition of child labour in Britain through a series of laws called the "labour laws" and laws concerning the education of poor children were also enacted . Laws passed in Britain were also promulgated in all its colonies and Mauritius was one of these colonies.

There developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a growing interest in "equality" as a principle of social justice and an appreciation of the fact that the formal recognition of an equal capacity for rights was not enough. Movements of reform started to use the State to create greater equality for the vast majority who were not doing so well out of the free market; to provide some support – thus some stake in the system- for those who would otherwise rapidly fall into the trap of poverty and insecurity.

This means that state's intervention into the family affairs and in favour of the child dates back to the nineteenth century in Mauritius but how far these laws were enforced is not too clear as many children were not going to school

according to statistics for the late nineteenth and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Teelock, 2001).

It is only in the twentieth century that the concept of the “Welfare State” started to emerge in Mauritius.

Welfare usually refers to a range of services which are provided to protect people in a number of conditions, including, childhood, sickness and old age.

“The welfare state” usually refers to an ideal model of provision, where the state accepts responsibility for the provision of comprehensive and universal welfare for its citizens. In many “welfare states” social protection is not delivered by the state at all, but by a combination of independent, voluntary and government services. These countries are still usually thought of as ‘Welfare States’

The principles and values underpinning the concept of the welfare state are the following: **individual and social well-being, solidarity, rights, justice, freedom and democracy**. Welfare provision in most western countries has grown hand in hand with democracy.

In Mauritius there were already features of welfare which pre-dates independence in the form of free health care in state hospitals, free education at the primary level and a system of pensions. It was not until after independence that the Welfare State was strengthened as the government of that time had adopted this ideology as a guiding principle in its promotion of social equality and justice for everyone.

Education was made free from the primary to the tertiary sectors though later on because of economic exigencies, the university fees were re-introduced. The system of pensions became more elaborate.

During those post independence days no particular emphasis was being put upon the welfare and rights of children. They were being taken care of by the provisions of the law concerning children and by the welfare system established for all the citizens of this country. It was not until Mauritius signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that the child as an entity became a major concern of the Mauritian State and the role of the State in the protection and welfare of the Child became more pronounced. Thus it is stipulated in the Implementation Handbook for CRC, it is stipulated that:

1. *In all actions concerning the children whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.*
2. *State Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardian, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and to this end, shall take appropriate legislative and administrative measures.*
3. *States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the Standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision. (Implementation Handbook for CRC: 39)*

Further on it is stressed upon that:

*“States must ensure necessary protection and care for all children in their jurisdiction. They must take account of the rights and duties of parents and others legally responsible for the child. But there are many aspects of “care and protection” that individual parents cannot provide. – for example protection against environment pollution or traffic accidents. And where individual families are unable or unwilling to protect the child, the State must provide a “safety net”, ensuring the child’s well-being in all circumstances. Often, the obligations of State and parent are closely related, for example the State is required to make available compulsory free primary education, parents have a duty to ensure education in line with the child’s best interests.”*

As we can see there is heavy emphasis on the responsibility of the state to provide care and protection to the child. Therefore in the next chapters, we are going to examine how far the Mauritian State is fulfilling its duties towards the child in terms of the:

- legal system
- the system of education from nursery stage to primary level
- the health services for the child
- Social security
- Leisure activities
- Care and protection for the Poor children

## Chapter 10

### THE CHILD AND THE LAW

By law, in most countries of the world, the concept of “child” is defined in terms of age and in Mauritius, a person is considered a child when he/she is aged between the age of 0 and 18 years but though considered as a minor, is endowed with a legal status. According to the Civil Law of the Republic of Mauritius:

*“ Tout etre humain possede la personnalité juridique” (Code Civil p. 6 no. 7)*

This article of the Code Civil is inferring that a child is recognised as having a legal status and the next article is more specific in stating the rights of the legal person:

*“ Sous réserve des dispositions expresses de la loi, la personnalité juridique emporte pleine jouissance des droits civils.”*

### THE STATUS OF THE CHILD

In fact, the status of the child in Mauritius has already been established since 1804 when the island was a French colony and Napoleon was the ruler of France. The French “Code Civil”, a compilation of the existing French civil laws of that time as well as new laws promulgated by Napoleon himself, was extended to distant “Isle de France and Bourbon” in 1805.

When Napoleon became emperor of the French, this code of laws, re-named “Code Napoleon” was re-promulgated in 1807 while it was extended to Isle de France in 1808 by the “Capitaine General” , Decaen.

When in 1810, the island was captured by the British, the capitulation Act (Art. 8) allowed the vanquished (the French) to keep their religion, laws and customs. Thus, after the British had proclaimed that the Code Napoleon would remain in use in Mauritius in 1810, two centuries later, the “Code Napoleon” though amended in many cases, is still the basis of all our civil laws.

The Civil Code of 1804, has been modified over the years, in order to respond to the particular needs of a Mauritian society in constant evolution. Reform of the

Civil Code started since 1978 when the Legislative Assembly introduced several amendments to the Code until 1983. After 1983, there have not been major changes to the code. Many of the amendments concerned the family, marriage and divorce but some of the laws concerned the child also.

### **Status of the child and Parental Responsibilities according to the Civil Code:**

The “Code Napoleon”, the source of all our civil laws in Mauritius, tells us that the child is the responsibility of the parents or the parent in case of single-parent families. In order to have an idea of the legal status of the child vis -a -vis the parents and the State, the laws concerning the child must be examined.

Thus, according to the “Code Civil” in Mauritius, the child is legally under the authority of his/her parents to whom he owes respect:

*371. L'enfant a tout age, doit honneur et respect a ses père et mère.*

It should be noted that instead of speaking of the rights of the child, emphasis is upon the duties and responsibilities of the child towards the parents and the authority of the parents over the child, is stressed upon:

*371.1 Il reste sous leur autorité jusqu'à sa majorité ou son émancipation par mariage.*

It should be noted that now both parents have authority over the child as since 1983, the law has been amended to give the mother also the same legal authority over her child.

*372. (l'Act 7/1983 a abrogé l'article 372 et a promulgué le nouvel article 372).*

*Pendant le mariage, les père et mère exercent en commun leur autorité.*

Even the natural child is under the authority of the parent who has recognised him or her:

*374. Sur l'enfant naturel, l'autorité parentale est exercée par celui des père et mère qui l'a volontairement reconnu, s'il n'a été reconnu que par l'un d'eux.*

If the natural child lives under the same roof as both his/her parents, the child is under the authority of both parents unless he/she lives with only one parent , in which case the authority is vested mainly upon this parent

This **authority** of parents entails responsibility for providing for the basic needs of the child:

*203. "Les époux contractent ensemble, par le seul fait du mariage, l'obligation de nourrir, entretenir et élever leurs enfants."*

The parents' duties consist also of the protection of the child – protection of his security, health, morality and the **right** and obligation of minding, supervising and educating their progeny:

*372.2 L'autorité appartient aux père et mère pour protéger l'enfant dans sa sécurité, sa santé, sa moralité.*

*Ils ont à son égard droit et devoir de garde, de surveillance et d'éducation.*

This authority and supervision of the parents can only take place if the children and parents live under the same roof. The law sees to it that the parents must keep their children with them under the same roof.

*108.1 (inséré par l'Act 22/2982) Le mineur non émancipé par mariage est domicilié chez ses père et mère.*

*Si les père et mère ont des domiciles distincts, il est domicilié chez celui des parents avec lequel il réside.*

The authority of the parents vested by law means that the child, while living with his/her parents lives under certain constraints, especially in terms of freedom of movement to and from the family home.

*371.3 Sous réserve de dispositions spéciales contraires aux règles établies par le présent article, l'enfant ne peut sans permission des père et mère, quitter la maison familiale et ne peut en être retiré que dans les cas de nécessité que détermine la loi.*



*Toutefois le juge en Chambre peut autoriser l'enfant à quitter la maison familiale, à la requête de l'un des deux parents, lorsque le refus abusif de l'autre n'est pas justifié par l'intérêt de l'enfant.*

Even when the parents are divorced the child remains under the authority of both parents:

*260. Le divorce laisse subsister les droits et les devoirs des père et mère à l'égard de leurs enfants ..... (under certain conditions)*

If the child lives with only one parent after divorce, the authority is exercised by that parent as long as the child lives under his/her roof.

*373.1 Si les père et mère sont divorcés ou séparés de corps, l'autorité parentale est exercée par celui d'entre eux à qui la Cour Suprême confie la garde de l'enfant, sauf le droit de visite de l'autre.*

But this does not mean that the other parent loses authority over his or her children. The law sees to it that the other parent keeps his right to oversee the welfare and education of his child:

*263. L'époux à qui la garde des enfants n'a pas été confiée conserve le droit de surveiller leur entretien et leur éducation. Il y contribue à proportion de ses ressources.*

The parents lose their right of authority over their child only in some specific cases such as mental incapacity, deprivation of his rights by the law, condemnation for abandoning children, in which case the other parent takes over the full responsibility and authority over the child :

*373. Perd l'exercice de l'autorité parentale ou en est provisoirement privé celui des père et mère qui se trouve dans l'un des cas suivants:*

- 1. S'il est hors d'état de manifester sa volonté, en raison de toute autre cause;*
- 2. Si un jugement de déchéance ou de retrait a été prononcé contre lui, pour ceux de ses droits qui lui ont été retirés*
- 3. S'il a fait l'objet d'une condamnation pour abandon d'enfants.*

*373.2 Si l'un des père et mère décède ou se trouve dans un des cas énuméré par l'article 373, l'exercice de l'autorité parentale est dévolu en entier à l'autre.*

The Law sees to the protection of the child even if both parents have passed away and in such a case, the judges will see to it that a guardian is appointed to exercise authority and be responsible generally of the child.

*373.3 S'il ne reste plus ni père ni mère en état d'exercer l'autorité parentale, il y aura lieu a l'ouverture d'une tutelle.*

In case of adoption, the person who adopts the child is invested with all the authority and responsibilities which are normally those of the biological parents:

*358. L'adoptant est seul investi a l'égard de l'adopté de tous les droits d'autorité parentale, inclus celui de consentir au mariage de l'adopté, a moins qu'il ne soit le conjoint du père ou de la mère de l'adopté; dans ce cas l'adoptant a l'autorité parentale concurremment avec son conjoint, mais celui-ci en conserve l'exrcice.*

*Les droits d'autorité parentale sont exercés par le ou les adoptants dans les mêmes conditions qu'a l'égard de l'enfant légitime.*

*Les regles de l'administration légale et de la tutelle de l'enfant légitime s'appliquent a l'adopté.*

*368. L'adopté a.dans la famille de l'adoptant, les mêmes droits et les mêmes obligations qu'un enfant légitime.*

Even the laws concerning marriage and the family stresses upon the responsibility of parents to see to the education of their children:

*213. Les époux assurent ensemble la direction morale et matérielle de la famille. Ils pourvoient a l'éducation des enfants et préparent leur avenir.*

The laws under the Code Civil have been amended several times during the past century to adapt to present circumstances. For example laws concerning the adoption of children have been amended in the context of demands for the adoption of citizens by non-citizens. Thus in 1987 the National Adoption Council Act was enacted in order to create the National Adoption Council which would

inquire into all demands for adoption by non-residents and to advise the minister on such matters while at the same time liaising with overseas official agencies engaged in the adoption process.

The laws of the Code Civil underwent numerous amendments upon Mauritius adopting the “Convention of the Rights of the Child”

## **THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

Though in the past, the status and welfare of the child in society seems to have been the main preoccupations of the legislators, most legislation in relation to the child, in recent years has been concerned mainly with the following:

- the rights of the child
- protection of the child against all kind of ABUSE

The Code Napoleon which comes to us from 19<sup>th</sup> century France, puts a lot of emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of the parents rather than upon the rights of the child. At the same time, the Code Civil seems to be concerned mainly with children living in the conventional family rather than with disadvantaged children with a single parent.

After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1948, the different nations of the world came to the conclusion that children who formed one of the most vulnerable groups of the human race, had specific rights which had to be protected and so in 1959, came the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

In spite of this recognition of the rights of children, there was no legislation in most nations of the world as well as in Mauritius to ensure that those rights were being protected and so in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted. A year later, the world Summit for Children established a world declaration on the survival, protection and development of Children and a plan of action was set up.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child treaty spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere - without discrimination - have:

- the right to survival;
  - to develop to the fullest;
  - to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation;
- to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

Since its adoption in 1989 after more than 60 years of advocacy, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified more quickly and by more governments (all except Somalia and the US) than any other human rights instrument. Its basic premise is that children (all human beings below the age of 18) are born with fundamental freedoms and the inherent rights of all human beings.

Many governments have gone even further, enacting legislation, creating mechanisms and putting into place a range of creative measures to ensure the protection and realisation of the rights of those under the age of 18. According to UNICEF, "*The Convention has inspired a process of national implementation and social change in all regions of the world.*"(<http://www.unicef.org/crs/faq.htm>).

Among the changes which have been brought in local legislation in many countries of the world, in order to incorporate the principles of the CRC, the UNICEF informs us about the following:

- *a review of the Child Care Act in South Africa,*
- *the passage of the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act of 1998 in the United Republic of Tanzania*
- *the Democratic Republic of the Congo 's new draft constitution grants free education and prohibits conscription into the army before the age of 18*
- *In Ethiopia, provisions for children's and women's rights have been written into the new constitution and legislation,*
- *Malaysia enacted a new law, the Malaysian Child Act, which is within the framework of the convention,*

- *In 16 countries in the Americas and Caribbean region, national laws have been adapted to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

Singapore, a small island state, has also passed protection laws in favour of children. The Children and Young Persons Act protects a child from abuse, neglect and abandonment. It also provides rehabilitation of children and young persons who commit offences or are beyond parental control.

Mauritius is also one of these countries where extensive changes have been brought to existing legislation to accommodate CRC. Since 1990, when Mauritius ratified the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), there has been a change in emphasis in legislation in favour of the rights of the child. Whereas in the Code Civil puts the onus of responsibility of child care and protection on the parents and family, the Convention on the Rights of the Child assigns that responsibility on the State also. By adhering to the Convention the different states take the following responsibilities to:

- *do all it can to implement the rights contained in the Convention*
- *protect its children from all forms of discrimination*
- *take decisions in the best interest of the child*
- *make sure that the child has the right to parental guidance*
- *ensure the child's right to life and survival*
- *protect the child's right to a name , an identity and a nationality*
- *safeguard the child's right to a family life*
- *promote family reunification across frontiers*
- *struggle against child abduction*
- *allow the child the right to express his/her opinion*
- *allow the child the right to freedom of expression, obtain information , make ideas or information known regardless of frontiers*
- *ensure that parents and legal representatives guide the child's exercise of his/her right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.*
- *allow the child the right to meet with others, join and form associations*
- *ensure that the child has the right to privacy and to the protection of his/her reputation.*
- *Ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of sources*
- *Help parents and guardians in child raising by providing services for the care of children*
- *protect the child from all forms of ill treatment by parents or others responsible for him/her.*
- *provide special protection for a child without a family*
- *ensure that adoption is carried out in the best interest of the child*
- *give special protection to a refugee child or to a child seeking refugee status*
- *guarantee that the disabled child has the right to a decent and fulfilling life.*
- *Provide the child with the right to benefit from the highest attainable standard of health.*
- *Make sure that the cases of children who are receiving treatment or placed in care are reviewed periodically.*
- *Ensure the child's right to Social Security*
- *Assist parent in order to ensure the child a right to a standard of living adequate for his physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.*
- *Give the child access to education on the basis of equal opportunity*

- *Provide an education which aims at developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent.*
- *Allow children in pluri-ethnic and multilingual countries to have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practise their own religion and language*
- *Ensure that the child has access to appropriate recreational activities.*
- *Protect the child from economic exploitation through performing harmful work*
- *Protect the child from using drugs and from being made to sell drugs*
- *Protect the child from sexual exploitation and abuse*
- *Engage in international co-operation to prevent sale, trafficking and abduction of children*
- *Protect the child from all sorts of exploitation*
- *Protect the child from torture, deprivation of liberty, death penalty, and life imprisonment*
- *Protect the child during armed conflicts inside the country*
- *Promote the physical and psychological re-adaptation and social rehabilitation of child victims.*
- *Ensure that the child in conflict with the law, receives the treatment which promotes the child's sense of dignity and worth, takes the child's age into account and aims at his or her reintegration into society.* (adapted from "The Convention on the Rights of the Child- Situation in Mauritius, 1991-1998- UNICEF/Ministry of Women, Family welfare and Child Development)

These articles of the Convention demonstrate a strong accent on the responsibility of the State in providing assistance to parents in the child-raising process, that is, in providing all the basic needs of the child. In article 6, the accent is on obligation of the State to see to the welfare of the child. The CRC has been acclaimed throughout the world and the following extract from a speech by Louisiane Gauthier of L'OMEP in 1992 is an example:

*" This Convention should be acclaimed by all, for by its very existence it challenges all societies to seriously consider the destiny they wish for their children. The Convention will have a civilising influence and will promote human dignity. It will create clear legal obligations in the countries that adhere to it, and will no doubt trouble the consciences of those refusing to do so. As a civilising force and conscientious objector, the Convention on the Rights of the Child carries great symbolic weight. We need noble texts to inspire us when the very scope of human drama unfolding before our eyes leaves us with a confused sense of impotence and indignation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a beacon light in the dawn of the third millennium. It is up to us to transform its ideal into a legacy. (Gauthier . L.,1992:3)*

By signing the convention, Mauritius was bound to abide by the articles of the convention as far as possible. So as to ensure that the rights of children were being protected according to the convention, a Ministry responsible for child Development was created in 1991, though its mandate included also the rights of women.

To pave the way for legislation in the domain of child protection, the National Children's Council Act was passed in 1990 and the National Council for children was established.

*“The main goals of the National Council were: to advise the Minister on all matters pertaining to childhood in Mauritius, to combat all forms of child abuse, neglect and exploitation of children, and to co-ordinate the activities of organisations working for the welfare of children.”(Bennett:19)*

The main activities of the National Children’s Council are to identify children in need of help, develop methods of investigating cases of child abuse and to bring assistance to those children. The council also offers counselling service to the abused children, their parents and even to the abusers.

In the document entitled “The Convention on the Rights of the Child”, the Situation in Mauritius, it is stated that: **The State must do all it can to implement the rights contained in the Convention** (Article 4). Ever since it had signed the convention, the Mauritian State has taken a series of measures to ensure that the rights of the children of the Republic were respected and protected.

The Convention is recognised by the Judiciary in Mauritius and the Legislative Assembly has amended existing laws in order to give legal force to the provisions of the Convention. Among these amendments, we find the following:

- In 1991, incest was made a criminal offence
- In 1994, the Child Protection Act was enacted.
- In 1995, there was an amendment to sections 20 and 23 of the Constitution to ensure that children born of a Mauritian mother was granted Mauritian citizenship.(Before this law, only children born to a Mauritian father was granted Mauritian citizenship)

### **The Child- Protection Act of 1994:**

In 1994, with the Child-Protection Act, the Mauritian State, determined to show its commitment to the Convention on the rights of the child, demonstrates its intention to protect the child from all forms of ill-treatment.

Among these laws we find the following:

- Any person who ill-treats a child or otherwise exposes a child to harm shall commit an offence.
- Any person who in an advertisement exploits a child by using him in such a way as is likely to cause in him or in any child watching him reactions which are contrary to morality or detrimental to psychological development shall be deemed to exposed a child to harm.
- Any person who causes , incites or allows any child
  - (a) to be sexually abused or by another person
  - (b) to have access to a brothel
  - (c) to engage in prostitution,
 shall commit an offence.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (l) (a), a child shall be deemed to be sexually abused where he has taken part whether as a willing or unwilling participant or observer in any act which is sexual in nature for the purposes of-

- (a) another person's gratification;
- (b) any activity of pornographic, obscene or indecent nature  
(any other kind of exploitation by any person).

The 'Child Protection Act' goes on to spell out clearly other protection measures for the child by declaring as offences such acts as :

- selling "liquor", 'rum' or 'compounded spirits' to a child,
- allowing a child to have access to a gaming house
- allowing a child who is unaccompanied by an adult to have access to a video club
- renting a video tape to a child
- to allow or cause a child under his care to beg .

According to this Act, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women's rights has been entrusted with considerable power to protect the child in danger:



*“Where the Permanent Secretary has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being exposed to harm and is in need of assistance, he may summon any person with or without the child to give evidence for the purpose of enquiring into the matter”* (Child Protection Act 1994)

To make the “Child Protection Act “ more effective, this law includes an “Emergency Protection Order” which with prior authorisation from a magistrate, allows the P.S. to take a child away from any place he/she is residing if it is believed that the child is at risk. The law confers on the Permanent Secretary the right to

*“enter any premises specified in the order, where necessary by force and search for the child”,  
‘remove, or return the child to, or to prevent the child’s removal from ,any place of safety”,*

*‘cause him to be submitted to medical examination or treatment, request police or medical assistance”* (Child Protection Act-1994)

In cases of removal of children from their residence, the children are sent to the Ministry’s (WRCDFW) “shelter” which is found at Albion. Officers of the Ministry also send these children to another shelter in Forest Side, run by a Trust Fund. For certain cases, the MWRCDWF to what have been termed “places of Safety”, that is to institutions run by NGOs, such as: Terre de Paix”, SOS Children’s Village, CEDEM and for infants aged less than 2, they are usually sent to the “Creche” of “Coeur Immaculée de Marie”. An Emergency Protection Order has effect for a period of 14 days.

In 1998 **another Protection of the child (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act** was enacted to reinforce the first one of 1994 and in which the word “harm” has been re-defined:

*“ ‘harm’ includes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or moral injury, neglect, ill-treatment, impairment of health or development;”*

In order to be conform to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, other amendments have also been brought to existing legislation, in order to ensure the security and protection of the child by the State. Among these new laws are the following:

- The Dangerous Drugs Act (amendments concerning the procurement of drugs to minors or mentally handicapped persons)
- The Explosive Act, the Firearms Act, the Pesticides Control Act, the Pharmacy Act (amendments concerning the protection of children from handling dangerous materials)
- The Shops Act (Proposed amendment to prevent the child of the shopkeeper from being employed or allowed to serve customers in any shop where the child is under the age of 15).

In fact, twenty-five laws concerning children have been amended under '**The Protection of the Child (Miscellaneous) Bill**' of 1998. Other laws which have been amended to protect the child include the Criminal Code (supplementary) (amendment) of 1998, which legislate the following kinds of "harm" which can be caused to a child: assault with aggravating circumstances upon a minor, rape, sodomy, debauching youth, procuring enticing and exploiting prostitute, sexual harassment, sequestration, family abandonment, child trafficking, larceny with wounding, larceny with violence by night breaking, extortion, deceiving purchaser, harbouring a minor without parents' permission, dealing with obscene matter, admitting minors in a brothel

In 1997, **the Protection from Domestic Violence Act** was passed and to broaden the scope of application of the first act an amendment Bill was enacted in 2004 and again through this Act also the security of the child is being taken care of. According to this Act of 1997, and to its amended form of 2004, "domestic violence" includes any of the following acts committed by a person against his spouse, a child of his spouse or another person living under the same roof-

- (a) *wilfully causing or attempting to cause physical injury;*
- (b) *wilfully or knowingly placing or attempting to place the spouse or the other person in fear of physical injury to himself or to one of his children*
- (c) *intimidation, harassment, ill-treatment, brutality or cruelty;*
- (d) *compelling the spouse or the other person by force or threat to engage in any conduct or act, sexual or other wise, from which the spouse or the other person has the right to abstain;*
- (e) *confining or detaining the spouse or the other person against his will;*
- (f) *harming a child of the spouse*

- (g) *causing or attempting to cause damage to the spouse's or the other person's property*
- (h) *threatening to commit any act mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (g) (The Protection from Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill –No.XIV of 2004)*

The above list does not constitute the end of legislation in the field of child protection from all sorts of abuses and dangers. Thus, in 2000, the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction Act was enacted. The main aim of this legislation was to “*secure the prompt return of children wrongfully removed to or detained in any Contracting State; and to ensure that rights of custody and of access under the law of one Contracting state are effectively respected in the other Contracting States*”.(Act no. 19 of 2000). In September 2000, the Government had set up a task force to review all laws concerning children as well as their enforcement procedures. The task force including NGO's and other stakeholders, aims at making the laws more effective and ensuring that procedures are more child - friendly.

Nevertheless, as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, said: "*The principle of 'all children, all rights' is still much too far from being a reality.*"

In spite of all the legal structure established by the government to protect the children of the Republic, child abuse is still a scourge in our society as the numerous reported cases of child abuse and molestation testify.

### **Child Abuse:**

Child abuse occurs when the following ill-treatment is perpetrated on the person of the child:

- wounds and blows
- sexual assault-rape
- sexual harassment
- incest
- debauchery of a child
- child pornography
- child prostitution

- child trafficking
- breach of trust of minor
- abandonment
- left within reach of sources of harm or even greater danger such as a fire
- carelessness causing serious accidents or even death for the child
- intentional burning such as with cigarettes or an electric iron
- mental harassment

According to statistics from the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, during the period January to May 2004, 86 children have been physically abused by their parents, teachers and other people, 19 have been abandoned, 125 have suffered neglect, and have failed to thrive, 178 have suffered from emotional /psychological abuse and emotional deprivation. Others have suffered from sexual abuse of different types such as being encouraged to have sexual intercourse before the age of sixteen (36), while others endured incest(2), attempt upon their chastity(36), sexual harassment(3), sodomy and bestiality (5), rape (6)

The "Child Protection Act" promulgated in 1994 provides for the protection of children against ill-treatment, neglect, abandonment, destitution or any other form of exposure to harm. This act which gives considerable power to the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development through its permanent Secretary who is enabled to investigate suspected cases of child abuse and to refer them to court and he can even ask for protection order or a committal order in order to be able to put the child in a safe place. Through this act, other stakeholders responsible for the general welfare of the child in society, such as the doctors, dentists or teachers are obligated to report cases of child abuse. Convicted child abusers are liable to prosecution but the number who have been prosecuted makes one wonder about the effectiveness of these laws as there are many loopholes within the legal system which make the child abusers get away with their crimes in some cases.

Apart from the promulgation of new laws to protect the child in Mauritius, existing criminal laws have been amended to cover certain forms of child abuse. thus the Criminal Code (Supplementary)Act, the Criminal Code (Amendment)Act) 1998, the

Criminal Code (Supplementary) (Amendment) Act 1998 include the following form of child abuse:

- *Assault with aggravating circumstances,*
- *Assault (simple)*
- *Murder of newly born child and infanticide*
- *Manslaughter*
- *Unlawful arrest and sequestration*
- *Abducting Minor*
- *Larceny with wounding*
- *Larceny with violence by night breaking*
- *Larceny with other aggravating circumstances*
- *Larceny with violence*
- *Assault with aggravating circumstance* (Task Force,2003:27)

The existing and new laws have not been able to deter the perpetrators of abuse against children, as every year, hundreds of children in Mauritius suffer from different forms of abuse from adults. The fact that the number of reported cases of different forms of child abuse to the Child Development Unit is on the increase (from 1748 in 1995 to 3350 in 1999 ) may mean that :

*“Sensitisation campaigns and the enactment of child protection laws have encouraged more victims to disclose their suffering and more parents to come forward to report cases.”* (Ministry of Women’s rights web site)

According to the Child Development Unit, most cases of cruelty to children go unreported. This may be the situation when the abusers are very close parents as in the case of sexual abuse where the culprit may be the father or the brother or uncle and mothers are reluctant to report the case. Sexual abuse within the family is very insidious and very often difficult to substantiate.

#### Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of children:

Commercial and sexual exploitation of children is increasingly becoming an acute problem among some adolescents. The Government (the then Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development) commissioned a research on this problem and the report entitled “Study on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children in Mauritius and Rodrigues”, was produced in 1998 but the recommendations were not implemented and the next government commissioned another study again entitled “ Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Mauritius” (CSEC) and the

results were made public in 2002. Both reports taken together give a comprehensive overview of the problem though each study had taken a different approach towards studying the problem. The first one adopted a more qualitative approach while the second one had adopted a more quantitative approach.

However in this present report, this aspect of child abuse is not going to be tackled in too much details as this has been taken care of in the two reports mentioned earlier and this research concerns only the 0 to 12 age-group and according to both reports children of less than 12 are not usually involved in prostitution in Mauritius though there may be a small number of twelve year olds who are actively involved in prostitution. The 1998 report seem to suggest this: “ *Besides there are evidence of the existence of prostitution among pre-adolescent children- though not child prostitution in the strict sense of the term....* ”(p.14)

However, the CESC report (2002) mentions the fact that for nearly half of the respondents in the survey carried out for that research, the first sexual experience started between 10-12 years. This means that some children of less than 12 are living in an environment where they are at risk of falling in the trap of prostitution.

The CSEC reform also informs us that :

*“The network of CSEC and sex trade spread far and wide and involve a section of the close family members of the children including their own mother, friends and acquaintances, boyfriends, neighbours, professional pimps and other intermediates like taxi drivers, employees of hotel, bars, and discos etc. It also appears that the tentacles have spread within the schools from where vulnerable children are spotted and recruited, there are charges of police inaction and even complicity.”*

It would seem that in many cases it is the adults who should have been protecting them who are taking advantage of their childish naiveté. And in spite of the existence of laws which do not allow children access to certain places, they are able to go to these places with the complicity of adults.

### Child Labour:

Though there are laws (Section 7 of the Labour Act of 1975, amended in 1986) which protect the child from commercial employment, children continue to be employed in some sectors of the economy. However, according to official statistics, child labour as a percentage of the labour force has been steadily declining.

According to the figures provided by the UNICEF situational analysis (1998),” from 1.2% in 1990 to 0.8% in 1995, and 0.5% in 1997 for males aged between 12 and

14 and to females of the same age group from 0.8% in 1990 to 0.5% in 1995 and 0.36% in 1997”.

There are also children who are being employed informally in the family business, be it in the field or in the shop or even as hawkers on the streets. This is an area of labour which it is difficult to control.

With the introduction of compulsory schooling to the age of 16 this year, the problem of child labour will, it is hoped, gradually disappear though it is difficult to assess how far this law will be able to be fully enforced as the labour laws permits 15 year olds to be employed.

### **The Child Development Unit:**

In order to enforce these laws passed in order to protect the interests of the child, the government has created the “Child Development Unit”(CDU) of the Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development and Family Affairs. The CDU has branches in different parts of the island: Port Louis (Head Office), Goodlands Community Resource Centre, Bambous Community Resource Centre, Mare d’Albert Women Centre, Flacq Women Centre.

The Ministry offers through the **Family Counselling Services**, psychological support as well as legal advice to individuals, and to families in cases of sexual abuse or any form of abuse which are reported. These services are available at the centres mentioned above as well as at Floreal.

Other measures which have been taken to take care of children who are victims of various types of abuse are the following:

- A foster Care service or the “famille D’accueil”
- the Childwatch network
- the Drop-in centre

The **foster care service** consist of the placement of children who have been abused or abandoned in the care of families who have accepted to act as foster parents to these children, Those parents are chosen by the ministry after careful

investigation and consideration. In 2003 there were about 10 children who had been placed in that is commonly known as “familles d’Accueil”.

It is a pilot project which aims at placing at least 40 children in 25 families.

*“**Childwatch**’ is a programme of surveillance for children who are exposed to any form of abuse. It is a network, which operates at regional levels with the collaboration of a pool of volunteers, social workers, professionals, community leaders and members among others” (Ministry of Women’s Rights – Bilan 2001-2002)*

Childwatch networks have been set up in the following regions:

Cité Richelieu, Pointe aux Sables, Tombeau Bay, and Camp Levieux.

Workshops are organised in the different localities to monitor the progress of these various networks.

The **Drop - In Centre** is a place where child prostitutes are taken care of if they need help or if they need a place to spend the night in safety when they are being considered to be at risk.

### **Child Protection and the Police**

A police unit, called the Brigade pour la protection des Mineurs, has just been set up to protect the minors from harm. It consists of 5 members (4 men and 2 woman policemen) The main problem with this unit of the police force is that it does not work at night when the youth are more at risk.

.The officers respect office hours which starts at nine and finishes at 16.00 hours.

### **Juvenile Justice:**

The administration of juvenile justice has been the subject of an investigation, commissioned by the Ministry of WRCDFW in 1999 and a report explaining all discrepancies in our administration of Juvenile Justice has been produced in May 2000. However as we cannot write about the child and the law without mentioning the issue about the problems related to the administration of juvenile Justice, we are going to give a brief overview of the issue in this report.



The administration of juvenile justice is a matter of concern in Mauritius as it concerns two types of defendants whose alleged offences are of different natures and should have been approached in different manners by the legal authorities but are treated in the same manner. These two types of defendants are:

- the criminal offender
- the “child beyond control”

The first type of defendant in a law court has allegedly committed a criminal offence such as petty theft, assault of different types, drug addiction or even drug trafficking. The “child beyond control” has not committed any crime but is someone who has behavioural, familial or social problems and who have been declared “child beyond control” by their parents or guardians because they have been perceived as being sexually overactive (especially the girls) by these parents or are considered as being ‘*de trop*’ by the father-in-law or mother-in-law when their single or divorced mother or father re-marry. In some other cases it is known that some of the children have been sent to the “reformatory” because the grandmother, who take care of them with the assent of the parents, can no longer control them. In 2003, 615 (298 boys and 317 girls) cases of children have been reported at the CDU as having behavioural problems and being a “child beyond control”. If we look at the following statistics, we realise that the figures keep on increasing:

**Table 9 showing the number of children with behavioural problems and who are children beyond control from 1996 to 2003**

Year	No of Boys	No of Girls	Total
1996	72	58	130
1997	58	65	123
1998	116	73	189
1999	226	189	415
2000	234	193	427
2001	269	249	518
2002	273	258	531
2003	298	317	615

According to law (Uncontrollable children, Juvenile Offenders Act 1995, art.18), these children who are arrested or referred to police and judged by a magistrate, must be committed to institutions, that is, the probation hostel or home or the Rehabilitation Centres, the latter being situated in a big compound found at Barkly , Beau Bassin. These centres are : The Rehabilitation Youth Centre for girls (RYC girls), Rehabilitation Youth Centre for boys (RYC boys) and the Correctional Youth Centre (CYC) for boys. The RYCs are more or less open centres for young offenders who have broken the law for the first time, for petty crimes and for those categorised as “child beyond control”. The CYC on the other hand is a prison for young habitual offenders, young drug addicts and for those who have committed serious crimes. (Payneeandy & Naeck –2001- MRC )

The fact that both type of defendant in the juvenile court are being treated in the same way in our judicial system constitute an injustice. Both the young offender and the “Child beyond Control” follow mostly the same organised and well-laddered juridical procedures, which consist of three main stages: police-custody, trial and institutionalisation.

Two differences emerge in the treatment of these children during these three stages.

- In case of “child beyond control, the magistrate often acts as a mediator or a counsellor between both parties and is obviously more flexible with a young offender.
- The “child beyond control” when sentenced is deprived of the alternative of being placed on probation; he or she is either released or committed to institutions. Whereas for a young offender, a magistrate can decide, according to law, to place the child on probation.

Our juvenile Justice system present some discrepancies.:

- After arrest, children who are deemed unfit to be released in parents’ custody, stay in the police cell until they appear in front of the magistrate
- There is no juvenile court as such. The district court acts as a juvenile court.
- The magistrate hearing the case is also the one who deals with adults.

- There is no remand home and children in remand stay in the youth centres along with convicted inmates as long as the magistrates has not given his sentence.

Through this system of administering justice for the juvenile offenders, children become caught up in the legal system, as it has been found that instead of rehabilitating the young inmates of the RYCs, life in those centres seem to lead them further into the cycle of petty crimes and other vices. Upon release from the RYCs, many of the boys and girls find their way back to the carceral system only to graduate to the more repressive centres, that is, from the CYC to the RYC and hence to the adult prison world.(Refer to MRC Report on the Rehabilitation of juvenile Offenders)

There is great concern among magistrates who sit on judgement of the juvenile offenders about the fate of the latter when they integrate the prison world. According to them, being interned in the RYC means inevitable graduating to the CYC and the adult prisons and so to protect these juveniles from the cycle of crimes, these magistrates do their best not to intern the young first offenders or the “child beyond control” so that their numbers inside the centres, have diminished. In spite of these changing attitudes, the juridical system has yet to be reformed in order to protect the interests of the child in compliance with article 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

*“ A child in conflict with the law has the right to treatment which promotes the child’s sense of dignity and worth, takes the child’s age into account and aims at his or her reintegration into society.”*

### **The Probation Office and Juveniles:**

The Probation Service, another arm of the juridical system in the rehabilitation of the young offender, though it also has to offer its services for adults too. The Probation Office is also responsible for the Probation home and hostel which shelter young offenders who are at their first transgression or have been found to be a “child beyond control”.

It has an important role to play in the administration of justice for the young offenders as the Office has to work closely with the courts in planning sentences for offenders through the reports of the probation officers on the offender.

After the sentence, the probation officers have to continue with their work of rehabilitation of offenders in the community through constant monitoring of the young offenders and even their parents or guardians. They assist families in conflict and try to safeguard the welfare of children.

The objectives of the probation service and aftercare service seem to be attained during the probation period and the success rate is around 95% but the success is limited to the probation period only as some juvenile offenders, especially boys, after completion of their sentence continue to transgress the law. The reasons for the failure of the service to prevent the juvenile's relapse into delinquency may be the following:

- After the probation period, the young offender is under the influence of his/her home environment.
- The probation officers have not been able to carry out an in-depth rehabilitation work through lack of proper training.
- Limited human resources to carry out the probation work effectively.

In the administration of justice for young offenders, we must not forget the After Care Service which takes care of the youths whose sentence may be spent outside the rehabilitation centres.

### **The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children:**

The Ombudsperson for Children, appointed by the President of the Republic, has for responsibility to :

- *ensure that the rights, needs and interests of children are given full consideration by public bodies, private authorities, individuals and associations of individuals.*
- *Promote the rights and best interests of children;*
- *Promote compliance with the Convention.* (Supplement to Government Gazette of Mauritius no113 of 13 November,2003 -Act no41 of 2003)

The Office of the Ombudsperson has the powers to:

- advise the Minister, public bodies and other institutions responsible for providing care and other services to children, on the protection of the rights of children.
- Propose measures to ensure that the legal rights of children in care are protected
- To investigate all reported cases of abuse and maltreatment against children and whenever the rights of children are deemed to have been violated, whether in the family, in schools, in all other institutions and in cases of children who are citizens of Mauritius but are living abroad during the investigation and even in cases where children who are not citizens of Mauritius but are residing in Mauritius.

That office can also initiate investigations in its own rights and see to it that justice is seen to be done for children who are among the most vulnerable group of human society. The ombudsperson's powers have been reinforced through a piece of legislation which was enacted in March of 2005.

The establishment of the Ombudspersons's office for children is not restricted to Mauritius only as one of the missions of the UNICEF is to promote the appointment of ombudspersons for children or commissioners for children's rights. Some countries which have set up institutions to protect the child and safeguard her interests are the following: Zambia, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Madagascar and South Africa among others.

## Recommendations:

Though there is an impressive legal framework which has been put in place to safeguard the rights of children, there are still many loopholes within the legal system which are detrimental to the interests of the child in Mauritius. The situation has been looked into by a task force presided by Ms. Pramila Patten, Bar-at Law, and the report of the task Force has been presented in June 2003. This task force report is very comprehensive in that most of the discrepancies in the existing legal

system have been highlighted and recommendations have been made for new legislation to ensure better protection of the child at risk.

However some of those loopholes within the legal system are to be highlighted here:

- In the context of the Child's Protection Act, the approval of a district magistrate is needed before a child at risk can be removed from his home and after 16.00 hours and during the week-ends, no magistrate are available as they are no longer considered to be on duty. This situation must be amended in one way or another as child abuse very often are occurring during the night and week-ends.
- The "Brigade des Mineurs" also does not operate after 16.00 hours. A night - shift should be introduced for this particular group of policemen.
- In the case of juvenile justice, a juvenile Court should be established
- A differentiated juridical approach should be adopted in dealing with juvenile criminal offenders on the one hand and "children beyond control" on the other hand.
- Children on remand and those who have been convicted should be housed in separate quarters, for the protection of those on remand.
- In the reform of the administration of justice for juveniles, the role played by judges, lawyers, social workers, law enforcement officials, personnel working in children's institution and a range of other workers such as the probation workers have to be reviewed in order that the rights of the child may not be infringed upon.
- The probation service should be reinforced through training and recruitment in order that rehabilitation after internment and probation continues in a more in-depth manner

- All persons directly in contact with the child in different state institutions or NGOs, such as child welfare officers, policemen, doctors, nurses etc. should undergo intense training which should include: child psychology, skills of communicating with the child and the sociology of families in Mauritius. Otherwise all the positive effects of the different pieces of legislation in child protection and welfare would be perverted if those who should be implementing the laws are making serious blunders in the management of their tasks.

## Chapter 11

### THE STATE AND THE FORMAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

*Education is at the heart of both personal and community development; its mission is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talents to the full and to realise our creative potential, including responsibility for our own lives and achievement of our personal aims (UNESCO report Delors commission p. 19).*

In Mauritius, we may say that we have a state educational system as the state has a measure of control over most educational institutions in the island even if it does not own all the institutions. Margaret Archer defines a state educational system thus:

*“a state educational system is considered to be a nation-wide and differentiated collection of institutions devoted to formal education, whose overall control and supervision is at least partly governmental, and whose component parts and processes are related to one another” (Archer, 1984:19)*

The Mauritian State has been involved with the setting up of a formal system of education ever since colonial days especially during British rule. The formal education of children in Mauritius which started under the aegis of religious bodies, that is, Roman Catholic or Anglican organisations during British rule became the concern of the state when the British government started to build primary schools for the children of the free coloured and those of the liberated slaves and also to allocate subsidies to the various religious bodies which were running primary institutions as from 1856. These subsidies, called grants-in aid, were a replica of what was being practiced by the British government at home. Laws, concerning the education of poor children, were being promulgated in Britain and were implemented in the colonies but the British government was not really interested in the development of a system of public education as is explained by Teelock:

*“The concept of public education did not take hold in Mauritius or in British colonial policy until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed it could be argued that Britain did not have a general plan for colonies until the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Teelock,2001: 275)*

It was only in 1944 when the Ward Report was endorsed and an Education Ordinance was promulgated to introduce comprehensive reforms in the organisation of education in Mauritius. A Department of Education was made



responsible for over-all educational organisation and a Director of Education was appointed. This is the time when the government was formally taking charge of a “system” of education in the colony. That embryonic system was based on the British system of education which we have inherited to this day. The colonial legacy in our educational system is mentioned by Chinapah:

*“ the structure of Mauritian educational system is more or less a copy of the British educational structure with six years of primary education ending with the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE).....”(Chinapah,1983:27)*

It was only in 1968, when Mauritius won political independence from the British, that more far-reaching developments occurred in the field of education. The Government of that time had understood that education was the key to economic development.

The government’s contribution to the upgrading of our educational system has been constant and increasing regularly since Independence. For the financial year 1971/72., the total expenditure of the Ministry of Education was estimated at only about Rs 4 million, that is, about 5% of the total capital expenditure. Now 37 years after independence, recurrent expenditure by the government on education for the financial year 2003/2004 has now reached more than five billion (Rs 5,119 million), that is 14.7% of the total government recurrent expenditure. This means that the State has been investing massively in the education of its children within the last thirty –five years.

Since independence and even before with the universal suffrage in 1959, successive governments have aimed at bringing education to all the strata of the Mauritian society. All governments have been committed to the idea of “education for all” with the avowed aim of bringing more social equality and justice to the former colonial society. While taking care of equity and access to education to all the children of Mauritius, the main preoccupation of these governments was the economic development of the country as it is firmly believed that education helped in the preparation of workers for the economic system. Thus in the biennial report on Education for 1978-1979, the general philosophy for educational development in the context of economic development is clearly stated:

*In the context of the government's overall economic development strategy, educational policy is being adjusted to meet the socio-economic needs of the country. Steps are being taken:*

- (a) to democratise the educational system;*
- (b) to spread out schools evenly over the country so as to balance the educational facilities between urban and rural areas;*
- (c) to diversify curricula;*
- (d) to make an integrated approach to the concept of education as a life long process for the development of a well-developed personality;*
- (e) to adjust the educational system to meet the manpower requirements.*

We must also bear in mind that whatever development occurred in the field of education was strongly influenced by the politics of the different governments which have acceded to power since 1968. This political element in developments in education is highlighted by Todaro & Smith:

*“ On the supply side, the quantity of school places at the primary, secondary, and university levels is determined largely by political processes, often unrelated to economic criteria. Given mounting political pressure throughout the developing world for greater numbers of school places, we can for convenience assume that the public supply of these places is fixed by the level of government educational expenditures, These are in turn influenced by the level of aggregate private demand for education” (Todaro& Smith ,2003:380).*

Another element which may have influenced the actions of the Mauritian State in the development of education for the children of Mauritius is the adherence of Mauritius to the Convention on the rights of the Child (CRC) which claims children's rights to access and to quality education in these terms:

- *Give the child access to education on the basis of equal opportunity*
- *Provide an education which aims at developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent.*

But even before the CRC, the governments had not only identified education as the key to economic development but had also thought about the development and welfare of the child. This is stated in the first economic development Plan of 1970;

- (f) to make an integrated approach to the concept of education as a life long process for the development of a well-developed personality;*

Apart from developing skills in our children which will help them to integrate the labour force and hence help in the economic prosperity of a rapidly developing country, an educational system also should aim at supporting the physical,

emotional and cognitive development of its children. It is commonly agreed by psychologists that all children are born learning and therefore schools have the responsibility to nurture each child's learning potential and to provide opportunities for continued growth.

When compared to other developing countries, Mauritius is faring well in the field of education but when compared to countries like Singapore and Malaysia, countries which we wish to emulate in terms of socio-economic development, we still lag behind, especially in term of investment in education. There are some African countries which are investing a bigger proportion of their national budget on education, than Mauritius and these are: Lesotho (27%), Kenya (26%), Botswana (26%) and Burundi (23%).The following table gives an idea of the situation regarding education in some African and South East Asian countries:

**Table 10 Education in some African and South East Asian countries**

Countries	% of Central government expenditure on education (1992 – 2002)	Net Primary School Enrolment Ratio (1998-2002)		% of School entrants reaching Grade 5	
		Male	Female	Admin Data (1998-2001)	Survey Data (1997-2003)
Madagascar	21	68	69	34	40
Mauritius	15	93	93	90	-
Mozambique	10	63	56	52	55
Seychelles	7	100	99	91	-
South Africa	-	89	90	65	99
Tanzania		54	54	78	96
Sub-Saharan Africa	-	64	59	63	83
Malaysia	23	95	95	97	-
Singapore	23	93	92	100	-

( Data obtained from UNICEF statistics

In spite of the massive investment in education, the quality of education which is being dispensed to the children of the Republic must be investigated in order to find out exactly in what conditions are our children being educated.

How do our schools enhance the learning potential of children and what kind of opportunities for continued growth do they provide?

Our schools will only be able to achieve those aims only when :

- (a) the curriculum caters for the needs of the child learner – children will have access to developmentally appropriate school programs.
- (b) The examinations are more skills-based than content-based
- (c) The teachers adopt more learner-centered approaches in their dealing with the child, while acknowledging the individual differences
- (d) The school environment is conducive to learning
- (e) The school builds bridges with the local community

It is only when the children's needs are met, that they will be more successful in their learning career.

For a long time the Mauritian government's main aim has been to provide access to schools to the largest number and there has even been legislation to ensure that all our children should be schooled at least up to the age of twelve as schooling in the primary school has been made compulsory since 1991 and the Ministry of Education is even planning to make schooling compulsory up to the age of 16.

The question which we can ask ourselves is whether compulsory schooling will ensure that all pupils will be successful in school and that the full development of the child in its physical, emotional and cognitive aspects have been achieved.

In this part of the report the role of and the degree of involvement of the State in catering for the needs of the child in its different stages of development is going to be analysed. Thus, we are going to get an insight into the quality of the formal education which is being dispensed to the child in three stages of the early development of the child. These stages are what is the official delimitation of the stages of formal education in Mauritius and they are:

1. The 0-3 years old or the nursery stage
2. The 4-5 years old or the pre-primary stage
3. The 5-12 years old or the primary school stage

Each section will be described and analysed critically.

## Chapter 12

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (0-3 years old)

This section of the report will concentrate mainly on the quality of education received by the Mauritian child in early childhood which is subdivided into two groups: the 0 -3 years group , and the 3 –5 years group.

Bennett (2000) explains the allocation of responsibilities for the early development of the child thus:

*“Early development and education in Mauritius is organised in two separate systems covering two distinct phases. The infant/toddler period is referred to as “child care”, and the second from 3-5 years is referred to officially as “pre-primary education”. Auspices for the sector are divided between the MWRCDFW(Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare) and the Ministry of education.”*

#### **The importance of education in the early years:**

The first six years of a child’s life is the most important part of his life in terms of learning as he/she learns at a rapid pace large amounts of knowledge, skills and attitudes which will be the foundation of his future life as an adult. In this big adventure of learning, the quality of the child’s learning will depend to a large extent on the social environment which will help him/her to develop optimally. The social environment will provide him with the stimuli to awaken his natural curiosity and motivation to learn.

The stimuli to enhance his learning will come primarily from his home environment and also from his pre-primary schooling. His home environment has been dealt with in another part of this report and here we shall deal with the quality of pre-primary schooling in Mauritius.

The importance of the quality of learning in these early years is highlighted by Lerner :

*“Research from several disciplines confirms what early children educators have long observed – that the early years of life for establishing a lifelong foundation for learning. If the opportunity for children to develop intellectually and emotionally during these critical years is missed, precious learning time is lost forever” (Lerner J :252)*

### The children (0-3years) and childcare:

The official statistics do not indicate the exact number of children within the 0 -3 group but the following figures from the CSO can give us an indication of the trend for that group in 2002:

Table 11 Estimated resident population by age-group and sex – Republic of Mauritius, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2002

Age Groups (Years)	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2002			
	Male	Female	Both Sexes	
			Number	%
0	9,842	9,524	19366	1.6
1-4	40,153	38,500	78,653	6.5
Total	49, 995	48,024	98,019	8.1

With economic development, more and more mothers are joining the workforce and they have to leave their very young children into the care of others who may be members of the family but also caregivers in “crèche”.

As families are increasingly becoming of the nuclear type, working mothers have no alternative but to have recourse to paid caregivers who may be neighbours who accept to take care of the baby for a minimal fee or who may be those working as caregivers in the registered “crèches”. The following figures, obtained from the “Continuous multi-purpose house survey” give us an idea of the situation in terms of child care in the absence of working mothers in 1999:

Table 12- Child Care in 1999

<b>Babies looked after by</b>	<b>%</b>
Grand parents	50.9
Relatives without payment	13.9
Paid child minder	12.3
Nursery	16.5
Other	6.4
Total	100.0

These figures show that about 35% of infants whose mothers are working outside the home, are being looked after by people other than the grandparents and close relatives.

The State is not directly concerned with child minding for the infants aged between 3 months to 3 years old. The day-care centres are mostly under the control of private individuals. The only non-private nurseries/day-care centres are under the control of the municipal councils, that is, that of Port Louis (5 centres), Quatre Bornes (1 centre) and Beau Bassin –Rose Hill (1 centre at Chebel).

#### Types of child-minding:

Child minding by individuals and organisations other than members of the family is being done in three ways which are officially acknowledged. They are:

- home-based
- centre-based
- attached to a pre-school

The home-based child minding consists mainly of paid child-minders who look after the infant in their home.

The centre-based child-minding consist of a centre which has all the infrastructural conditions to be called a day-care centre. It has a manager as well as child minders and helpers.

Sometimes these centres are attached to a pre-primary school and they act as feeders to that school.

The formal centres, which were registered with the Ministry of WRCDFW in December 2003, care for only about 1674 infants.

#### **The nature of child-minding in the “Creches”:**

There are different types of contract between parents and day-care centres about feeding, bathing and other hygienic care of the infants. There are “creches” where the parents are told to bring the food of the children. The parents of each infant bring food which are appropriate to the age of the child. For example, tins of milk are brought for the babies, while for the older infants, the parents bring the cereals or rice and vegetable “purées” and the food is simply heated before being given to

the children. This upper middle class mother explains the feeding pattern at the day care centre where she send her child:

***Mais pour la nourriture comment ils font à la garderie ?***

- *Je prepare son dejeuner, enfin son lait, son jus, ses biscuits et tout.*

***Le lait aussi ?***

- *Oui.*

***On ne prepare pas la bas ?***

- *Non, c'est à dire que j'envois dans une petite boite le lait en poudre avec mon gobelet d'eau. Donc, eux ils melangent...*

***Mais là il est un p'tit peu plus grand. Quel age il a ?***

- *Il a 20 mois.*

***Mais c'est toujours pareil, c'est vous qui preparez tout ?***

- *Oui, oui. Ah bein peut-etre que, je sais pas exactement quand, peut-etre dans un an ou quoi j'enverrai du pain ou autre à dejeuner je ne sais pas.*

***Ca leur arrive de lui donner autre chose que ce que vous lui avez donnez ?***

- *Bon eventuellement, je sais qu'à l'heure du biscuit, disons dans la matinée il y a d'autres enfants. Peut-etre l'un prend le biscuit de l'autre eventuellement. Mais en principe c'est ce que j'envois.*

***Mais ils ne vont pas prendre sur eux-meme pour donner... ?***

- *Non, non pas vraiment. Je sais qu'ils proposent eventuellement des yaourt, à ce moment là on paye quelque chose.*

On the other hand there are day care centres which do not accept the parents food but provide their own prepared food which they claim is scientifically prepared according to the nutritional needs of the different children while at the same time respecting the cultural habits of the families. This manager of a day-care centre explains her feeding programme:

***Mais dans crèches c'est vous-même qui donnez à manger aux enfants ?***

- *Oui, chez nous nous donnons à manger depuis notre création. Tous les parents optent parceque nous avons un programme nutritionnel que nous leurs proposons et donc ils adhèrent à notre proposition, les enfants sont nourris avec nous même.*

***Mais vous avez des non catholiques aussi ?***

- *Bien sûr, nous avons des enfants de toutes cultures et nous respectons la culture. Nous ne donnons pas par exemple le porc, le bœuf tout ça. Nous donnons les œufs, les poissons, le poulet et la viande d'agneau. Mais jamais d'autre nourriture que les parents ne consomment pas. Comme ils sont des enfants, ils jouent ensemble, ils se partagent les repas, on explique bien tout ça aux parents. Les enfants ont une nourriture équilibrée en qualité, en quantité mais nous respectons les cultures des enfants.*

On the other hand the day care centres do not give baths to the babies in the morning. This is performed by the mother before bringing the baby to the centre but during the day the infants are cleaned when they have soiled themselves :



**Mais quand il s'agit des bains....**

- Oui, je ne donne pas le bain. J'explique aux parents dès le départ pourquoi c'est la maman ou le papa..... pourquoi c'est important qu'ils reçoivent leurs bains à la maison. Mais nous donnons les soins d'hygiène, si l'enfant a fait tata ou pipi on le lave.

**Care during sickness :**

In day-care centres which are well –equipped and with adequately trained personnel, it would seem that the infants are given elaborate care when they are sick and when the need arises the doctor attached to the centre is called in to take care of the child :

**Mais quand ils sont malades ?**

- S'ils sont malades avec nous par exemple, l'enfant a une fièvre, nous lui donnons les premiers soins. On lui donne un bain, on lui met des compresses, on fait appel à ses parents. Maintenant si l'enfant a une convulsion, c'est déjà arrivé, là nous donnons les soins parceque nous avons appris comment soigner l'enfant convulsif. Mais si l'enfant est malade à la maison, là les parents ne l'emmènent pas parcequ'il y a eu un accord.

**Mais s'il y a un cas grave tout d'un coup, vous faites appel à un médecin ?**

- Oui, nous avons notre médecin qui est à coté de notre crèche, qui vient régulièrement, donc on fait appel à lui si c'est grave.

For mild sicknesses, medicines like the panadol syrup are kept handy and it is administered with the permission of parents :

**Mais vous avez des médicaments ?**

- Nous avons des médicaments, sauf si les parents nous donnent l'autorisation. Par exemple si en cas de fièvre l'enfant peut prendre un panadol sirop, on peut lui donner. Les parents doivent signer un accord avec nous. Nous ne donnons aucun médicament sans l'avis des parents.

In other «creches », nothing is administered to the children before having sought the permission and approval of the parents :

**Mais ici, si les enfants sont malades qu'est-ce que vous faites ?**

On appelle les parents. Parce que d'après les cours qu'on a pris, on a dit que quand les enfants sont malades on doit contacter leurs parents avant. Après on a un p'tit soin à donner, un p'tit panadol tout ça jusqu'à ce que les parents arrivent. Mais on n'a pas le droit de garder quand un enfant est malade

The infants are brought to the day care centres with a bag full of the items of clothing, food and medicine and toiletries so they do not lack of anything :

**Mais les parents apportent leurs couches ?**

Oui, chaque enfant apporte ses couches.

**Ça veut dire que tous les matins les parents apportent l'enfant avec tout ce dont il aura besoin ?**

Oui, leurs vêtements pour une semaine.

**Ah bon, les vêtements pour une semaine ?**

Oui, pour une semaine. Tout le monde. Ils apportent leurs paniers de déjeuner d'un coté et puis leurs vêtements pour une semaine.

**Mais ils quittent le sac là ?**

Oui. Leur poudre vous voyez, il y a un p'tit sac à l'intérieur. On met tout dedans. Vous avez leurs serviettes, leurs couches, ses vêtements pour une semaine. Donc on ne va pas être embarrassé comme si, s'ils ont fait pipi tout ça.

**Mais est-ce que vous achetez d'autres provisions ? Vous avez du lait en réserve ?**

*Non, parce que dès que c'est fini, une semaine avant on fait les parents savoir pour apporter.*

It is a common occurrence to see working class mothers carrying their babies in their arms with a big bag full of the babies needs for the day on their back, every morning. Middle class mothers and fathers take their babies and infants by car to the "creches".

**The physical and cognitive development of infants:**

The day-care centres are not supposed to take care of only the basic needs of the infant but also of the physical and cognitive development through specific exercises which the well trained caregiver is supposed to engage the child in. The child-minder of long experience explains the way she sees to the all round development of the baby:

**Quelles sont les activités que vous avez pour l'éveil ?**

- *Comme je vous dis nous travaillons sur le développement de l'enfant. Alors par exemple, tout bébé, nous travaillons surtout sur l'autonomie dans les mouvements. Parcequ'un bébé a besoin d'acquérir ses capacités motrices tout seul, en respectant les lois physiologiques de son développement. Et à ce niveau là nous avons beaucoup de matériels qui stimulent l'enfant vers le mouvement. Et l'enfant fait pas mal de mouvement, tourner, retourner, se décontracter, se relaxer tout seul, par apport aux objets qu'il y a autour de lui. Et l'auxiliaire est là pour encadrer le bébé ou l'enfant. Des fois par la parole, en faisant comprendre à l'enfant qu'elle est là, de présence, de qualité humaine et en même temps l'enfant est en sécurité, l'enfant agit. Donc nous ne mettons pas l'enfant dans des situations s'il n'a pas encore acquis le control de son corps. Au fur et à mesure qu'il acquit ce control, à ce moment nous renforçons les capacités d'éveil par d'autres matériels. Par exemple nous avons des gros jeux moteurs où l'enfant peut s'allonger ou s'agripper, bouger. Nous avons aussi des gros doudous, vous mettez l'enfant dedans et il contemple son extérieur, ça veut dire qu'il dissocie son corps de l'espace, il découvre ce qui se passe autour de lui. Nous ramenons le plafond vers lui en mettant par exemple des tissus colorés pour qu'il puisse voir parceque c'est fatigant tout le temps de lever les yeux comme ça et de voir tout, haut. Alors on rabaisse le plafond pour le bébé pour lui donner plus de plaisir de voir, de regarder. Donc il n'a pas de problème sur le plan de la tonicité musculaire parcequ'il n'a pas besoin de faire de gros efforts pour se raidir. Tout ça fait partie de l'éveil. Et puis nous avons aussi des matériels qui exercent l'appréhension, qui permet à l'enfant s'aller vers l'approche et la saisie, d'attraper des objets, de regarder, de jeter, de toucher, de palper, de manipuler tout ça. Alors ça les aide dans leur développement et aussi à l'éveil de la motricité, coordonner les mouvements des yeux, coordonner les mouvements des mains, savoir discriminer les sons en secouant ou en jetant. Nous avons de gros livres aussi que les enfants peuvent attraper, regarder.*

**Ils lisent ?**

*Oui, pour les bébés nous avons des livres en plastique, c'est à leur portée, c'est assez grand, léger, souple, ils peuvent toucher, regarder et puis mettre dans la bouche parcequ'ils ont besoin de faire connaissance avec l'extérieur. La bouche leur apprend aussi de quoi est fait leur environnement et puis nous avons aussi des musiques, des cassettes où ils peuvent écouter des petites comptines, juste pour leur apprendre à éveiller leur curiosité auditive. Et puis il y a l'interaction avec le bébé. Par exemple quand on le change, on lui parle, on lui dit fait, ça éveille aussi son esprit, sa curiosité. Donc on verbalise toutes les actions.*

The number of day-care centres which are taking care of the “éveil” of the infant is difficult to discover and has yet to be researched.

There are home-based centres which are being run on purely commercial lines as the « nursery » is merely a place for child-minding of children of different age-groups . This transcript of the interview of a helper in such a kind of « creche » informs us about the situation and supports the affirmations of the above informant about the mixing of the age-groups in some nurseries :

**Combien d'enfants vous avez ?**

*Disons ici dans la journée il y a six. Il y a deux qui ne sont pas venus aujourd'hui.*

**C'est quel âge ?**

*On a de 16 mois à deux ans et demi. Peut-être l'année prochaine on aura un bébé de trois mois.*

**Mais la garderie c'est pour combien d'enfants ?**

*Disons que la dame prend que pour le nombre de bers qu'elle a. Il y a des grands les après-midi, les grands de madame D....(Pre-primary school) viennent là. Alors ils se reposent dans le parc. Je crois qu'il y a six à cinq. Mais tous les jours ce ne sont pas les six qui viennent à la garderie. Il y a un garçon, ses parents travaillent tôt une semaine, donc il ne vient pas quand son papa travaille tôt. A ce moment là il retourne à la maison directement. Mais sinon il vient là.*

In the above case, a former garage, attached to the owner's house, has been converted into a « creche ».

### The Care-givers:

The quality of care being dispensed to the babies and infants in our day-care centres will depend to a large extent upon the skills and level of education and training of the care-givers.

Officially there are about 430 care givers in the various centres and 140 of them are the managers though some 20 of those managers only manage without getting involved in child minding.

The basic qualifications of those people range from Form II to Form V and very few have studied up to Form VI. The average qualification of care givers in that sector is that of Forms III and IV. There are some who have studied only up to standard VI but who have been so long in the sector that they have become very knowledgeable about the caring of infants. At the time of their recruitment, they were not expected to have had any training in child minding before seeking employment as care givers for infants. The situation has changed now as child

minders are expected to follow some form of training and they are expected to possess at least a basic academic qualification of up to form IV as explained by a manager of a DCC:

- *Alors pour travailler en crèche il faut quand même avoir une connaissance académique jusqu'à la Form 4, parceque quand même il faut comprendre la psychologie de l'enfant. Et en même temps il y a aussi tout un aspect nutritionnel qui est très important parceque pour les jeunes enfants, c'est la base même de leur développement. Savoir quoi leur donner comme nourriture pour qu'ils puissent se développer sur le plan physiologique et physique. Et comme c'est un besoin fondamental, c'est très important. (interview of key informant)*

### **The Role of the State in the ECD sector:**

The involvement of the Mauritian State in the 0-3 group is of recent date and concerns mainly the control and regulation of those centres, the training of the care-givers ,parenting education and recently the furnishing and equipping of newly set-up day-care centres.

#### **Control of the day-care centres by the State:**

With the increasing number of day-care centres, there was an urgent need to regulate the ECD sector to ensure that the children are being taken care of by the appropriate people in the proper environment. The Ministry which is concerned mainly with this sector is the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare (MWRCDFW).

That ministry's involvement in the ECD sector became more pronounced after two surveys were carried out in that sector: one by UNICEF consultants and one financed by the World Bank. The findings of these surveys fueled the Government's growing concern for that sector. As a result of those surveys, an ECD Policy Paper for the 0-3 year old, which involved all the stake holders was prepared, approved and published by the government in 1998 and since 1999, the ECD Action plan is being implemented. According to officers of the MWRCDFW, six of the seven policy statements of the ECD Policy Paper (0-3 years) have been achieved and the remaining one, concerning children with special needs, is being taken care of.

A “Child Care Advisory Committee” involving all stakeholders from various Ministries, NGO’s, and the private sector, was set up to regulate the sector and “The Institutions for Welfare and Protection of Children Regulation 2000” under the Child Protection Act, was produced and published. These regulations have started to be applied to all day-care centres as from 2001.

To date, only 169 nurseries/day care centres have received a certificate of registration from the Ministry of WRCDFW, though 200 applied for registration. Only those which were considered as satisfying the requirements and norms of “Regulations 2000” have been registered. Those DCCs not complying with the regulations 2000 are given a delay of three months to upgrade. After the delay, if the Ministry’s officers find that no efforts are being made to improve conditions at the DCC, the latter are requested to close down as they are not respecting the Regulations 2000 and the rights of the child. It must be pointed out that there are nurseries (23) which are closing down on their own initiative due to a lack of clients with the increasing number of mothers who are losing their jobs through the closing down of factories.

These centres are not all of the same standard according to welfare officers who have been visiting all those “creches”.

There may be about 20 which are of a very high standard in terms of infrastructure and the type of pedagogy dispensed and the fees are also very high, ranging from Rs 2,000 to Rs 3, 500. It is generally agreed among parents and welfare officers that the higher the price the better the conditions for the children’s welfare. With such prices, it is not surprising that only the upper middle class and middle class parents can afford these high quality “Creches” for their children.

The rest of the registered day-care centres can be considered as of average quality. They do possess the minimum of all the conditions stipulated in the regulations.

In spite of the existing regulations, there are still irregular nurseries, locally called “*creches marron*” which are operating. These are the “creches” which do not meet the requirements of the Regulations as the infants are being cared for in poor

hygienic conditions. Officially there are only 10 of those which have been reported by the public or by other registered nurseries. These have been asked to close down by the authorities.

There are other individuals who may be operating illegally by taking care of one or two babies without the knowledge of the authorities and even if these cases are reported, it is difficult to take action as these people pretend that they are taking care of relatives. Very often some working mothers have been heard to say that they leave their infant in the care of “*ene madame dans l’endroit*” who is being paid for this service. The following transcript of an interview of a key informant with a long experience in early childhood care -giving gives us an idea of the situation in some “creches”:

***Vous connaissez les autres types de crèches. Mais vous pouvez me donner une catégorisation des types de crèches que vous pouvez avoir ?***

*Oui, nous avons des crèches qui sont de simples garderies, qui n’assurent pas l’éveil des enfants. Les enfants sont là, ils sont libres de bouger, de jouer. Ils sont de tout age, ils sont mélangés. Il n’y a pas un environnement ambiant pour mettre un enfant.... Disons un bébé, il a besoin d’un cadre pour lui. Mais les enfants sont souvent mélangés entre eux même. Vous avez des crèches comme ça qui fonctionnent...rien que... bon on garde l’enfant parceque les parents ont besoin d’aller travailler.*

***Et les conditions physiques ?***

➤ *Il y a beaucoup de problèmes. Il y a beaucoup de crèches qui laissent à désirer parcequ’ils le font dans leur maison ou bien ils louent une petite maison où ils font cela. Ils ont une petite espace très restreinte pour l’enfant, parfois il n’y a pas assez de lumière, pas assez d’aération. Et puis on fait aussi beaucoup de forcing chez les enfants, par exemple je peux vous dire, moi j’ai vu de mes yeux des bébés de 7-8 mois s’asseoir sur le pot, étalés contre le mur. Et vous pouvez voir au moins une dizaine de bébé sur les pot. J’ai trouvé ça très dur, parceque d’ailleurs l’enfant n’a pas encore acquis le control de son corps et qui est un problème énorme, il ne sait pas trop ce qu’il élimine ou pas à cet age là. Il n’a pas une notion là. Donc on est entrain de faire la précocité dans l’apprentissage et qui est un danger pour le développement du cerveau. Moi j’ai vu ça et c’est vraiment catastrophique. Et je peux vous dire qu’il y a des repas où on peut par exemple donne à manger à des enfants qui ne répondent pas à leur age. Par exemple on peut donner du riz à un enfant qui n’est pas en age de manger le riz. On peut lui donner des vermicelles, mine Appollo, n’importe quoi !*

It must be pointed out that the control of the centres and homes where child minding is being carried out, is being exercised in very difficult conditions as this control is being carried out by only 1 child welfare officers and three ECD Resource Persons. It would seem that the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of WRCD FW is highly understaffed for such an important enterprise, which is that of taking care of the rights and welfare of the children of the Republic. In spite of those

difficulties the officers of the MWRCDFW seem to be doing their work regularly as testified by a manager of a day-care centre:

- *“Normalement ils viennent une fois par mois, ils viennent visiter les crèches, voir si les normes sont respectées, par exemple l’hygiène, la manière de préparer la nourriture tout ça. Et puis nous avons les inspecteurs sanitaires aussi du Ministère de la santé qui viennent voir si les normes sont respectées parcequ’il y a des mesures d’hygiène très importantes qu’il faut prendre pour les jeunes enfants.*

***Ils viennent régulièrement ?***

- *Oui, ils peuvent venir comme ça ! Ils ne vous disent pas, ils débarquent comme ça ! Presque tous les mois des fois.*
- 

### **The Ministry of WRCDFW and furnishing of DCCs**

Apart from controlling the private DCCs, the Ministry of WRCDFW has also helped in the setting up of day-care centres (DCCs) in different regions of the island such as at Surinam, Plaine- ded Papayes, Riviere du Rempart, La Tour Koenig, Quartier Militaire and Sainte Croix. The Ministry has financed the furnishing and the purchase of equipment and toys but the running and management of the DCCs were under the responsibility of NGOs namely MFPA and MAPBIN under terms and conditions agreed between the ministry and the NGO’s. Unfortunately the DCC’s at Surinam, Plaine des Papayes and Riviere du Rempart have had to close down because with the closing down of some industries, the mothers had time to take care of their children and at the same time could not afford to pay for the DCC.

Future Plans of the Ministry of WRCDFW in collaboration with NGO’s in terms of infant care :

The ministry of WRCDFW will help in the furnishing and buying of educational equipment and toys for the following day-care centres:

- At Dubreuil village in October 2004, within the premises of the multi-purpose complex built by the NGO “*Anou Dibout Ensam*”. The ministry will also help with the training of the personnel, and the organisation and setting up of the DCC though the “*Association Forces Vives*” will take charge of the running and management of the DCC.
- At Richlieu in December 2004, though a number of other organisations will be directly involved also. The NHDC will put two buildings in Cité Flamboyant/ Richelieu at the disposal of the ministry, IFAD and MWRCDFW will fund 80% of

the renovation work and the purchase of equipment and the Women's association of Cité Flamboyant will be running and managing the DCC.

- At Cité Florida- Baie du Tombeau, in January 2005. Here again the NGO's will also be involved. "Anou Dibout Ensam " will finance the construction of the DCC and the MFPA will take charge of the running and management of the DCC.

### **The training of child minders:**

In the field of training of child minders, the private sector, more especially the Ecoles Menageres" which was later to be known as "Bethleem", was the pioneer in the field. Bethleem started to run its own training courses since 1979, that is, well before the government. The development of training is explained by one of the responsible persons at Bethleem:

*.....Nous avons aussi l'école de formation. Comme je vous ai dit ce n'est pas possible de faire la crèche sans la formation, donc nos premiers auxiliaires qui ont démarré avec nous étaient nos propres élèves. Nous les avons formé sur le plan de la psychopédagogie du jeune enfant. Les cours composaient de la psychologie du développement, la pédagogie de l'éveil.*

#### **Qui faisait ces cours ?**

- *A l'époque il y avait M.....qui était avec nous parceque l'UNISEF lui avait donné une bourse pour aller suivre des cours en puériculture, parcequ'il fallait quand même avoir cette notion pour initier les auxiliaires. Et puis nous avions aussi l'aide de la MIE, du Ministère de l'Education qui envoyait de temps en temps des personnes pour nous aider pour la formation. Donc l'école était bien partie, le Ministère de l'Education nous donnait un budget de fonctionnement pour une année, c'est-à-dire pour soutenir les filles qui venaient suivre des cours.*

#### **Les cours se passaient comment ? C'étaient des cours réguliers ?**

- *Oui les cours, c'était tous les jours pendant toute la semaine.*

#### **Combien d'étudiants vous aviez ?**

- *Au début, nous avions 20 élèves. Et ça dure une année.*

#### **Quand est-ce que vous avez commencé ?**

- *En 1979, en même temps que la crèche.*

#### **Une vingtaine d'élèves en formation. C'est-à-dire la formation pour la crèche et l'école maternelle.**

*Oui, pour les deux.....*

With the growing number of people being involved in child care, whether as paid child minders or working in nurseries, the State, through the ECD section of the CDU (MWRCDFW), became conscious of its responsibility to see to it that those child minders were properly trained in order to dispense quality care to the babies, infants and toddlers. The authorities have come to realise that leaving very young



children in the hands of unskilled and ignorant child minders may be considered as putting them at risk.

Since 1995, when two officers of the Ministry of Education benefited from scholarships to participate in a UNESCO/UNICEF sponsored ECD training programme for Sub-Saharan African countries, training courses of core trainers in that sector were organised and in the end 150 caregivers received training in ECD. Other initiatives taken in the ECD sector since 1997:

- A trainers' guide has been prepared and then reviewed
- Parental education programmes were carried out
- Panel of writers to prepare ECD Programme guidelines (0-3 years) and Child Care Accreditation Handbook (0-3 years old) was set up.

The "Child Care Advisory Committee" has pointed out that as many trained caregivers have left the sector, training courses in ECD should be re-organised for the newly recruited caregivers who were untrained. Therefore a "Basic Course on Early Childhood Care and Development" has been initiated by the Ministry and from March to September 2004, 350 caregivers were trained. Courses have been run in the following Women centres: Triolet (32), Abercombie(31), Rose Hill(37), Dubreuil(3), Floreal (38), Batimaraïs (11) and Rodrigues (6). A new cohort of 166 has again been selected to follow the course.

It would seem that there are some caregivers of nurseries have been able to follow the Certificate of Proficiency in Pre-Primary Education course run this year by the MIE/MCA, together with the pre-school teachers. The fact that a big number of child minders who applied for that Proficiency course failed the entry exams is proof of their very low academic standard.

In spite of these efforts to train the human resources for child-minding, It would seem that, though large numbers have received some form of training in the past, many leave the sector because of low remuneration. The result is that some managers are employing child - minders without any training in Early Childhood Development though the Regulations 2000 stipulates that training in ECD is compulsory. Where such cases are identified by the Ministry's officers during their

regular visits, the non-trained caregivers are advised to follow the basic course on ECCD (0-3yrs) organised by MWRCDFW, free of charge.

Sensitisation programmes in ECD were also organised for managers/care givers of day care centres.

It must be pointed out here that training of caregivers does not concern too much those in the informal sector, that is, those working in the child's home. According to the UNICEF report of 1998 (p.35), about 60% of child-minders in the informal sector have never received any training and they form the bigger proportion of caregivers for infants

### **Parenting Courses:**

Since the most important caregivers remain the parents, the Ministry as well as Bethlehem have also been running parenting programmes in early child care for parents. The Ministry of WRCDFW started to run training programmes for parents in various regions throughout the island during the period 2000 to 2002. A total of 100 workshops were organised using the social welfare centres, the community centres and women centres as venues.

These workshops led to demand from the parents for courses in how to deal with adolescence and resulted in courses in child development from 0 to 18 years for parents during the period March 2003 to June 2004. These workshops, sixty in total, four per school were held in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, in 15 ZEP schools on Saturday mornings. An average of about 30 parents turned up in each locality for these workshops. The facilitators who were involved in those sixty workshops included psychologists from the MIE and the MOESR, National ECD trainers, social workers, and officers of MWRCDFW and of officers of the Family Protection Unit.

This means that only about 500 needy parents were concerned with these training programmes.

### **ECD Programme Guidelines (0-3 years):**

In its efforts to improve the condition of the child of the 0 to 3 years group, in 2003, the MWRCDFW produced an “ECD Programme Guidelines Handbook” for that age group. It is hoped that the care-givers would be using this publication to ensure the physical, cognitive social and emotional development of those infants. This is a highly laudable initiative but these guidelines are written in English and in a rather technical jargon which makes one skeptical about its use by the care-givers whose level of education mostly is not more than a form V level and very often even lower. Hopefully the workshops organised by the Ministry for the manager on the effective utilisation of this handbook, will lessen the problem as the managers are being asked to explain to their personnel in the meantime on how to use the handbook. It would seem that as from next year, workshops will be organised to cater for this issue as all caregivers will have the chance to participate in the workshops.

### **Accreditation of Child Care Centres:**

In order to encourage the improvement of the quality of childcare in Mauritius, the MWRCDFW has set up the Childcare Accreditation Bureau in January 2001. This Bureau is to ensure that childcare institutions are providing services which meet the 30 principles with regard to established quality indicators. These indicators are spelt out in the “Accreditation of Child Care Centres in Mauritius Handbook (0-3 years)”. It is hoped that the indicators in the handbook will guide the caregivers in the formal sector towards improving their services to the infants and their parents.

### **Suggestions for Improvement:**

The State through the Ministry of WRCDFW has set up a very good framework for the control of the running of day –care centres but this is not enough. There is a high demand for those day-care centres as more mothers are working outside the home. Most day-care centres are privately owned and apart from a few of very good standard, there are numerous DCC where conditions leave much to be desired. Therefore the following measures have been suggested:

Some Recommendations for the ECD Sector:

- **A Higher proportion of the MWRCFW resources should be devoted to the care of the 0-3 infants**
- **Day-care centres should be set up by the MWRCDFW in order to have centres of a high standard and the services should be free for low-income families.**
- **The number of child welfare officers should be increased considerably in order to be more effective in the control of the DCCs.**
- **The recruited officers in the early childhood sector of the Ministry should receive intensive training in matters concerning early childhood and decision -making.**
- **The parenting Programmes should take into consideration the local context so that scientific knowledge at the basis of all training programmes do not clash with cultural norms and practices.**

## Chapter 13

### Early Childhood (3-5 years old): Pre - Primary Education

Pre-primary schooling is to a large extent in the hands of the private sector and the role of the State is very limited and its involvement in that sector is very recent. Government expenditure in the p.p. sector for the 2002 -2003 budget was Rs 68 million, that is 1.6% of the budget allocated to education in general, but it is a great improvement when compared to 1995/96 when the State disbursed only Rs 6 million for that sector.

This absence in the sector does not mean that the Government was not aware of the importance of developing pre-primary education in Mauritius: Thus we learn of the then government's vision of the pre-primary sector the Education Master Plan:

*"Government's long-term aim is that all children of pre-primary age should attend pre-primary schools in suitable buildings with trained teachers, adequate playing space and using appropriate teaching material. Such schools will counteract inequalities in social conditions by providing an educational base for socially disadvantaged children" (1991)*

With the coming to power of a new government which produced a new Action Plan, the commitment to develop the pre-primary sector of education is also apparent. The "Action Plan" also stated the new government's perception of the importance of the early years in the child's development:

*" It is during these years that the child explores and discovers the essential of living and learning...The child learns through interactions with his/her environment, and family and community are central to these interactions. "*

It was that government's intention to improve access and quality of learning experiences at preschool level.

The intentions of the successive governments were praiseworthy and though many of those intentions were initiated, no government fully achieved their aims in that sector of education. Meanwhile in 2000 a still newer government came to power and things have started moving with the creation of the "Preschool Trust Fund" which is the authority responsible for the management of all preschools run under the responsibility of a primary school's PTA.

## **School Population:**

The age group for this stage of schooling is officially the 3 to 5 years old but in fact the group includes only the three to four year olds as at the age of five most toddlers are joining the primary schools.

In March 2003, there was a total of 37,414 pre-school children in all types of schools on mainland Mauritius while in the island of Rodrigues, there were 1,206 children, making up a total of 38,620 toddlers going to pre-primary schools in the Republic of Mauritius. The distribution of the sexes is more or less the same in both islands, that is, 18,825 boys and 18,589 girls on the mainland and in the island of Rodrigues, the distribution was as follows: 608 boys and 598 girls. There may be a good number of children who are not being sent to a pre-school by their parents in the Republic. The following statistics for the year 2002 when the last population census took place:

**Table 13 Population Statistics for the 3-5 years old**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Male popn.</b>	<b>Female popn.</b>	<b>Total population in 2002</b>	<b>Enrolment in Pre-primary school population</b>
3	9,891	9,448	19,339	14,120
4	9,940	9,610	19,550	16,287
5	9,955	9,882	19,837	6,575 (most of the others are in primary schools)

If we consider only the 3 and 4 years old, it would mean that in 2002, some 500 of the 3 years old and some 3000 of the 4 years old were not in the formal schooling system.

## **The Schools:**

According to the CSO's Digest of Educational Statistics, in 2003, there were 1092 buildings or places where pre-primary schooling was being dispensed in the Republic of Mauritius , with 1,061 on mainland Mauritius and 31 in the island of Rodrigues. Out of these, only 780 were buildings which were solely used as a school, 208 of these "schools" and were part of a residence and 104 were found in structures used for other purposes. In terms of buildings, this means that there are three categories of pre-primary schools as only the ones called "school" only have fulfilled the criteria to be called a school.

The district with the largest number of P.P.schools is the district of Plaine Wilhems with 315 of all categories (196:school only, 79: partly residential, 40:other purposes). According to reports, it would be in this district that there would be the oldest established pre-schools and a greater number of the high standard schools. The following table gives us an idea of the number of pre-primary institutions and the number of children enrolled in those schools in 2003 in the Republic of Mauritius:

**Table 14- Number of pre-primary Institutions in each district and Enrolment**

District	No of pre-primary institutions	Total enrolment of 3-5 year old toddlers
Port Louis	147	5631
Pamplemousses	102	3,295
Riviere du Rempart	104	3527
Flacq	130	4,600
Grand Port	110	3,631
Savanne	65	2,079
Plaines Wilhems	315	11,524
Moka	54	1,956
Black River	34	1,171
Island of Mauritius	1,061	37,414
Island of Rodrigues	31	1,206
Republic of Mauritius	1,092	38,620

Many of these schools may not be of the standard required by the authorities but according to Bennett (2000),:

*“Although concerns about buildings and amenities are expressed in several reports, most buildings now conform, it seems, with the regulations. 20 sub-standard pre-schools were refurbished and provided with teaching materials, books, furniture and basic equipment.”(p.29)*

In some of the buildings the issue of health and safety may be a cause for concern. According to a parent who has visited several schools, there are schools which are housed in old wooden buildings with very few doors and in case of a fire this may be a source of danger for the children. These schools may be of a high standard in terms of equipment and yet some of them may be places which are sources of danger for children.

The teacher/ pupil ratio in Mauritius is 16 while in Rodrigues, it was 17, but the teacher /pupil ratio will vary from school to school depending upon the number of children accepted in each class of those different types of schools. The schools

which demand high fees are generally of a high standard and so do not allow for crowded classrooms.

### **Types of ownership:**

There are three types of schools in terms of ownership:

1. The Pre-School Trust Fund schools which include "Government" Schools and Roman Catholic Schools, numbering at 185, run by the PTA of the primary schools where they are located.
2. The Municipal or village councils Schools
3. The private schools.

The largest number of schools are those of the private types: 820 in Mauritius and 28 in the island of Rodrigues, the municipal or village councils own only 59 and the Pre-School Trust Fund, including the Roman Catholic Schools controls 185 pre-school units, that is, 182 schools in Mauritius and 3 in Rodrigues

### **The "Government" schools:**

The PTA schools make up about 17% of the total number of schools in Mauritius and total enrolment in those pre-school units amount to 6,920. These pre-school units are under the control of the Pre-school Trust Fund and receive help from the private sector through the extension of facilities and by cash donations.

The Government's involvement does not only include subsidising the running of the PTA schools but also subsidising the private schools in the payment of Rs200.per child above the age of 4, each month. These subsidies may be the reason for the increase in the enrolment ratios from 62% to 96%.

Depending on the availability of classroom in the primary school, the pre -primary school unit, sometimes consist of only one room with the amenities while in other schools, such as in Camp Diable Government School or La Gaulette govt. school, a whole block houses the pre-school classes.



In this context, the Ministry of Education is providing the infrastructure while the PTA's of those primary schools, in other words, the community, helps to finance other facilities such as equipment and pay the teaching and non-teaching staff . In those communities where a good proportion of the members are affluent, the p.p classrooms are very well equipped. For example the facilities existing in Camp Diable and La Gaulette are quite impressive.

### **Schools run by the local authorities:**

The local Authorities have set up and run only about 5% of all the pre-primary schools. Most of these schools are to be found in the districts of Port Louis and Plaine Wilhems. The Municipality of Port Louis by itself is running 15 of these schools while the municipalites of BeauBassin/RoseHill ,Vacoas/Phoenix and Curepipe run 24 schools in Plaine Wilhems. In the other districts, the pre schools are run by village councils and there are very few of them, with the district of Grand Port boasting of 12 schools while the other districts have only one or two schools each. These figures gives an idea of the importance attached by local authorities to the education of the pre school child. In these places, local communities rely mainly on the private sector to educate their very young.

The urban schools are usually very well equipped and the staff are trained.

### **Private Schools:**

The private sector own and run about 77% of all pre-primary schools.

There are different categories of private schools. They range from the very poor to the very posh with intermediate types in between.

The total number of children enrolled in both the private schools and the municipal schools amount to 31,700 children in the Republic of Mauritius.

### **Categories of school (in terms of quality)**

The type of ownership does not really give an indication of the quality of teaching and learning in those schools.

Pre-primary schools in Mauritius can be classified into three types:

1. The sub-standard school
2. The average schools
3. The high standard schools

What will differentiate these schools will be the following:

- The school physical environment
- The pedagogical equipment
- The number of personnel (in terms of helpers)
- The teacher/pupil ratio
- The quality of the teaching staff in term of the length and quality of training
- The curriculum adopted
- The type of pedagogy in use

All these factors together contribute towards the all-round development of the child, that is provide the opportunity for play (psychomotor), creativity, cognitive and affective development. If even one of the above criteria is of a low standard or is missing from the school, the children attending the school will be disadvantaged.

### **The sub-standard schools:**

These schools are characterised by a lack of space, poor pedagogical equipment a high teacher /pupil ratio, poorly trained teachers, a curriculum which is a mere collection of items without a philosophy and teaching may be highly teacher-centered. These schools are mostly of private ownership and are to be found in the disadvantaged areas, that is, in the poor suburbs of the big towns like Port Louis and in certain rural areas. Most of these schools may not be registered schools though they are allowed to operate. There are very few of these pre-primary schools of low standard which have been officially registered.

These poor quality schools have been described by the UNICEF report 1998:

*“ Many of these schools are housed in sub-standard buildings with inappropriate and insufficient furniture and inadequate educational tools. “(p. 37)*

In some cases it has been reported that garages have been converted into a pre-primary classroom and the facilities expected for a P.P. classroom are barely available.

According to some key informants who have been interviewed, there may be a good number of private schools which do not satisfy the conditions to be registered as pre-primary schools but are allowed to operate all the same even if the conditions are far from being conducive to learning;

*“ Officiellement il y a a-peu pres 1100 écoles à Maurice mais il y a au moins 300 qui fonctionnent sans l'enregistrement. Mais on les tolère.*

***Mais dans quelles conditions sont ces 300 écoles ?***

*Il faut voir ! Ils entassent les enfants dans les cuisines, dans les salons. L'autre jour ma femme et moi, on est entré dans un petit chemin, on voit une maison en roche et puis nous avons vu quelques enfants sous une varangue avec une balançoire. Et ils ne se servent pas du tout de cette balançoire, c'est mis comme décoration. ....(pre-primary school manager and key informant)*

The clientele of these schools is mostly children of labourers or factory workers who cannot afford to ask for more facilities as they cannot pay for high fees. Many of these schools consist of one room in a private house whose owner wishes to earn a source of income. Fortunately these schools have considerably diminished in numbers during the last decade. These schools may have been set up with the aim of profit -making but they are all the same providing some form of education to children who other wise would have been deprived of it if these schools did not exist as the State is providing pre school education for only a small proportion of children.

### **The average schools:**

The majority of preschools in Mauritius can be classified as average in terms of quality. These schools include the “Government” schools, the local authorities schools and a large number of private schools. In these schools the quality of the teaching may be of a good standard but there may be some facilities which are missing such as a lack of space for a playground etc. The size of the school in terms of the number of classrooms and the number of children may make a difference in the quality of those schools. A large school population which has to be housed in several classes may mean that the teacher/pupil ratio may be high in some of those schools so that there may be great difficulty to cater for the needs of

so may young children who need individual attention. In such a scenario, the resources may be strained.

In general this category of school

#### The High Standard Schools:

These are schools where the infrastructure and equipment is of a high standard and where the teacher/pupil ratio is rather low. The typical clientele of this type of school is middle class who can afford to pay for the high school fees as this transcript of the interview of a high status pre-school in the Plaines Wilhems district and where English is usually the medium of instruction.

#### ***Et les élèves viennent de quelle région?***

*D'un peu partout. Il y en a beaucoup qui sortent de Port Louis, de Baie du Tombeau, il a P.. de Vallée Des Pretres, il y ade Pamplermousses et puis il y a les Chinois de Port Louis et puis les enfnts de Coromandel, BeauBassin tout ca.*

#### ***Il sont de different groupes ethnique?***

*Oui*

*...*

*La majorité ont de l'argent. Ils sont tres riches.*

#### ***L'ecolage est a combien?***

*C'est a Rs 2,100*

The fact that pupils from places which are very far from the locality where the school is situation, means that there is an important organisation at the level of transport for the pupils. In fact for all these high standard schools, the main clients are the middle class parents who live in different places of Plaine Wilhems and Port Louis and there are informal arrangements between the school's authorities , the parents and the school bus owners to transport the children to and from the school.

The fact that the schools have high standard infrastructure and equipment does not mean that the quality of the learning is really of a very high standard.

In other schools of the same category, the school fees can rise up to Rs 3,500 according to some reports and the affluent parents expect a high standard of service for their toddlers.

What attract the parents to these types of schools is not only the quality of the service but also the medium of instruction which may be either English or French. Middle class parents speak either English or French to their pre-school children at home. Another factor which may attract the middle class parent is the fact that their

children will be in the company of children of the same middle class background with common values and home practices.

## **Facilities offered by the pre-primary schools:**

### **Space available for learning:**

The Ministry of Education's report in 1998 states that less than 36.5% of pre-schools were offering 1 square metre per child. which means that most classes are overcrowded. In a pre-school the amount of space in the learning environment is highly important to assist in the full development of the child.

### **Playground:**

According to official statistics out of a total of 1,092 schools, 1030, that is, around 94% have a playground attached to the school, though a 1998 survey by the Ministry of Education found that "40.6 % of pre-school had no outdoor space at all"(Bennett:29). There needs to be a redefinition of school playground but whatever the definition, it would seem that a good number of the schools do not have a playground, a situation which may not look too bad statistically at the national level but which is detrimental to those pupils who are not enjoying facilities which would have helped in their development . The presence of a playground in the precincts of a pre-primary school is of the utmost importance as this is the place where a lot of play can be organised in order to help in the physical and social development of the child. The gross motor skills of the child are developed through games organised by the teachers and playing together in the school playground also helps the child to develop social skills through participation in the games and sharing. The playground is especially important as the pre-school pedagogy hinges mainly around what has been termed "play pedagogy".

The quality of the games in the school playground is usually enhanced by the presence of equipment such as "balancoire etc, Such aspects of the school playground may be one of the factors which make the difference in the standard of

teaching and learning in a preprimary school. Some of these schools, especially the urban ones possess only a very small playground where there is not enough space for all the pupils to fully enjoy the advantages of the presence of a playground.

## **Libraries**

In 2003, only about 6% of all schools possessed a library. The district which could boast of the greatest number of schools with libraries were Plaines Wilhems, where 15 out of 315 schools (3%) could boast of a library. In Port Louis, only about 7% of schools had a library while in Savanne only 1 school had a school library on a total of 65. This is an indication of the type of pedagogy adopted in most of our pre-primary schools. The importance of book in the education of the pre-school child is explained by Lynne Lawrence, who after having explained how a good book develops the vivid imagination of the child further expounds upon the virtues of the book for the child:

*“Early books can also give children experiences that will help them to move on to more complex forms of books as they mature.....”*

*“It is worth mentioning that children also like the sensations that a book offers .the size of a book is printed on, the illustrations, all these elements play their part.”(p.44)*

Lawrence goes on to explain the role of books in awakening the senses of the child especially the illustrations. Illustrations in the books can inspire the child to create his own drawings.

The importance of a school library in the child’s development is recognised by the Mauritian curriculum of 1997:

*“ Se familiariser avec une bibliothèque: comprendre le classement par rayon;choisir un album, une bande dessinée, demander des renseignements,etc.....Reconnaitre les differents types d’écrits, les supports divers.....”*

*Sur le plan moteur: développer la perception visuelle (reconnaitre les contours, des couleurs, des images, etc. ) le contact de la main avec le livre,etc.” (p21)*

The advantages of the presence of books in the pre-school child’s school environment are numerous and the fact that most of our pre-school children do not have access to appropriate books to further their development is a great loss to them and can have repercussions upon their general progress through the educational system.

### **Audio-visual Materials:**

Compared to the presence of a school library, we can say that our pre-schools are more equipped in terms of audio-visual materials. Ninety-three per cent of all schools can boast of a radio/cassette, but only 40% of all schools possess a TV. set and 35% possess a videocassette player. The district with the largest proportion of TV sets is the district of Plaines Wilhems with 53% of schools possessing a TV set and 46% having a video cassette player among all the schools of the district.

The radio cassette is used for children to listen to and learn children's songs while the TV and Video set is mainly to make children watch children's films and used as pedagogical support. In many schools the TV may not be used as pedagogical support but is present just for the sake of inspection from the authorities. How these audio visual materials are being exploited pedagogically has yet to be researched.

In some of the high standard schools, computers and CD Roms are being used as pedagogical support in an interactive way to the great delight of the children.

### **Teaching Staff:**

The quality of schooling depends to a large extent upon the quality of the teaching staff. In 2003 the teaching staff in the pre-primary sector totaled up to 2,445 on mainland Mauritius and 63 in Rodrigues, that is a total of 2,508 in the Republic of Mauritius. One way to assess the quality of the teaching staff is to examine their academic qualifications. According to educational statistics (CSO), nearly 35% of the teachers for both Mauritius and Rodrigues, do not have a SC and among these there may be people who have not studied up to above form III at the secondary level. The criteria for the recruitment of teaching staff in the pre-primary sector has been regulated and thus we learn that:

*'Unless they have a derogation, teachers are expected to have a general education to the level of the Cambridge School Certificate and a specific training duration not specified) for pre-primary teaching' (Bennett :31)*

Most of the under qualified staff are employed by the private sector whose main aim is profit making and individuals with low qualifications accept low salaries.

The big majority of the teaching staff, that is, about 59% have passed only SC. And only about 5% have passed HSC. The academic qualifications of the teachers give us an indication about the fact the pre-primary sector does not attract the elite. There is also the general perception in Mauritius that the pre-primary school teacher does not have to be highly qualified and any body with the three Rs can do the job.

### Professional Training:

The quality of the teaching staff is also assessed through the standard of the training undergone by the teachers. The Mauritius Institute of Education and some NGO's, have organised teacher -training courses for the pre-primary school sector, these courses have tried to give professional empowerment to large numbers of the teaching staff to a certain extent. Most of the teaching staff have now received some form of formal training: 1,511 teachers have already obtained a Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education and some 900 of these teachers are now following a Teacher's Certificate in Early Childhood Education from the Mauritius Institute of Education and the Mauritius College of the Air, through Distance mode. The rest of the P.P staff who possess the required qualifications is now following the Certificate of Proficiency course. This means that by the end of this year most teachers in that sector would have received their Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education though there is still a small number who are not qualified to follow these award courses offered by the MIE.

It must be pointed out that before 2001 the training programmes in that sector was very patchy without a systematic organisation though the MIE had been providing training to some 325 teachers since 1994 and the MOESR had been providing a number of orientation and training programmes at local levels with the help of foreign experts in the field of pre school education. Thus we learn from a UNICEF report (2002) that:



“Technical assistance mainly from France and India, was a significant catalyst in enhancing teaching skills and encouraging innovations. Moreover, under the UNDP-supported project “Strengthening of Pre - Primary Education” –1984-86, a cadre of teacher educators was trained to upgrade the quality of services and enforce norms and regulations. The trainees were exposed to different ECD models and practices in UK, France, India and Denmark and were able to share experiences and expertise through regional exchanges with Indian Ocean islands and countries of sub-Saharan Africa””(p.3)

NGO's also have been involved in the training of teachers , especially L'OMEP and 510 teachers have received a certificate from OMEP , 17 from Playgroup and 205 from Bethlehem and there is also the “*L'Association pour la Promotion de la Petite Enfance*”, but according to Maudho &Naeck (2001:26), these courses were non-award courses which are not officially recognised as they do not possess the “*appropriate validation and accreditation mechanisms*”

The training courses have had for mission to upgrade the teaching skills of the teachers.

### **The Helpers:**

In a sector where there are 1,092 schools, there are only 196 and this means that in most schools, the teaching staff has got to take care of all the needs of the children. Very young children need a lot of individual attention and care in order to blossom fully. Most schools without helpers are to be found mainly in districts like Riviere du Rempart, Flacq, Grand Port, Savanne, Moka, and Black River. It would seem that the teaching staff fulfill the roles of helpers in some of the poor schools which cannot afford to employ a helper.

## **The Curricula for the pre-schools:**

For a pre-primary school curriculum to be effective, it must take satisfy a certain number of criteria which will ensure that the quality of the education dispensed is of a good standard.

A pre-school educational programme must be relevant to the experiences and developmental needs of a child as all children go through the same developmental stages, It must aim at the whole round development of the child , that is, the cognitive, the gross and fine motor as well as the social and emotional aspects of a child development must be taken into consideration.

An appropriate pre-primary school programme harnesses the child's natural creativity ,inherent curiosity and thirst for knowledge in order to make them active and autonomous learners. This programme must also take into account the rights of the child which must be protected and respected.

As the pre-primary school sector has for long been neglected, the State having taken an interest in that sector only recently, they has never been any national programme having won unanimity among the different stakeholders in that sector, so that the different types of schools had adopted its own curriculum with the result that the Mauritian pre-school sector is characterised bay a wide variety of curricula.

- “curriculum” devised by the “*ti-miss*” ,widely in use by semi-trained teachers in the poorly endowed schools
- Curricula devised by the teachers who have been trained at the Mauritius Institute of Education in all aspects of child's development.

Curriculum proposed by the MOESR and the MIE in1997 and rejected by some stake holders (case taken to court because of the content) used by a good number of schools since there is no official document

- Curriculum devised by L'OMEP school and used by teachers trained at L'OMEP
- Curriculum based on the philosophy of Froebbel (1 school)
- Curriuculum based on the philosophy of Montessori (2 Schools)

There is a new curriculum prepared by a team at the MIE which is being proposed to the MOESR as a national curriculum and which has been approved officially in 2004.

In fact, the teachers use bits of all types of curricula with which they come into contact through their various training courses and this is explained very well by this teacher of a school of an average quality:

- *J'ai eu..., enfin mon curriculum c'est un moi qui ai... Tous les cours que j'ai suivis, L'OMEP, j'ai regardé tout ce qu'il y avait de meilleur dedans, la MIE aussi pareil et pendant les cinq ans que j'ai suivi des cours j'ai essayé de préparer mon curriculum même et j'ai adapté ça avec le contexte mauricien. Il y a un peu de Sud Afrique, de France, j'aime chercher un peu tout ce qu'il y a lire, pareil comme le nom, comment on écrit. Ils viennent cocher leurs noms le matin. J'aime chercher un peu partout tout ce qu'il y a, même à l'extérieur Et la j'ai préparé mon curriculum.*

It would seem that in the pre-schools attached to primary schools the Pre-Primary School Trust Fund (PPSTF) sees to it that the official curriculum is used. The PPSTF has a “*droit de regard*” on the other private schools also and according to some teachers, that organisation also send directives about the running of the pre-primary school unit.

### **Medium of Instruction:**

The official language is English but the language used in the pre-primary schools varies depending of the type of school, the school clientele, and the teaching staff. In most of the poor private schools, creole is used by the teachers to communicate with the children though they have to teach English and French languages which are included in the school's curriculum. The Montessori school uses English with a little bit of French as medium of instruction while some of the posh private schools use French and some use English as medium of communication and instruction. There is no official policy about language used as medium of instruction for the pre-primary sector

### **Pre-school pedagogy (being practiced in the local pre-schools):**

All the factors mentioned above are very powerful elements in influencing the type of pedagogy practised in a pre-primary school. Pedagogy consist of the practices and learning processes which help to achieve the educational goals and objectives. At this early age of secondary socialisation, the main pedagogical concern should be to make the child aware of the self, others and how to interact with others and thus the development of the skills of autonomy, self-awareness, self-preservation and protection, self-esteem, moral behaviour and social skills should be embedded in the pre-school teacher's practice. In order to achieve these aims, concepts and ideas have been drawn from various schools of thought such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Froebbel, Montessori and teaching programs models such as that of Reggio Emilia. Through various types of in-service training, the pre-school teachers have come into contact with a number of teaching approaches which they try to implement as far as they are able to. The effectiveness of the approach will depend to a large extent upon the teacher's training and academic background, her perception of teaching and learning in the sector.

A group of researchers form the University of Oxford have identified three types of approaches to teaching and learning in the pre-primary sector:

- the *programmed approach*, which is highly teacher directed, providing for little initiative on the part of the child.
- the *Open-framework approach* which provides the teacher with a strong pedagogic structure(or framework) that supports the child in their explorations and interactions with, and reflections upon, the learning environment.
- The *child –centred approach* in its most extreme applications where the teacher responds entirely to the individual child's interests and activities.

(Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, Bell: 28)

All these approaches are being adopted by preschool teachers in Mauritius from time to time but the most dominant approach is that of the “programmed approach”. With this type of pedagogy, the curriculum objectives are clearly classified and learning involves mainly basic skills and memorisation. The type of pedagogy adopted is strongly influenced by the type of curriculum being used in the school. Until recently when a common official curriculum has been introduced by MOESR, most teachers, because of their training, seemed to adopt a common

approach in their choice of subjects, topics and activities. It is difficult to assess to what extent the new curriculum is having an impact upon the teaching/ learning process. Most pre-school teachers seem to have adopted approaches to teaching from the variety of curricula existing here and abroad.

Though the pre-primary sector in Mauritius is the one where more pedagogical innovations have been initiated than in any other sector, we still observe the imprint of our traditional colonial curriculum which becomes apparent through the fact that the various curricula in use today is still subject-oriented and content-based. Emphasis is still content-based rather than skills –based.

A typical pre-school curriculum would consist of the following subjects:

Physical education, Science Education, Creative art, Pre- writing, Language, pre-maths, pre-reading, moral education, music and dance. The innovation is that these subjects are being taught in an integrated manner around a specific theme.

Below is a list of themes worked out with the pupils of a pre-primary school (pre-school Trust Fund) in Camp Diable:

**First Term:** *Myself, My House, Furniture, Clothing, My Village*

**Second Term:** *Occupation, Transport, Water; Sea, Food, Environment, Animals*

**Third Term:** *Plants, Flowers, Fruits, Vegetables.*

In another school in Pointe- aux Sables which is a private school of a good standard, patronised by the middle class parents of that locality, we discover the same thematic integrated approach around the theme Animals. The following table (provided by the teacher) gives an idea of the approach adopted by the teacher and the domains of learning which are being developed around the theme “Animals:

Domain of learning :	Activities
Physical Development	Movement Education-Duck Walking
Language Development	Conversation-Introducing theme: Animals and story-telling
Pre-writing	Graphism
Creativity Development & fine motor development	Modeling of animals Free drawing of Animals (free)
Cognitive Development	Maths-Sorting of small animals

This approach is confirmed by the manager of another private school though here we realise that the educator is aiming at the development of life-skills rather than the memorising of facts from different subject areas:

***Vous travaillez avec des thèmes ?***

- *Beaucoup de thèmes. Par exemple notre thème pour ce trimestre pour les petits, c'est sur l'eau et les plus grands travaillent sur les arbres fruitiers. C'est sélectif, les enfants eux même ont choisi trois arbres fruitiers locaux et ils sont entrain de travailler dessus. Alors on va vers le concept de vie d'abord pour voir comment l'arbre est devenu l'arbre, en passant par la petite graine qu'on met en terre, et par cette germination qui commence, développer la perception de l'enfant au niveau sensoriel et en même temps au niveau mental, l'amener vers cette logique, penser logique et réfléchir, organisation et tout. Et il y a beaucoup d'expériences, il faut que les enfants voient, qu'ils explorent et manipulent pour pouvoir accommoder et construire sur leur accommodation.. Et puis on a des jeux pour la grosse motricité de l'enfant pour coordonner tous ses mouvements et puis nous avons des jeux aussi allant des plus petites billes pour aller au plus gros. Donc l'enfant a une variété de matériel pour pouvoir développer toutes ses capacités qu'il a besoin de développer. Et quand ils partent en primaire, ils peuvent s'adapter sans difficulté à l'école parceque la base a été jetée, l'enfant a acquis tout ce qui s'appelle notion, concept et il peut arriver à comprendre quand l'enseignante va lui dire, va lui poser des questions, va l'amener vers une réflexion, il n'aura pas de problème.*

This same approach is described by another pre-school teacher and manager of Pointe Aux Sables:

***Vous avez adopté un integrated approach ?***

- *Oui. On fait tout à travers le sport, les mathématiques etc. Si on travaille sur les fruits, ce sera un peu plus les mathématiques pour ma grande section parcequ'ils iront en primaire. Le langage aussi, ce sera sur les fruits, la créativité sur les fruits, l'éveil scientifique aussi. Donc c'est tout centré sur les thèmes qu'on travaille. Dans une année on a plusieurs thèmes comme ça et on travaille à peu près trois ou quatre semaines sur un thème. Là à partir d'aujourd'hui on va travailler sur la mer et l'eau. A partir d'aujourd'hui l'éveil scientifique se sera tout ce qui flotte et tout ce qui coulent dans l'eau, tout ce qui se dissout et ce qui se dissout pas. Et les exercices physique aussi pareil, reliés à l'eau. Ça ce sont des jeux qu'on a inventés. Le langage aussi pareil, où on a de l'eau, uses of water, tout ça c'est fait : les jeux, la pre-lecture. Aujourd'hui on va faire le bateau et eux ils vont faire la mer, tout est centré sur le thème.*

The master-plan for one year for a pre-school in Coromandel gives us an idea of the various themes around which learning in the different domains is achieved and we can take stock of the fact that children from different regions of the island are obtaining learning experience around more or less the same themes:

**The following is the MASTER PLAN for a private school for one year:**

1st Term			2nd Term			3rd Term	
1	Schéma Corporel	1	Métiers et Transport	1	1	Les animaux domestiques/aquatiques/sauvages	
2	Mon école	2	Les métiers des parents				
3	Vêtements	3	Les moyens de transport				
4	La famille	4	Les vêtements et la musique	2	2	La nôel	
5	Ma maison	5	Fête annuelle de l'école				
6	La pâque	6	Sports Day				
Festivités							
1	Pâques	1	Fêtes des parents (fête des mères/pères)	1	1	Divali	
2	Chinese Festival			2	2	La nôel	
3	Independence/Republic Day	2	Fête de la musique				
Sorties							
1	Waterpark	1	Airport/Jardin	1	1	La mer	

This thematic approach is adopted by the different types of pre-schools, whether the high status ones or the small village schools.

Most of the "teaching" hinges upon a play-based pedagogy. It would seem that most pre-school teachers adopt such an approach but the effectiveness of the approach will depend upon teacher's knowledge and experience, consistent planning, the quality of support in the school environment and in the home background of the pupils.

According to certain reports from parents and pre-school teachers themselves, there are some pre-school teachers who are not using appropriate methods in their classroom practices as they seem to lack the skills of good teaching. According to a student teacher who went to research the quality of activities which would develop creativity among young children in five schools, she discovered that the teachers were putting emphasis mainly on drawing and colouring rather than upon

other activities in the area of creativity. This imbalance in activities was mainly due, according to her, to the fact that the teachers were not competent enough to put other activities in practice as “*none of the five teachers is gifted in any creative artwork*”. That same student goes on to point out another shortcoming of teaching in those schools where she carried out her research.

*Three out of five schools practice dancing on a monthly basis. The others rarely practice dancing classes just because the teachers themselves do not know how to dance and show no interest for dancing.”*

Another teacher – student (permission has been obtained from those students to quote their work) who engaged in a small-scale research about the teaching strategies in the pre-primary sector for the needs of an assignment reveals some practices which can be considered as sources of concern for teacher educators and the authorities in general. She went to interview a sample of ten pre-school teachers (her own colleagues) of a rural locality, many of whom had received some form of training and her findings were quite alarming in view of the fact that they revealed that the pedagogy used by these teachers were far from the child-centered and progressive one being advocated in the training courses. She discovered the following:

- Audio-visual teaching aids such as radio, cassette, and computers were not being used by 60% of these teachers
- Other teaching aids such as matching cards, dominos and picture books, etc. were not being used by 60% of them.
- In the development of literacy skills and language, not one teacher provided opportunities to associate sounds with appropriate pictures of trees, animals, objects and birds. Phonemic awareness were not being developed at all.
- It would seem that the development of higher –order thinking was not also being promoted as only 10%, that is one out of 10 teachers, have the habit of asking pupils to find differences and to discriminate between different types of action in a picture.
- Not one teacher thought it important to discuss important current events with pupils and to sensitize them to the problems of the world at an early age.
- Only 20% thought it important to give extension work at school and at home.



It is difficult to know whether these practices which can be described as poor, are the result of ineffective training or lack of motivation on the part of the teachers. This is a matter for more in-depth investigation as the sample is too small for generalization within the pre-primary sector.

In other cases, it may not be the teacher's lack of skills which is the problem. There are teachers who are working in very difficult conditions such as this student teacher who has to work with 60 small children at the same time and she has to have recourse to strategies will help her cope with the large numbers. Therefore it is not surprising that her time-table for the week shows a lot of time allocated to "juice" time and "rest" time. There is even a day where the teacher allows the children to engage in free activities for the whole day.

On the other hand, in some schools, more especially those with a middle class clientele where the parents expect to send their children in the government primary schools, the parents have expectations which may conflict with the philosophy of pre-school pedagogy. In such schools the teacher/manager tries to include a pedagogy more appropriate for the standard I of the primary school and this is confirmed by this teacher from a school with a middle class clientele:

*"Oui, on travaille sur des thèmes, chaque trimestre on travaille sur des thèmes, comme ce trimestre ci c'est la mer, la noel, chaque trimestre on change de thème, et puis on montre aux enfants les choses de principe comme les grands. Surtout les grands qui vont partir en first. Ils connaissent les chiffres, les alphabètes, les couleurs en anglais et en français. Et puis ils écrivent dans leurs cahiers. ça c'est pour les grands, les petits non."*

This transcript also informs us that though she uses a thematic approach with a play-based pedagogy in the first year, in the second year (4 years old), "les grands" are being prepared for the standard I curriculum of the highly competitive system of the primary schools. This is a practice which is current in many pre-primary schools and it would seem that this is what the parents expect. According to some teachers, there are often conflicts between teachers and parents about the appropriate pedagogy for the pre-schoolers. Parents are often complaining that children go to these schools to play rather than learn and that they are not being prepared to enter the primary school system. Very often, the teachers have to come to a compromise with the parents' expectations. Such a situation means that

traditional methods of teaching, expository teaching and rote learning, have to be used by the teacher to prepare the children of “la grande maternelle” for the primary school. This clashes with the whole philosophy of child-centeredness which is being advocated in the pre-primary sector as well as in the primary sector. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that some schools prescribe books for the pre-school children. These are work-books with routine exercises to be practised by the children, which have been written by local people and found on the market. It has been reported by parents that some teachers go to the extent of putting a cross where the answer is considered wrong. It is always recommended to teachers not to put a cross for pre-school children as this will have a negative effect on their self-esteem. In fact all these practices in many of the pre-primary schools go against all the principles of the development of autonomy and creativity in the pre-school child. As we can surmise, the pedagogy in those schools is highly framed, where the teacher controls most of the activities except where in some cases, free play is allowed.

It must be pointed out that highly structured didactic teaching has been found to result in young children showing significantly increased stress/anxiety behaviour (Burts et al, 1990). In these circumstances, the rights of our children are being undermined by some pedagogical practices in our pre-primary schools.

As most schools in Mauritius are private, we must not forget the role of the owner/manager who may be the teacher herself but in many cases there is the owner whose main goal is profit-making and the quality of the school environment may depend upon the amount of investment allowed for by the owner. Apart from the investment factor, the most important input of the manager may be her management style. It has been observed that the pre- schools which are considered as the most effective and hence popular with parents are the ones which are the most well managed in terms of finance, facilities and teachers’ pedagogical practices. These highly effective schools may not be the most expensive ones.

As within our pre- primary school sector, there are schools which are being run according to a specific philosophy, it would be interesting for the general public as well as the pre-school sector in general to learn about the type of pedagogy which is practised in a Montessori school.

### The Montessori Pre-school:

There is a school in Port Louis where the **open-framework approach** is adopted and this was in a school where the Montessori pre-school programme is used. In this model the child has a good deal of freedom to make choices between the various learning challenges that exist in the school environment, that is, the sand corner, the puzzles, the block play, the book corner etc.

The Montessori pre-school classroom is a "living room" for children. Children choose their work from among the self-correcting materials displayed on open shelves, and they work in specific work areas. The children work with high concentration and few interruptions and it is aimed at developing the following qualities, that is, becoming self-disciplined, ordered and focused. The child has the freedom to work with the material which captivate his/her attention, repeatedly. In the Montessori pre - school, academic competency is a means to an end, and the manipulatives are viewed as "materials for development." In the Montessori preschool, five distinct areas constitute the prepared environment: **Practical life**, **The sensorial**, **Mathematics**, **Language arts** and **Cultural activities**

This teacher explains the teaching and learning process in her school:

- *Dans toutes les activités de Montessori, c'est par quatre main sections ; il y a ce qu'on appelle le practical life où ils apprennent à verser, à attacher des boutons, tout ce qui fait la vie courante. Et puis il y a le sensorial, les activités du côté de tous les sens, et les mathématiques et le langage. Donc dans chaque domaine, il y a une activité pour les plus petits et plus petits et puis ils progressent. Ce n'est pas seulement en fonction de leur age.*

#### **Toutes ces activités là « cut across the ages » ?**

- *Oui, sauf peut-être pour les mathématiques qu'ils commencent plus tard, à partir de quatre ans. Mais tout le matériel sensoriel est une préparation indirecte au mathématique, par exemple il y a dix blocs de cylindres. Inconsciemment ils manipulent tout en dizaine, parce que quand arrivé aux mathématiques ils apprennent le système décimal. Mais ils le font inconsciemment, ils ont l'habitude de manipuler dix : dix élèves, dix cubes etc. Par exemples dans le langage, quand les plus jeunes rentrent à l'école le premier activité qu'ils font c'est le vocabulaire. Il y a des cartes qui sont classifiées par thèmes disons et ils apprennent les mots. Et ils ont les deux, anglais et français. Mes assistantes font en français avec eux et moi je fais en anglais avec les mêmes cartes pour qu'ils voient que c'est la même chose.*

In this type of pre-school education, emphasis is more on the development of the cognitive and psychomotor skills rather than upon the knowledge content. The various activities also develop the affective and social skills of the children.

A problem faced by the Montessori school teacher is Mauritian parents' perception of schooling in the pre-primary sector. The common perception is that of the child being groomed to enter the primary sector, that is, that of the child being engaged in a race to be able to read and write as quickly as possible so as to among the first in the competition for the final Certificate of Primary Education(CPE). This attitude clashes with the Montessori philosophy. This is explained by the Montessori teacher:

*« Oui. Disons le problème principal que j'ai avec certains parents....par exemple quand je leur demande, la façon d'enseigner est totalement différente avec la façon traditionnelle. Par exemple, il y a une petite fille qui va partir cette année-ci, mais j'ai l'impression qu'à la maison sa maman lui fait apprendre tout par cœur. Et à chaque fois elle me demande tout. Quand elle ne sait pas quelque chose elle va me demander, mais l'idée pour moi c'est pas qu'elle me demande et que je lui donne une réponse. Elle me demande et moi je lui renvoie la question pour qu'elle aille découvrir elle-même. Donc c'est tout à fait différent.*

***Donc quelque part il y a un conflit entre votre méthode et la maison ?***

- Pour certains enfants, définitivement. Oui. Mais d'après moi, ils pensent que c'est trop lent. Ça prend plus de temps en fait de faire un enfant apprendre par lui-même. C'est beaucoup plus facile de lui rendre la réponse.*
- Au faite là dessus j'explique la plupart de temps parcequ'il faut absolument faire l'enfant découvrir quelque chose, quand l'enfant pose une question essayer de...parce que parfois il pose une question qui est trop compliquée, essayer de lui renvoyer la question plus simple, lui donner plusieurs étapes à suivre. Les parents qui sont busy n'auront pas le temps de faire tout ça.*

The pre school environment in principle should unify and develop the psycho-social, physical, and academic functioning of the child. Its important task is to provide the toddlers with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security and a sense of order, pride in the physical environment, abiding curiosity, a habit of concentration, habits of initiative and persistence, the ability to make decisions, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school, and community. This foundation will enable them to acquire more specialized knowledge and skills throughout their school career. This is the ideal model but a great number of the schools of Mauritius do not satisfy these criteria as we have seen above, some schools do not possess the necessary infrastructure, the appropriate pre-school

pedagogical equipment and the quality of teaching may not be of the required standard.

#### **Some Recommendations for the Pre-School Sector:**

- **As standards in most of these pre-schools are low to average, more involvement of the State in the setting up of pre-primary schools of a desired standard is advocated.**
- **Access to the State Pre- Primary schools should be free because those who go to the low-standard schools are the children of the working classes as the fees are low. The children of the working classes start to be at a disadvantage ever since their early years. Many find it difficult to bridge the gap in later years and they have failed the CPE since their pre-school years.**
- **While waiting for the setting up of the State pre-primary schools, more control should be exercised over the private ones to see to it that the proper pedagogy is being practised.**
- **The officers who are engaged in supervising pre-schools should themselves be trained in pre-school pedagogy.**
- **Though large numbers of the pre-school teachers have been trained by the MIE and other organisations, there is still a good proportion of those teachers who do not have the necessary basic qualifications to follow those formal training courses. These teachers need training and support.**
- **Even the “trained” teachers need support from appropriate resource persons to guide them in proper pre-school pedagogy. Therefore these teachers with the help of their union should be organised in networks where they would share experiences and obtain the support which they highly need.**
- **Existing training programmes should be reviewed in order to cater for the specific needs of the pre-school teachers of Mauritius.**
- **Special programmes, where teachers and parents could collaborate in close partnership with the aim of promoting the child’s welfare.**

## **Chapter 14**

### **PRIMARY EDUCATION**

For the Mauritian child, the primary school stage is made up of six years of schooling with the final summative examination, the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) playing a very important role in the life of the student. Children going to the primary schools are aged between 5 and 12.

In 2003, there was a total of 291 primary schools in the Republic of Mauritius: 278 in mainland Mauritius and 13 in Rodrigues. These schools have been categorised according to their type of ownership.

#### **Different types of schools:**

Thus we have 221 of the schools run by the government and 53 schools are run by religious bodies but receive substantial help from the government and hence are called aided schools, while the rest of the schools consist of private schools of various types. In Rodrigues there are eight government schools and five private schools

#### **Ownership and administration**

1. Government Schools –221 schools run by the State

Aided Schools (Schools run by religious bodies who are accountable to the government):

- 51 are run by the Bureau D' Education Catholique
- 2 are run by the Hindu Education Authority

-

2. Private non-aided schools Private Fee- paying Schools: Among these are to be found such schools as L'Ecole du Centre, Lycée Labourdonnais, Lycée du Nord, etc..

The number of children admitted to these schools in 2003 is the following: 124,933 in Mauritius and 4,683 in Rodrigues.

Number of primary schools and the number of primary school pupils in the Republic of Mauritius in March 2003 (CSO:2003)

**Table 15 Number of Primary Schools and the School Population**

	No. of schools	Pupils in Govt. schools	Pupils in Aided schools	Pupils in non-aided schools	Total no. of pupils
Rep. Of Mauritius	291	97,884	26,038	5,694	129,616
Island of Mauritius	278	95,257	23,982	5,894	124,933
Island of Rodrigues	13	2, 627	2,056	N.A	4,683

### **Access to Primary Education:**

Since Independence, the State has embarked upon an extensive programme of building primary schools in most towns and villages of Mauritius. This network of primary schools across the island testifies to the commitment of successive governments to the concept of “democratisation” of education by giving access to schooling and education to the maximum number of school-going age. The widespread presence of government primary schools throughout the Republic is demonstrated by the following table:

**Table 16- Number of Government Primary schools by District**

Districts	Govt. schools	Total
Port Louis	25	34
Pamplemousses	23	24
Riviere duRempart	22	27
Flacq	27	36
Grand Port	25	30
Savanne	15	18
Plaines Wilhems	45	69
Moka	21	27
Black River	10	13
Island of Mauritius	213	278
Island of Rodrigues	8	13
Republic of Mauritius	221	291

In 2002, there were 148,715 children aged between 5 and 11 years of age, making up 12.3% of the resident population. As the total number of children going to a primary school was 129,616, and a certain number of pupils in the primary cycle may be aged 12, it would mean that a good number of children of school-going age are not in school. Even though the government has made primary schooling compulsory since 1991, a certain number have dropped out of the school system and have become the “street children” while others may be engaged in petty, low-paid jobs or simply remain at home performing household chores while the parents are at work. Parents who do not send their children to school may be liable to prosecution. The laws to protect the child’s rights to education do exist but fully implementing these laws remains fraught with difficulties as many of the parents cannot afford to provide the basic necessities for schooling while some other parents perceive their children who work as a source of income for the family. Thus, though all children of school-going age do have access to schooling theoretically, in reality, for economic and social reasons, not all children are able to attend a primary school.

## **THE CURRICULUM:**

The primary school curriculum for the government and aided schools is centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research while in private fee-paying schools such as Lycée Labourdonnais and Lycée du Centre and des Mascareignes the children follow a curriculum determined by “*L’éducation Nationale*” in France. These schools accept only a small minority of Mauritian nationals.

Therefore for this piece of research, we are going to concentrate on the Mauritian primary curriculum.

Traditionally, the primary school children of Mauritius of State and Aided schools have followed a common curriculum consisting of four core subjects, namely English, French, Mathematics and Environmental sciences. This curriculum includes also Asian languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, Mandarin, Marathi, and Arabic and children have to choose one of these languages.



With the new MMM/MSM government in 2000, the Ministry of Education proposed a new programme of curriculum renewal in early 2001. It is stated in the Ministry's document that the curriculum developers were influenced by the principles underlying the report of UNESCO's commission on education (Delors report) that is: Learning to Know, Learning to do, Learning to be, and Learning to live together. It is also stated that :

*"The new curriculum will meet the development needs of the country, in terms of an educated and skilled workforce. It will allow our children to face the new challenges of the economy and the trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century society. The new curriculum will also enable the children of today to be versatile and flexible, trainable and employable through the mastery of skills relevant to tomorrow's world."*

Therefore *"in a world where new Information Technology (IT) based skills are fast replacing the traditional skills and to make our children responsible citizens"*, new subjects have been introduced. These are: Information technology, citizenship Education and other subjects which used to exist in the curriculum but which have been re introduced under new names such as "The Arts" (Creative Arts), "History and Geography" and "Science" The three last subjects named, formerly grouped under the umbrella of "Environmental Studies", are now being taught in standards IV to VI while standards I to III continue to study these areas of knowledge in the subject known as "Environmental Studies"

The following table gives an idea of the new primary school curriculum:

**Table 17 – the New primary school Curriculum**

<b>Standards I- III(Lower Primary)</b>	<b>Standards IV-VI (Upper Primary)</b>
English French Mathematics Information Technology	English French Mathematics Information Technology
Environmental Studies (EVS)	Science History and geography
Citizenship education The Arts Health and Physical education Asian Language/Arabic (Optional) Religious Education (Optional)	Citizenship Education The Arts Health and Physical Education Asian language/ Arabic (Optional) Religious Education(Optional)

Borrowed from the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research

We must note that some subjects such as “Asian languages/ Arabic” and “Religious education” are optional though, since 2004 as a result of the judgement of the Supreme Court, the AL have been accorded the same status as the other subjects in the computing of marks for ranking and grading purposes at the CPE level, after a long struggle by the Government Hindi teachers Union (GHTU)

The Curriculum developers of the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (NCCRD) have devised curriculum packages in all subjects taught at the primary level from standard I to VI for all subjects, including the Asian languages. These curriculum materials have been translated in the books prescribed by the Ministry and which are used in all Mauritian schools.

What the Ministry of education and Scientific research calls a “curriculum” is subject to debate among educationists in Mauritius who, when asked to give their opinion on the primary school curriculum asked the provocative question:” *Is there a curriculum in the primary sector?*” According to these experts, what is presented as a curriculum is merely the various syllabi for different subjects. When asked about their awareness of an official curriculum, primary school teachers answer that they only know their books and the slim booklet on the various syllabi, sent by the MES.

Kelly (1999) defines a curriculum in the following way:

*“ Any definition of curriculum if it is to be practically effective and productive, must offer much more than a statement about the knowledge-content or merely the subjects which schooling is to ‘teach’ or transmit. It must go far beyond this to an explanation, and indeed a justification, of the purposes of such transmission and an exploration of the effects that exposure to such knowledge and such subjects is likely to have, or is intended to have, on its recipients – indeed it is from these deeper concerns,..... that any curriculum planning worthy of the name must start.”* (Kelly, 1999:3)

The curriculum in use in our primary school sector is not one which bears the characteristics as described above. It is one which bears the characteristics of a conservative and elitist educational system which is subject-based and marked by strong classification and framing. At the same time, this subject-based curriculum reflect traditional academic values that are out of place in a complex, information-rich world. This type of curriculum and approach towards education, has been

under the constant attack from progressive educators who advocate a child-centred approach to primary school curricula.

The following extract from Cornel Ham (1989) gives an idea of the difference between traditional and progressive education.

*“ A cluster of notions have, for better or worse, attached themselves to ‘**traditional education**. Some of these are :**subject-centred, intellect, standards, lessons, examination, structure, work and discipline, teaching, obedience, mastery of subject content, memory work, order, accountability, control and other related concepts**. Similarly a cluster of notions have attached themselves to “**progressive**’ education. Some of these are: **child-centred**, emotion, activity, utility and relevance, discovery, understanding concepts, critical thinking, process, freedom, facilitation of learning, experience, growth, creativity, problem-centered and other related concepts.” (p.76-77)*

Field research and interviews are showing that our primary school education still shows characteristics of the traditional education described above .

The primary school curriculum in Mauritius has many aspects which goes against the principle of a child-centred education though the educational authorities claim that it is a child-centred and progressive one and in official documents the primary school curriculum sounds very progressive.

When examined closely we find the following characteristics which makes it contrary to a child-centered education , that is to a certain extent detrimental to the welfare of the child. The curriculum is not child-centered because of the following reasons:

- The curriculum is overloaded
- More emphasis in on the delivery of the content than on skills and competencies
- Lack of balance in the allocation of time to the various subjects taught – there is more emphasis on languages
- The curriculum is fragmented.

### The overloaded Curriculum:

The fact that the primary school curriculum is overloaded has been acknowledged in many official reports. Thus the report entitled "Proposal for Structural Reform-1990" states the following:

*"Many teachers have complained that the curriculum of the primary school is too overcrowded, the subject syllabuses are too overloaded."(p.70)*

Again the "Action Plan" of 1998 we find the concern about the problem of an overloaded curriculum in the primary sector:

*" Since the emphasis is on process of education, it is therefore necessary to download the content of the curriculum that has already been severely criticised in several quarters as 'overloaded'."(p. 23)*

Unfortunately for the children of Mauritius, the primary school curriculum is still overloaded with masses of information on the subject content and to this existing curriculum more subjects have been added as it has been explained above. These new subjects such as IT, health and physical education and citizenship education, are highly relevant to the education of a primary school child in this information age but the whole curriculum should have been overhauled in order to fit in these subjects in terms of skills and competencies. These skills and competencies and knowledge should have been developed across the curriculum instead of adding new knowledge to the existing burden. As it is now, the curriculum is more content-oriented rather than process-oriented.

An overburdened curriculum results in a race against time to "finish the syllabus" so that teaching is mainly of the expository type and rote learning and cramming is the rule in our primary classrooms. There is an emphasis on the memorisation of masses of knowledge which are constantly changing instead of skills.

### **Time-allocation for subjects and emphasis on languages:**

In 1988 Donald Chessworth in his report gives a description of how the curriculum is managed in the primary sector

*“There are very particular and conceivably unique features about primary education in Mauritius as reflected in the curriculum. This is illustrated in the weekly time-table an example of which is now given for stds. V and VI.*

*English 290 mins; Mathematics 250 mins. Oriental Languages 225 mins. ; Environmental Studies (I) 115 mins; Environmental Studies (2) 115 mins; Creative Education 110 mins Movement Education 100 mins. Religious Education 90 mins, Education in Human Values 50 mins; making up a week of 25 hours and 25 minutes. The school week is of the same length in Standard IV; 22 hours and 55 minutes in standard III; 21 hours and 40 mins; Standard II; and 21 hours and 50 mins. in standard I. It appears that in some schools the time-table is far from rigidly kept. (Report of the Salaries Commissioner ( D. Chessworth, 1988).*

More than fifteen years later, the names of certain subject areas have changed but the pattern for time-allocation for the different subjects remain almost the same. Below is the table-table showing the allocation of periods of the school-week to the teaching of different subjects presently. Each period has a duration of twenty-five minutes. According to this time-table, the subject area called “Environmental Studies” is taught only at standards I to III only while at standards IV to VI, this area is disintegrated into three parts: namely, History and Geography being one component which is itself subdivided into History and Geography, the other components being Science Education and Citizenship Education. Religious Education means religious classes for the Roman Catholics mainly while the non-Christians are doing some reading.

**Table 18**Time –Table for one-stream school (no. of periods allocated to each subject during the week for standards I to VI)

St d.	Engli sh	Fren ch	Asian Lang	Mat hs	Environmental Studies			HE/ PE	Cre at. Edu.	IC T	Lit/ Num	RE/ read.	Tot al per W
I	10	10	7	9	6			3	4	3	5	3	60
II	11	10	9	10	6			3	4	3	5	4	65
III	11	10	9	10	7			3	4	3	5	3	65
					His / Geo	Sci.	Cit. Ed.						
IV	11	10	9	10	3	3	2	3	4	3	5	3	65
V	11	10	9	10	3	3	2	3	4	3	5	3	65
VI	11	10	9	10	3	3	2	3	4	3	5	3	65

Key: **HE/PE:** Health education/ Physical Education  
**Creat. Edu. :** Creative Education  
**Lit/Num:** Literacy and Numeracy  
**Re./Read. :** Religious Education and reading  
**His/Geo:** History and Geography  
**Sci. :** Science Education  
**Citi. Edu. :** Citizenship education

It would appear that no less than 12 hours and 30 minutes. each week are spent, as far as the majority of children are concerned, with learning **three languages** (English, French, Asian Language) none of which most of them do not use for any family or social purpose and the subjects are taught and examined in languages which are foreign to the children. Emphasis upon the teaching of languages seems to be a characteristic of colonial schools of which our primary schools are the direct descendants. According to Altbach and Kelly in their book "Education and Colonialism",

*"Most colonial schools, regardless of whether they were urban or rural, government or missionary, emphasized two things - language instruction and moral education....." (Altbach and Kelly- 1978)*

The fact that language takes up more time than any other single subject means that not enough time is devoted to other subjects like History, geography and the sciences though the primary school week seems to be very full of learning so that some teachers extend their school work into tuition hour.(The private tuition problem will be dealt with later on). It is an advantage to speak more than one language but the sad truth is that most of our primary school leavers cannot be described as being fluent in either English or French or even in one of the Oriental language.

The primary school curriculum is overburdened but not with the right ingredients. In such circumstances, knowledge and skills which are essential for the all-round development of the child, are neglected even if they have been timidly introduced in the school programme. The school culture is so strong that even when creative education, movement or physical education and value education, the latter recently replaced by citizenship education, had been introduced in the primary curriculum, these subjects were being neglected by many of the class teachers according to what the teachers themselves report.

For example health and physical education, which are of the utmost importance if we want to promote healthy generations of children, are subjects which have been neglected ever since their introduction in the school curriculum. We can get an

idea of the importance accorded to these subjects through the time allocated to both together, that is, only 75 minutes. (see table above).

B. Oogarah-Pratap (2004), explains the situation of the teaching of Health Education in the primary schools of Mauritius:

*“ ...Health Education was introduced as a discrete subject in the primary school curriculum in 2002. However, the subject did not seem to be getting due recognition. A study was thus conducted in 2003 among eighty primary school teachers across the island to identify barriers to the effective teaching of Health Education in primary schools. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. All teachers acknowledged the importance of Health Education, but only 56% of them were teaching the subject at school”*

According to the survey carried out during this research and to what has been reported by new trainee teachers posted in schools, at a certain time the prescribed books were not available in the schools and as they were hardpressed for time to finish the syllabus for the traditional subjects the class teachers do not have the time for these subjects. According to data obtained from the children's questionnaire, it would seem that the children of urban schools are the ones who are being neglected in terms of their training in physical education. From the sample of schools chosen for this research, urban schools such as Jean Lebrun, La Paix RCA, and Raoul Rivet GS in Port Louis are suffering from a lack of space for practising physical education. Other schools suffering from the same problem are Jules Koenig G.S. and Vallee des Prêtres. According to data obtained from the children's questionnaire, it would seem that the children of urban schools are the ones who are being neglected in terms of their training in physical education. From the sample of schools chosen for this research, urban schools such as Jean Lebrun, La Paix RCA, and Raoul Rivet GS in Port Louis are suffering from a lack of space for practising physical education. Other schools suffering from the same problem are Jules Koenig G.S. and Vallee des Pretres. On the other hand in Philippe Rivalland RCA , an urban school, pupils seem to have the opportunity to practice a lot of sports.

The schools where physical education is being taught seem to be mostly the rural primary schools. This is supported by answers from children of such types of schools, such as those of Grand Bois GS, Camp Diable GS, Bheewa Mahadoo (Riviere du Rempart), Rose Belle, Grand Gaube and Cote D'Or. As the sample of children were taken from only one class of each school, it does not mean that all

teachers of the school are teaching physical education. It has been reported by teacher themselves that some teachers practice “physical education” to relieve the pupils from boredom sometimes. According to some of the children physical education seem to be equated to running around or playing with a plastic ball.

To the question whether they were learning how to draw and paint, only children from six out of the eighteen government and aided schools (33%) answered that they were being taught these skills. This may mean that in most school, the subject called “creative education” is being totally neglected in the upper primary classes though according to reports from trainee teachers this subject is being taught mainly in the lower primary classes:

*“ Creative education is taught more in the standards I to III and very much less in the upper primary classes.....”*

Again it is a question of priority in the race for good results at CPE , time cannot be “wasted” on non-examinable subjects. It is only in the lower primary that teachers can afford to devote time to the non-examinable subjects. The teachers point out that from time to time the art works of pupils are being exhibited on the school’s notice board. It may be a form of encouragement to other pupils but also as a “show” to outsiders that creative art is being promoted in the school.

Not only these subjects are being allocated shorter hours than other core subjects, the teachers themselves are neglecting them in their race for time to finish the syllabus and drilling pupils to answer examinations papers for the core subjects. In fact, many teachers seem to have squeezed out the non-examinable subjects from their intense every day cramming work for the examination. These non-examinable subjects like creative education, health and physical education are among the areas of knowledge which are most useful for the development of life skills in children at an early age and help in their overall development. Unfortunately though introduced in the official curriculum, they are being accorded a very negligible importance in the school time-table and by teachers whose main aim is to make pupils pass in the core subjects through routine drill exercises.



## **The fragmented curriculum:**

Advocates of open or progressive education have always objected to the sharp division among subjects in traditional classrooms, arguing that such curricula cannot be child-centred. According to them, the traditional curriculum is against the interests of the child as children view the world in a holistic and integrated way. Children do not atomise and fragment knowledge in their minds, they rather unify it by assimilating new knowledge to existing knowledge. This aspect of the child's development is explained by Cohen, Manion, and Morrisson (1996):

*“From the child's perspective, integration in learning is natural during the early years of life. At this stage, in her mental development, the child does not see what she learns as classifiable into distinct subject areas or isolated skills. She reads, records, calculated in pursuit of her current interests, and not until the age of 9 or so does she begin to classify what she learns into subject compartments. Integration stems from the child and from the natural ways in which she learns. It is the child who integrates, not the teacher.” ( p.168)*

The advocates of integrated curricula argue that they will be more meaningful to children who naturally view the world holistically. The child's “whole personality” and individual needs are best served when the curriculum caters for his/her rhythm of learning, when the young child does not have to switch from subject to subject. Knowledge cannot always be wrapped up in neat and separate packages as many key concepts straddle subject boundaries. To bind learning into subject compartments is to prevent important links between subjects from being explored and to close up channels of investigation

Therefore these educators recommended an integrated curriculum in which subject boundaries were less distinct.

In such a curriculum, skills are studied around broad unified themes which encompass a number of subject areas. Dearden (1976) explains an integrated curriculum thus:

*“Integration logically presupposes differentiation, the differentiated elements being subordinated to some unitary whole. In what might be called “loose” integration, the subordination of elements is no more than their selection according to relevance to a topic, theme or centre of interest. Thus geography, history, science, music and art may be selectively drawn upon for the contribution they can make to some such theme as canals, the sea, railways, flight, India or whatever. If the theme is the sea, then there may be maps of oceans, the history of voyages of discovery, experiments on floating in salt and fresh water, the painting of scenes beneath the*

*sea, the playing of “Fingal’s Cave”, the singing of sea shanties. Treasure island may be read and the economic uses of the sea may be studied. No doubt the justification for such a “loose” integration of subjects would be that it naturally follows the course of an interest without any arbitrary interruptions.....”*

Unfortunately for the children of Mauritius, the curriculum is becoming more and more fragmented.

The primary school curriculum used to possess some strands of integration in certain domains such as Social Studies and Environmental Studies but recent decisions at the Ministry level have led to more fragmentation so that we now have three separate subjects like History Geography and Citizenship Education which used to be encapsulated in only the subject known as “Social Studies”

It has been noted that where subject boundaries are reduced, it is possible to reduce the influence of subject content and a higher priority can be given to general processes, skills and attitudes. The child-centered teacher integrates the subject matter and the methods appropriate at any moment. The result of this fragmented curriculum is that more and more emphasis is being put on the subject content in our primary schools and rote learning is being encouraged at the expense of critical and creative thinking in our schools.

### **The curriculum and pedagogical practices in our primary schools:**

Pedagogical practices in Mauritian primary schools (State & Aided) is deeply embedded in the culture of primary schooling which in turn is deeply entrenched in a tradition which may be traced as far back as colonial days.

This is a culture where teaching has always been teacher-centered though lip service is often being paid to child-centeredness.

Data from questionnaires administered to experienced primary teachers who are being trained at the MIE confirm that though the teachers may try some other teaching methods such as group work, their main teaching method is explaining and questioning with some demonstrations depending upon the subject. This is confirmed by reports from Teachers’ Certificate Primary (TCP) trainee teachers (initial training) who went on their school –based experience (SBE) and who

observed the class teacher with whom they had been assigned and in their observation grid (OG), they describe lessons as being taught mostly in the expository method. A very recurrent remark from those observation grids is that :

*“ The teacher gives all the information and she was talking all the time.”(OG)*

*“ The teacher explains all the time and gives all necessary information”(OG)*

*“ The teacher was talking all the time and was giving the students all necessary information”(OG)*

We cannot fail to notice the expressions such as “gives all information”, “explains”, “talking all the time” which are typical of expository teaching. In a sample of observation grids, this remark comes out in recurrently in those OGs.

*“All the questions were prepared in advance and there were no interaction.the pupils participated only by repeating after the teacher,”*

It must be pointed out that most of the primary school teachers have been following training courses at the MIE in one way or another. In spite of having been or being currently in the process of being trained at the MIE where a more constructivist approach is advocated, the teachers (in-service trainee teachers with long years of experience) admit to using most of the time the expository/demonstration approach accompanied by drill exercises.

A new trainee teacher explains teaching strategies in the primary schools:

*“ Lecturing is mostly used when the teachers are introducing a new lesson where they explain and give a lot of details..... Questioning is a strategy which is used in almost every day class....”(questionnaire)*

One of the older trainee teachers explains why she uses modelling as a strategy:

*“I explain and demonstrate the skill. Students practice with teachers' feedback. All students can see and hear the explanation and demonstration.(Questionnaire)*

Emphasis is on drill and practice in the upper primary schools and on skills which are not meaningful and rote learning is encouraged as the main aim of both teacher and pupil is to obtain the highest marks. For example pupils can locate and

name all the rivers and mountains of Mauritius on maps but are not able to recognise them in real-life contexts. Some of the teachers even go to the extent of giving the answers to the scientific experiments proposed in the prescribed books without going through the process of experimenting and demonstrating in front of the whole class (this has been reported by TCP (Teacher's Certificate Primary) students who go on their School-based Experience and witnessed some of the classroom practices of the class teachers). The following transcript from the questionnaire of a trainee teacher describes the class teacher's attitude to learning and the examinations:

*"The teacher was more of the "talk and chalk" type, but in topics like essay writing, he used the group work method. He knew his subject very well. During the class, his students were very attentive and at a point of time, I had the impression that he laid much emphasis on giving **good results** than children's education or needs."*

As for the teachers teaching Asian languages, most of them are still using very traditional approaches to teaching as testified by this trainee teacher:

*"The mentor with whom I was attached knew her subject very well, But the teaching methods that she was using was only lecturing and questioning. Brainstorming was done only in standard VI..... The teacher sticks to what is in the book and he/she never or rarely adds something new ..."(ques.)*

Another trainee-teacher in A.L. describes the attitude of Asian language teachers in such terms:

*"In most school, there is still the "talk and chalk" method. They come in class, deliver the lesson and go away. Sometimes, they come without a lesson plan. They don't take learning styles into consideration...,.....The teachers are some times very strict and authoritarian, thus the pupils are afraid to approach them."(ques.)*

Therefore teaching in our primary schools is mostly the mere transmission of knowledge. The main intellectual skills which teachers aim at developing in the children are of a very low order, that is, memorisation and understanding. Instead of guiding pupils towards higher-order skills such as explaining, synthesising, and evaluating, the teacher goes through all these processes him/herself in an expository manner. In such a class context, students are very passive and as Shor (1992) points out:

*"..the actual cognitive levels of students are hard to measure in teacher-centered classrooms where students participate minimally" (Shor,1992:21)*

In such a set-up, there is no room for child-centredness. This means that the child does not have the opportunity to participate actively in her own learning, her autonomy is curtailed and scaffolding and emotional support from peers are minimal, her thinking skills are limited to the lower-order, that is, critical and creative thinking is not being developed. All these characteristics of teaching in the primary classroom are detrimental to the full cognitive, social and emotional development of the child. This situation has led Griffiths (2002) to describe teaching and learning in our primary schools as “unequal learning opportunities” and has a very severe judgement on the teaching and learning process in this country:

*“Equality of opportunity to learning does not exist in the Mauritian primary education system. The ability of children to learn in school is assessed and categorised, according to general rather than individual expectations, These do not take into account the various learning and developmental starting points and stages which children bring into the act of learning at school. Children have different starting points yet they are cast in the same mould, expected to display a uniform ‘good performance’ in class and at examinations.” (Griffiths in Bunwaree,2002:38)*

However there is hope that classroom practices are in the process of changing as it is being observed that in the lower primary classes, some teachers, especially the younger ones, who have been newly trained, and some others of the older generation, who have become convinced of the necessity of innovating in their classroom practices have started to change their approach. These changes have been witnessed by trainee teachers who report that:

*“discovery learning, cooperative learning and peer tutoring are being used by some teachers of general purpose”*

In some schools, such as Rose-Belle North G.S., it is reported that all the desks are arranged in groups and that group work is a common feature of teaching in those schools. Therefore we can say that young teachers in the primary sector are more and more adopting a more “Constructivist” approach to teaching and learning.

In the Asian language classes also a change in pedagogy is being observed among newly trained teachers as witnessed by the trainee teachers (new recruits):

*“For the lower classes at R. E. W. G. School, the Hindi teacher makes use of lots of flash cards, uses brainstorming method and made learning through games a great success. Drawings, charts, and teaching aids were also being used”*

For the Asian Language teachers also, new approaches are being adopted at the level of the lower primary classes only as in the upper primary, the teachers cannot afford to take up time through lengthy processes as they have to prepare the pupils for the exams and the expository method and rote learning are the rule in those circumstances.

The pedagogical approach in the Roman Catholic Aided Schools, may be different to some extent from that practised in the government primary schools. In the RCA schools, an inclusive pedagogy has been adopted for some time and the teachers have been following additional training courses organised by the Roman Catholic authorities. How far this inclusive pedagogy has been successful has not yet been researched but it would seem that the teachers are using a more "constructivist" approach in their teaching generally as reported by this trainee teacher about teaching at Notre Dame de la Paix R.C.A:

*" The teachers are very active.. there are various teaching strategies from day to day. The students were really motivated, The various teaching strategies used are as follows: Direct Teaching, group work or cooperative learning, peer tutoring,..."*

The differences in teaching approaches between the RCA school teachers and the Government Schools teachers must be the subject of a research.

A constructivist approach to teaching is deemed by educational psychologists to be the approach which is most conducive to help in the all –round development of the child. In the constructivist classroom the learner gets the opportunity to build on prior knowledge and understanding to construct new knowledge and understanding from authentic experience. Through teaching strategies such as "brain storming", "mind-mapping", "inductive teaching", and "cooperative learning", students are set in a learning environment where they can think laterally, that is they can explore possibilities, invent alternative solutions (problem-solving), collaborate with other students (or external experts), try out ideas and hypotheses, revise their thinking. In other words, students have full opportunities to make use of higher-order intellectual skills such as "application", "analysis", "synthesis", and "evaluation".

Unfortunately these progressive approaches to teaching and learning remains only at a rhetorical level for most teachers in the primary sector of education in Mauritius.

The Ministry of education and the MIE are trying to promote a more progressive pedagogy based on the recent theories of learning and several committees have been set up by the Ministry to look into pedagogical practices in the primary sector but this enterprise is fraught with heavy difficulties. If the teaching and learning process being practised in our primary schools is still of the traditional type, it is due to forces beyond the control of the teachers themselves. Factors such as the educational system, the primary school culture, the evaluation system, and historical factors are the main barriers on the road to reforming pedagogical practices in our primary schools.

### **The system:**

It is difficult for teachers to change from teacher- centeredness to child - centeredness in a system where the school is merely a selecting agent. The overt aim of the school is to educate all children but in reality the covert aim is to select the “best” pupils for the “best” secondary schools as all secondary schools are not of the same status and quality. Though state secondary schools have been built in many different localities of the island, there are still large numbers of primary school - leavers who can only expect to gain access to private schools where very often standards are lower than in the state schools. The State secondary schools are therefore more highly-esteemed by parents and pupils who would like their children to attend those schools. The element of selection associated with the examinations, especially the CPE means that competition is rife, even now after the abolition of ranking as explained above, there are still secondary schools which are not up to standard and pupils are competing for admission to the best “schools”. In such a context, teacher-centeredness, rote learning and competition is the rule.

“Democratisation” of education has led to overcrowded classes of 40 to fifty pupils in a class in urban areas. There is no room for pedagogical practices catering for the individual needs of the child. Anyway practicing differentiation in overcrowded classrooms where there is scarcely space for the teacher to walk between the rows is hardly realistic. Such overcrowded classes will continue to exist for a long time

especially in urban areas where there is a high demand for certain schools which have been classified as “good schools “ by parents because of the high percentage of passes achieved in those schools. It is difficult to imagine how teachers will change their practices in such circumstances.

### **The Nature of Assessment:**

The ultimate culprit causing the deficiencies in pedagogical practices in our primary classrooms may be the nature of assessment prevailing in our educational system. In this traditional context, children have been assessed through their achievements in summative form of evaluation at the end of each academic year throughout their six-year stay at the primary school. The most important of these assessments being the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE). It must be pointed out that the papers for end-of-year examinations at each standard are set by the Ministry of education. Examinations papers are modelled most of the time on the final school leaving examination in the primary, that is, the CPE. Seventy per cent ( 70%) of each paper at the CPE test ELCs (Essential Learning competencies),that is, through items which demands merely recall of facts and comprehension. We must ask ourselves whether “Essential Learning Competencies” must necessarily mean recall of facts and comprehension. The fact that 70% of the papers test merely recall of fact has encouraged teachers to merely transmit knowledge by “telling” and “explaining” rather than developing higher-order intellectual skills, such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation among pupils. The format of the examinations papers means that the students are being assessed for the maximum amount of knowledge which they absorb through rote learning and which they must reproduce.

Therefore teachers adopt a very conservative approach which will ensure that the whole syllabus is covered and that the pupils are trained to look for cues and hints to be able to answer examinations questions correctly. In such a situation the class teacher has the tendency to stick to the prescribed books only in her teaching. This is highlighted in the trainee teachers OGs through a recurrent remark such as the following:



*“The children were taught exactly what was in the book. In other words, the teacher made use of the book only as working material.”*

*“She taught them only from the book.”*

*“She used the book a lot to explain”*

Sticking to the books only is to make sure that the pupils know the content of the book from cover to cover in order to be able to tackle examinations questions which are based mainly on the prescribed books' content. This aspect of teaching is a hint that only expository teaching is taking place. Primary school teachers' habit of using only the prescribed books in her teaching, precludes any innovative practices in the teachers' methods of teaching.

The way pupils answer examinations questions seem to reflect the way pupils are being taught in class. The MES report for the year 2000, repeatedly directs our attention to the fact that students are most of the time answering in a mechanical way, reflecting the fact that they are reproducing what they have learnt by rote. From the way pupils answer the examinations questions, we can infer that teachers teach as far as possible the precise content of tests, that is knowledge and skills taught are in the same format as the test papers rather than upon real learning. In such a context, emphasis is not on learning but on performance and competition.

The format of the tests and the element of selection will make teachers very reluctant to change their practices, that is, from a transmission model to a constructivist model. Adopting approaches such as “differentiation”, “active learning”, and “cooperative learning” to cater for the needs and learning styles of the individual child, by teachers is very rare in primary school classrooms as these practices take time and the Mauritian teacher does not have time to spare for those who cannot absorb facts rapidly; though it does not mean that they do not believe in the importance of innovative practices.

The result is that about 40% if not more, of those sitting for the CPE exams fail. It is a high percentage of failures compared to countries like Singapore, etc. This means a high degree of waste of resources and loss for the country in terms of human resources.

The abolition of ranking in the assessment of pupils at the CPE examinations may have led to some changes in the amount of pressure exerted over teachers and pupils in the way teaching and learning take place in the primary classroom.

For decades, the whole life of the school had been geared towards grooming pupils for achieving at least a pass grade at the Primary School Leaving examination or whatever name it has been given, be it Junior Scholarship, PSLC or CPE. School life had mainly centered around “finishing the syllabus, rehashing past test papers,”

We would like to think that all this is past us and that a new era is beginning in the life of our primary schools but according to observations and reports from teachers and inspectors, teachers are still teaching to the test.

### **The current pedagogy and the cognitive development of children:**

In her paper entitled “*Pedagogy Thinking Skills and Assessment*” ( MIE journal of Education 2003), Payneeandy analysed the CPE examinations for year 2000 and argued that the pedagogy being practised in our primary schools does not promote the development of higher order-thinking skills among our children.

The most striking feature of that analysis is that our primary school children at the end of six years of schooling are poorly endowed in such skills as: analysing, synthesising, making inferences and generalisations and writing, creatively. In other words, those children have not been trained by teachers to develop higher-order intellectual skills. Yet Fisher (1998) tells us that the skills which have been

*“identified as necessary for students to cope thoughtfully with the growth of information technology are the following: analysing, categorising, evaluating, explaining, formulating questions, making hypotheses, making inferences, observing, predicting, synthesising” (p.219).*

Payneeandy goes on to explain that the primary school children's lack of training in reasoning and complex thinking is proved when she gives evidence through her analysis of the MES examinations report that most of the pupils who sat for the year 2001 examinations were unable to tackle real higher-order questions in the exams papers, that is "unseen" questions, whose answers were not directly in the prescribed books and which could not have been prepared by the students and teachers before the examinations. She argues that the high rate of failure in these types of questions means that the children of our primary schools are being drilled into answering only lower –order questions. In fact whenever the answer to a question does not come directly from the prescribed text-book, a large proportion of candidates had difficulties to answer that question. In such a framework, students fail to get the opportunities to develop higher-order thinking.

### **The teachers and School culture:**

The primary school culture in Mauritius seems to be resistant to change. The teachers are all people who have received the same type of training though their academic qualifications may differ. In theory, the pedagogical practices of teachers should have been influenced by the type of training they have undergone but in our primary schools, pedagogical practice seem to be strongly influenced by traditions which have come down to us from our colonial past the past. It would seem that the school culture is stronger than the philosophy of the training courses.

Even with the abolition of CPE ranking, cramming for exams still continues in our primary schools though perhaps at a less intensive rate.

Considering the importance given to the CPE exams in the educational career of the Mauritian child, educational administrators as well as the wider community of parents and other interested stakeholders do not generally support teachers in innovative practices as their main concern is the percentage of passes. This is a culture where the emphasis is upon the "productivity" of the teacher. Her reputation will depend upon the percentage of passes in her class at the end of the year. The higher the percentage of passes, the better the reputation. This results in "good" teachers with high percentage of passes and "bad" teachers with low percentage of passes. These are terms commonly used in the Primary school jargon in

Mauritius. This emphasis on productivity influences the teacher's approach in class and her main aim is to "finish the syllabus" and engage the pupils in drill exercises where they learn to look for cues and hints to pass examinations. Thus the last term being devoted solely to practice and drill as pupils are made to work through past examinations papers. In such circumstances, teaching can only be "teacher-centred".

The syllabus is so overloaded that teachers complete schoolwork during tuition time. In fact private tuition is a continuation of schoolwork. Many teachers of standard V and VI (CPE) start class at 8.00 hrs in the morning instead of 9.00 hrs for the rest of the school. Such type of practices does not leave much space for innovative practices.

Changing teaching strategies will necessarily mean changing the seating arrangements of pupils especially when using group work as a teaching approach. Though many of the teachers mentioned above affirm that they practice group work, to one of the questions asking about the seating arrangement of their pupils, they confirm that pupils are seated in the traditional manner in the bus-type seating arrangement (*la classe autobus*). It is difficult to imagine cooperative learning in such a setting. The following remark from a trainee teacher explains the class teacher's frame of mind and attitude towards group work:

*"The teacher was not motivated to do group work, She did not like her class to be noisy."*

However it must be pointed out that in the lower primary (standards I-III), pupils are seated in groups in a certain number of schools, especially in the ZEP schools.

In the primary school culture, the "good" class teacher is the one whose class is a silent one. We can call that the "silent class syndrome". In the perception of heads of schools or even that of inspectors whether primary or secondary, a silent class is one where learning is taking place. There is no noise. It has been reported by teachers that whenever there is some noise or laughs coming from a classroom, the head sends somebody to enquire about what is happening in that class or he himself will come around and peep in that class. Otherwise the noisy class teacher may be made to feel guilty by the HT or DHT by being told that such and such

teacher is a very good teacher as he has a very good class control “ *Dans so classe ene mousse pas bougé*”.

In such circumstances the children are encouraged or even drilled to become passive. Interaction between pupils and pupils and teacher and pupils are not promoted. According to educational psychologists the more interaction in class the more learning takes place.

In such a system, emphasis is upon the amount of content covered by the teacher. The teacher's main concern in the primary schools of Mauritius is to “finish the syllabus”. There is considerable pressure for the teacher to complete the whole syllabus within a certain number of months, that is the two first terms, leaving the third term for drill exercises.

The school culture is so strong that, as it has been pointed out above, certain subjects such as Arts and Physical Education are not being taught in many classes and even in many schools, more especially in standards V and VI where teachers are always running out of time to “finish the syllabus”.

To help teachers in their task of reinforcing rote learning, there are model answer books which are being sold on the market and which are full of drill exercises which respond to the character of the CPE examinations. These books are not generally prescribed by the Ministry of Education but are prepared by Mauritian nationals who have been former teachers or who are still in service and they write these books with business in mind. There are at least 10 sets of books on the market. Most pupils possess at least one set of these additional books and children from well-off families may possess 2 or 3 sets of these books as they take tuition with different teachers.

These books are profitable to the authors but they are also of great help to the school-teachers whose work in training pupils to answer examinations questions is greatly being facilitated. These books are being freely sold in our primary schools with the blessing of head teachers and inspectors. The exercises in these books are in the format of questions set in our CPE exams papers that is, they cater for lower-order thinking skills, such as “knowledge” and “comprehension”.

### **The parents and classroom practices:**

The traditional classroom practices may be reinforced by the attitude of parents towards the teachers' classroom practices. Parents' resistance to change may be one of the highest hurdle on the path of pedagogical reform. Parents' opinions weigh very heavily in the balance against the will of the authorities to reform our educational system as they possess voting power. Through a poor knowledge of the value of new pedagogical approaches in the context of a changing world of work, parents have been known to oppose any change brought by many of our teachers who are often complaining about the power of parents to influence their practice. Therefore many of our teachers may be willing to adopt new teaching strategies as they confirm in their questionnaires but the influence of parents are too strong to oppose them. It would seem that some parents may be powerful enough to demand the transfer of teachers who do not meet with their approval. Another reason why teachers may bow in the face of the opposition of parents is that parents have become their direct employers through the practice of private tuition. Teachers cannot afford to displease the parents.

### **Private Tuition:**

Though private tuition is supposed to be 'private' and is not the State's concern, it now forms an integral part of our primary education sector as the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research gives official recognition to this practice by allowing teachers to use the school premises for this business. "Private Tuition" has become parallel system of instruction, which is making the parents subsidize primary education.

The original aim of private tuition was to help students with learning difficulties, gradually this practice got perverted when most pupils were having tuition with their class teacher. This practice became more perverted with the democratisation of schooling, the scarcity of good secondary schools and the rampant competition. The situation has been succinctly described in the "Situational analysis of women and Children in Mauritius" by UNICEF in 1998.

*Private tuition after school hours has become an inevitable scourge in such a competitive system. Although parents are becoming increasingly sensitized to the possible negative consequences of such pressures on their children, the existing system does not seem to provide them with any other alternative. There are reports that children who opt out of the system are marginalized or even ignored by teachers. It should be noted that at the primary level, the school teachers themselves give tuition to their class pupils (sometimes virtually the whole class) after school hours. Tuition in this context is merely an extension of school hours with the only difference that the teacher is paid for the effort he puts in after school hours. The premises where tuition is given to large numbers of children are sometimes totally inadequate and overcrowded” (UNICEF report 1998-p.38).*

According to data obtained from this research, most children from government and aided schools are taking private tuition with their class teacher. There are others, generally belonging to more well-off families, who admit to taking more than one tuition with a teacher other than the class-teacher.

The practice of private tuition reinforces the transmission model as the teachers literally spoon-feed the students to make sure that they pass their examinations. How far this spoon-feeding practice makes learning effective has yet to be proved.

With private tuition, there are other ways in which the rights and well-being of the child are being constrained. The most important ones being the following:

- children who are really in need of special pedagogical support because of learning difficulties are not getting any kind of special help as the tuition is being dispensed to the whole class.
- children spend long hours - ( from eight in the morning to 17.00hours sometimes to even 18.00 hours during school days) studying a lot of information which may not be meaningful to them. Work associated with tuition continues at home with the amount of home work which has to be accomplished.
- Leisure activities in the form of play which are essential in the development of the child are curtailed for a large number of children as will be explained in the chapter on the “leisure Activities “ of children.
- Children are forced to carry the heavy burden of their bags full of books to be used during tuition – Carrying such heavy load on their back may cause a lot of harm to the bone structure of the child and hamper them in their movement so that going to school may be a painful experience.

- Some parents have solved the problem of the heavy burden by providing their children with bags on wheels but this can prove to be dangerous for many children, who have to walk to go to school especially in the busy streets of towns, as the children have the tendency to walk on the street where the bags can glide easily, the pavement proving to be uneven and bumpy for the bags on wheels.

## **THE LITERACY PROBLEM**

A large number of children who leave the primary school after six years of schooling are illiterates. Illiteracy is the source of failure for a large percentage of pupils at the end of the primary cycle. Research (Payneeandy 2003) has shown that the percentage of children who cannot read and write in English and French is around 40%, after having studied those languages for six years. A figure which tallies with the high percentage of failure at the CPE exams.

This is a situation which has been perpetuated during decades as a high rate of failures (between 35 to 40 %) has always been registered at the final examinations in the primary sector. This is a worrying state of affairs for a country whose main resource is its human resources which must be skilled. and which has entered a period in time where economies are being based upon knowledge and the management of knowledge. The training of our human resources start in our schools and if the schools do not fulfill their mission to the full, the country will suffer a lot in this highly competitive world.

Among of the basics of human resource training are literacy and numeracy but these basic skills are not being achieved for large numbers of our children, Can the country afford such wastage of its resources.

However, when compared to other developing countries o the African continent, Mauritius obtains the highest scores in literacy. Thus in the MLA UNESCO/UNICEF report, we discover that among all the countries participating in the project, Mauritius with a mean score of 63.2 comes just after Tunisia and Morocco with a mean score of 77.9 and 67.6 respectively in literacy. (samples were collected from 60 schools). In numeracy also, Mauritius has the highest mean scores the (A case-study of an illiterate child of twelve years old and his problems)



### **The dangers of illiteracy:**

Illiteracy is not only a big handicap in the personal development of an individual in a knowledge based economy. The individual will not have access to secondary education and will not be able to live in an autonomous manner and thus will naturally drift towards unskilled work and even unemployment. In many cases these individuals join the underworld of crime and thus become liabilities for society.

In this highly competitive world, the good health of the economy of our republic will depend to a large extent on the availability of a highly skilled and literate labour force.

Why is it that a large percentage of the children of the Republic are illiterates at the end of six year schooling. Among the many reasons are the following:

- An archaic system which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century
- A curriculum which rests upon the content aspect.
- The absence of a clear language policy
- A evaluation system which evaluates quantity rather than quality.
- Overcrowded classrooms

The culture of the school where the reputation of the teacher depends upon the percentage of passes. Teachers have the tendency to neglect the children with very low abilities (working with them may be very time-consuming) while concentrating on improving the results of the average and bright pupils. In such circumstances, the teacher does not have enough time to devote to the individual child and differentiation is a strange concept for them. Those pupils who can adapt to the current pedagogy, that is, that of a transmission model are those who are able to learn to read and write while those who cannot, are abandoned to their fate of becoming illiterate.

In the wake of the vast reform programmes of our educational system, the State has decided to try to cater for the needs of these forgotten children.

One of the ways of taking care of those children for whom there is no time to spare in the normal curriculum has been to extend the school day for a half hour to enable the teachers to find time to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of those children. Extending the school day was not enough, the Ministry of education had to propose a pedagogical programme to help teacher to support those children who needed special care in literacy and numeracy.

This programme does not only take care of the children with reading and writing difficulties only but also of all children whose competencies have to be enriched. This programme takes care of all the primary school children at all levels. This new project is activity- based while helping the children to learn literacy and numeracy skills.

### **Children with special Needs and their Rights:**

Though children with special needs are now considered to include all children who, for whatever reason, continue to face barriers to learning, in this part of the report, emphasis will be more on the condition of children with a range of physical, sensory, intellectual or emotional impairments.

It is difficult to know the exact number of special needs children as there do not seem to be any official statistics on handicapped children. The only figures available are those provided by the 1998 UNICEF situational analysis of children in Mauritius report which says that there may be about 6000 of these children though only 1000 are to be found in schools are other specialised institutions.

Children with special needs are not all to be found in the primary school system. In the “Conventions on the Rights of the Child - Situation in Mauritius” – the report makes this very pertinent remark:

*“Disabled children encounter lots of difficulties to accede to regular primary school and even specialised schools.” (UNICEF 1998 – article 23)*

The only institutions which cater for the needs of those children are private and run by NGO'S. In her book entitled "The Rights of the Child in Mauritius, Lam Hung (2001) gives a list of those specialised schools. (p. 59-60):

**.Table 18- Specialised Schools for children with Special Needs**

Disabilities	Institution	No. of children
The blind	Lois Lagesse Trust Fund	15
	Lizié dans la Main	10
The deaf	Hear Institute(APDA)	75
	School for the Deaf(Jomadar Centre)	109
The Physically impaired	FMMH	12
The Mentally handicapped	Educationally subnormal school	100
	APEIM	302
	CEDEM	66
	APEBS	35
	Save the Children	15
	Amour sans Frontieres	10
	APRIM	15
	CEPEH	35
	Association des handicapés de l'est	25
	Reve et Espoir	22

The parents of those children with heavy physical and mental difficulties, have preferred to send them to these specialised schools where they think the needs of their children will be attended to, in a more specialised way because at the level of the formal system of education where no provision had been made for their needs so far.

Even with the existing institutions, their number is not enough to cater for the needs of all the disabled children. The UNICEF report also deplores the lack of specialised institutions to cater for the needs of the handicapped children in Mauritius:

*"There are very few institutions that deal with children in difficult circumstances and norms have not yet been defined specifically."* (Article 3)

The State's contribution to the welfare of these children is through grants to those specialised associations such as the school for the Blind, the school for the Deaf, APEIM, Lizié dans la main, etc. The children from those schools are given facilities by the Ministry of Education to participate in the national examinations, such as the CPE

For some cases of special needs such as for those children suffering from Cerebral Palsy (CP), the quality of care which they have received so far in general, leaves much to be desired. According to L'Express of 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2004, in June of this same year, 125 parents of children suffering from Cerebral Palsy met to discuss about the problems of these children and their future life as citizens of this country. The fact that no provision has been made of the special needs of the children suffering from CP. One of the parents expressed himself in these terms about their common concern for the education of their children:

*“ Le gouvernement n’a encore rien mis a leur disposition et les parents doivent avoir recours a quelques écoles spécialisées privées pour pouvoir assurer l’épanouissement de leurs enfants et leur permettre de se développer au mieux selon leurs potentiels respectifs.....Les résultats positifs déjà obtenus grace au devouement des éducateurs demontrent la nécessité de rendre l’éducation spécialisée accessible a tous les enfants IMC”*

These parents are concerned about the fact that they and their children have to depend only on some ill-equipped day-care centres where the children are not able to develop their full potential.

## **THE SCHOOLS’ INFRASTRUCTURE and other facilities:**

It is universally agreed that the teaching/learning process is more effective when it takes place in an agreeable physical environment which is child-friendly. Therefore we are going to examine how far the primary school environment in Mauritius is favours the development of the child and we are going to analyse the condition of the following: the Buildings, the Toilets, the School yard, the recreational facilities, library facilities.

### **The Buildings:**

The Government primary schools are mostly of recent construction that is, since independence and are mostly building made of concrete which more or less resemble each other.

Their differences lie in their location, neighbourhood and clientele which can influence the status enjoyed by the different schools. Thus we have urban,

suburban and rural and even there we have got schools in the big villages and those in the small villages.

Though the government with the help of the World Bank undertook an elaborate programme of renovation, expansion, erection and equipping of primary schools in the 1970's and 1980's,

*“ a survey undertaken in 1990 showed both deficiencies and substantial differences in physical conditions and material provision.” (Master Plan 1991,:62)*

The reason for these differences in the physical aspects of primary schools is explained by the same Master Plan:

*“The primary schools have been constructed at different times, and have been equipped in haphazard ways.” (Master Plan: 62)*

These words printed in 1991, that is, about 13 years ago are still relevant in 2004. With the onset of the educational reforms by the new government, changes are being brought and many primary schools have been upgraded and improved but there are still a lot of infrastructural problems in our primary schools as testified by both teachers and pupils and even reported in our newspapers.

On the other hand, the UNICEF/UNESCO survey called “Monitoring Learning Achievement” (MLA) carried out by the MES reveals that *“98.3% and 96.6% of the primary institutions surveyed (a sample of 52 schools) reported that the rooms are adequately ventilated and lit respectively.”* and that *“Water and electricity are always available in all schools” (p.69)*

This same report also informs us that compared to many other African countries( in the project), Mauritius has the highest classroom furniture index as the following table demonstrate:

**Table 19 Classroom Furniture Index for some African Countries**

	Classroom Furniture Index	
	Mean	SD
Botswana	4.9	1.2
Madagascar	3.5	1.4
Malawi	1.8	1.3
Mali	4.5	0.8
Mauritius	5.9	0.3
Morocco	4.9	0.5
Niger	3.6	1.7
Senegal	5.1	1.1
Tunisia	4.8	0.4
Uganda	3.4	1.4
Zambia	3.6	1.5

(MLA report –table 8.11, p. 108)

### **The Toilets:**

According to the UNESCO/UNICEF project report on “Monitoring Learning Achievement” (MLA)( Figure 8.14 p. 111), the primary schools in Mauritius are among the ones which have a low “lack of amenities Index” compared to the schools of other countries participating in the survey. The index ranges from 0 to 6 and Mauritius has an index of 1.4 compared to an index of 3.31 for Madagascar, an index of 2.1 for Tunisia and an index of 1.8 for Morocco. The schools of Mauritius seem to be better equipped in terms of amenities such as water, electricity, toilet/sewerage facilities than countries like Morocco and Tunisia . Yet a more qualitative approach in investigating the amenities available in our primary schools reveal certain aspects which cannot be gathered through a quantitative research. In terms of number of toilets and water points, the statistics would tally with the requirements of a primary school, but the quality may leave much to be desired in some cases. This is what this research reveals through the analysis of the open questions of my questionnaires, interviews and observation.

The condition of the toilets have always been a major problem in state-owned primary schools. Children and teachers have always been complaining of dirty and unkept toilets. Even though in many of the schools the toilet block has been reconditioned or rebuilt by the authorities or by a benevolent sponsor, there are still schools where the foul smell of the toilets is a cause of discomfort for pupils as well as for teachers.

After analysing the answers of teachers from the questionnaire, it would appear that the present state of toilets in primary schools fall into three categories:

- the very clean
- the moderately clean
- the squalid toilets

The very clean:

The teachers' questionnaires reveal that a good number of primary school toilets have been rebuilt or re-conditioned and that there is regular cleaning of the toilets. The following answers from teachers' questionnaire give us an idea of this type of the school toilets:

:*"The toilets are well-kept, they are washed twice a day"* ( School in Vacoas (John Kennedy Rd School )

*"Clean and well-conditioned but too close to classrooms"* (Rose-belle North G.S)

*The toilets are being kept clean in spite of the poor conditions* "(Plaine Magnien)

*"Freshly built as the school building itself a new one- all shining new". "They are cleaned regularly and they are rather in good condition"* (Camp Thorel)

:*"Newly renovated toilets with tiles and kept clean"* (Camp Fouquereaux G. S.)

*"Toilets are cleaned twice daily, so they are clean during the whole day"* (Bheewa Mahdoo: (Riviere du Rempart):

*" Very clean Tiled floor is washed twice daily"* (Poudre D'Or Hamlet Govt. School)

Other schools which have been reported to possess clean toilets are :

Phoenix, Grand Bois, Chemin Grenier, Belle Rose (Beau Sejour), Fond du Sac, Brisée Verdiere Govt School, New Bambous G.S., La Gaulette G. S., Grand River North West, Esperance Trebuchet G.S, De la Salle RCA, Notre Dame de la Paix RCA ,Trou Aux Biches and many others.

The teachers confirm that not only new toilets block have been built but they are being maintained clean regularly by private firms of cleaning.

The moderately clean

In spite of renovation or rebuilding, there are some schools where the cleanliness of the toilets is still a problem. They may be in good physical condition but the cleanliness leaves much to be desired when there are water cuts and even during rainy days when it is all too muddy. This is testified by the teachers:

*"The toilets have just been repaired, tiles have been placed but cleanliness is not to the satisfaction of every one"* (Baichoo Madhoo G.S., Quatre Bornes)

*"Due to the lack of water, sometimes they are not cleaned though there are new toilets with new equipment."* ( Ramnarain G.S Terre Rouge)

*'The toilets of the pupils were being cleaned often but yet it had a stinking smell"* (Louis Nellan G.S.)

*"Toilets are clean but when there is water cut, there is a bad smell".*(School in Port Louis)

In spite of renovation some schools cannot boast of very clean toilets because of the large number of pupils:

*"The toilets have recently been renovated. But with the large school population, the hygienic conditions seem to be lacking and in the afternoon bad smell comes from the toilets"*

Speaking of the same school, another teacher describes the situation thus:

*" Most of the time, the toilets are dirty, water every where – There are tiles on the floor and its very slippery and wet and present a danger."* (Hugh Otter Barry G.S , Curepipe Road)

### The Squalid Toilets:

On the other hand there are still some schools which have been reported to possess toilets in very poor conditions and there is often a very bad smell which is source of discomfort to the pupils and teachers:

A teacher describes the toilets at Louis Nellan G.S. in this way:

*"The toilets are not clean, there is a bad smell and the flushing system is not good."*

Another school at Citée Atlee Forest Side is thus described:

*" Poor conditions. Toilets are in the same condition as they were since they were built long time ago (25years). Very recently tiles have been provided to improve the condition. Sometimes we have shortage of water, One can imagine how unbearable is the odour. Some teachers have to close the shutters which face the toilets to get rid of the odour."*

The following are remarks about the condition of the toilets in some schools of the Republic:



*“ Bad and pungent smell, dirty. Need to be washed often. Uncomfortable and incorrect for using especially for staff.” (Vuillemin Govt school)*

*“ The toilets are in bad conditions and very unhygienic.”*

*“The toilets are very old and are not well drained. A very bad smell arises during the afternoon.*

*Toilet for staff is in a bad condition (Grand Bois):*

*“Dirty, misused, smelling, not maintained” (Quatre Cocos Govt. School)*

*“Very often found to be dirty and muddy during rainy season” ( Fond Du Sac G.S.)*

In some schools the old smelly toilets though banned have not been demolished and is a source of discomfort for the children and teachers:

*Ancient toilets are closed and banned but still very bad odours persist. The newly built toilets are quite good” ( Bhewa Madhoo)*

In some schools the buildings are very old and have not been renovated so that the toilets are in a very bad state of repairs. This is the case for Calebasses G.S.and for Doorgachurn HurryG.S.:

*“They are washed daily They are clean but the problem is that they are very old ones and times there is a bad smell”*

A young trainee teacher describes the Callebasses G.S. where she was a pupil:

*“Toilets are very dirty and very old. I was reluctant to go to the toilet. I attended the same school some 15 years back and the toilets are still the same.*

*“ Very old Built in1953-Outdated – very dirty” (Doorgachurn Hurry GS)*

*“ The children’s toilets were very dirty and a bad odour coming from them and disturbing classes near them”(Lady L. Ringadoo G.S.)*

Other schools where the toilets have been described as very dirty are the following:

Rajiv Gandhi G.S., Villiers René G.S., Labourdonnais G.S., Fond Du Sac G.S.,etc.

Apart from being in bad conditions, some school toilets are dark. Teachers have reported of badly lit toilets such as in Brisee Verdiere:

*“Quite Clean but not well-lit”*

This complaint about the darkness inside toilets is echoed again by other teachers as by this one from an urban school, namely Villiers René G.S., where apart from being *“very dirty and unhygienic , bad smell disturbing the children in the classrooms, are also very dark”*

The darkness inside toilets can be a source of danger for children.

Some teachers raise the issue of caretakers not doing their jobs properly. This teacher explains the reason for the lack of cleanliness of the toilets:

*“ The toilets are not clean. The caretakers do not give enough attention whether they should clean the toilet or not. The toilets are well furnished but lack cleanliness”*

This may be the case in a good number of schools where it has been reported that caretakers may sometimes refuse to obey the head teachers’ orders.

Therefore to circumvent this problem, the ministry is seeking private firms to clean the school toilets and this is confirmed by the teachers

*“Apart from caretakers, now workers from special cleaning services are posted in schools for the purpose of cleaning toilets...”*

This may be the reason why quite a good number of primary school toilets are in more or less good state of cleanliness.

### **The schoolyards and Recreational Facilities:**

It would seem that most schools have had their schoolyard asphalted during the recent years. Large areas of dusty playground in the dry season and muddy playground in the rainy season are on the decrease in our primary schools but the size of the school yard do pose a problem when it is too exiguous for a large school population.

Recreational facilities in the primary school yards are very rare except for some rare ones in rural areas. In fact, according to what the teachers and trainee teachers have reported, it has been possible to classify schoolyards into three categories in terms of school yard and recreational facilities:

1. Spacious school-yards with sports facilities
2. Spacious school-yards without sports facilities
3. Very exiguous school-yards for large school population.

In the first category, the school-yard is described as being very spacious, with large space of asphalted ground where children play at badminton, volley-ball and basket-ball. In some schools there are even volley ball and basket-ball pitches. The teachers speak of these school yards as being well-kept with decorative plants

in different corners. These schools are mainly the rural ones such as Ramnarain Roy Government School at Bel Air, P. Shibchurn G.S., Rajiv Gandhi GS., New Bamboo G.S. , La Gaulette G.S , Grad Bois and Trois Boutique G.S. Some of the ZEP schools, such as Xavier Barbe G.S. also fall in this category.

Rural schools have a great advantage over urban schools. Rural schools can boast of large playgrounds which sometimes possess volley-ball pitch such as the one in Plaine Magnien government school which is being described by one of the teachers working there:

*“ Large asphalted yard with volley-ball pitch, and also a basket-ball pitch. Spacious grassy areas used also as playground (regularly mown). Nice atmosphere, with plenty of fruit trees... Nice infrastructure for practising sport activities etc....”*

Another school, the Phoenix government school, also possesses:

*“ a newly built football pitch, an asphalted yard , a green space behind the school and a small playground”*

A student –teacher describes the school-yard of La Gaulette G.S. in the following terms:

*“The school’s environment is very clean and the school’s yard is full of beautiful flowers, fruit trees. There is a very spacious play-ground and there is an open –space for reading in the school yard.”*

However, there are urban schools whose school yard fall into this first category as for example for a school in Curepipe which is managed by the RCA which seems to possess sports facilities:

*“the schoolyard is asphalted and marked for sports activities and games”*

In the second category, the school-yards are very spacious but there is very little sports facilities or none at all. Among these schools it would seem that the following fall in this category: Sir A. Jugnauth G.S., Louis Nellan G.S, Sookdeo Bissoondoyal G.S. and Sir Abdool Rahman Osman G.S.

This trainee teacher explains the situation in an urban school:

*“ There are no sports facilities, the head teacher is too strict, he prevents the students from playing during recess time. There is a large foot ball ground but no use of it is being made..”*

In another school,

*“the schoolyard is very large but there are no sports facilities, there is no P.E teacher and no games are being organised by the school.”*

In the last category, we find the schools which have a very exiguous school-yard with no sports facilities. Very often these schools are the urban ones with a large school population like the Labourdonnais G.S , Prof I. A . Goomany , Raoul Rivet G. S.and Villiers René G.S. There are also rural schools in that category and among these there are the following: Lady Boolell G.S. at Montagne Blanche, Lady Ringadoo at Providence and M. Fowdar G.S.

Children going to some urban schools which are generally described as “star schools” are unfortunate in that they are not able to enjoy a large school yard. Conditions are very cramped in schools such as Raoul Rivet government school. That school has *“little space and it is asphalted. Pupils have practically no place to play”*.

In another school in Curepipe, the James Toolsy G.S., the same problem of lack of space for children to play is evoked by this statement :

*“ Partly asphalted, partly earth and dusty. Very little space available, At the back of the school, the land is uneven, rocky and grassy and unkept.”*

Many of the descriptions given by the teachers speak of partial asphaltting with a lot of dusty playground. For example it would seem that at Grand Bois govt. school though the *“yard is asphalted and in general clean, the playground is always muddy”*

Fond du Sac government school’s yard has been described as *“asphalted in some places and earthy and dusty in others”*

The same situation seems to prevail in schools such as Quatre-Cocos govt. School, Grand Bay, La Flora, Brisée Verdiere, Cité Valeejee etc.

What can be inferred from the different descriptions made by teachers, it would seem that many of our primary schoolyard have been asphalted at the front but at the back, the yards are still bare earth and dusty.

On top of lacking space for children to play, some school yards can be sources of danger and a lot of inconvenience. Some school –yards are flooded during the rainy season and are very muddy and slippery on other days. Among these schools where children are at risk in the school-yard, there are the following

schools: Caroline G.S., I. Goomany G.S., Lady Ringadoo G.S, Louis Nellan G.S. and Laboudonnais G.S. and Reverend Edward G.S.

From all accounts of teachers from various government schools, we can infer that recreational facilities in our primary schools are very limited. This inference is supported by the answers of the school children from their questionnaire. By going through the nearly four hundred answers of those children, we discover that a good proportion of them, that is nearly 40% play at “*cache-cache*”, that is, hide and seek during recreation time. Other variations of the “*cache –cache*” game are called “*police-voleurs*”, “*colin-maillard*”, “*chat et la souris*” or simply “*mailler*” by the children.

The ‘*cache-cache*’ game can be a source of danger as during that game the children are liable to falls and getting badly hurt. This may be more frequent on muddy and slippery grounds as described above. Bruises are very common during recreation time as testified by teachers and head teachers and even pupils.

Other games indulged in by the primary school children during recreation time are “*la marelle*” by the girls and football by the boys. Football consists very often of playing with a plastic ball brought by the children themselves or they may be playing with a plastic bottle.

There are schools where children are able to play at indoor games such as “Domino” and “Ludo” which may be provided by the school or which have been brought by the children themselves. In other schools, more especially the “star” schools, indoor games are not even provided, let alone outdoor games.

Recreation -time is also time for bullying of younger children of the lower primary by the older ones of upper primary. This occurs mainly because there is very little supervision of the children during that time.

There are stark differences between recreation time in government schools and the private schools. Thus in the private school for this research, the children are playing at football on a football ground with a real ball.

## **The School's Canteen and Hygiene:**

A source of danger to children can be the kind of food being sold at the school canteen or by individual cake vendors. Several cases of food intoxication at school have been reported in newspapers. One of the cases which had caused a lot of uproar among parents was the one at the Emmanuel Anquetil school at Roche Bois in January 2003, when 13 pupils had been hospitalised due to sickness and tummy-ache. This led to a lot of protests from the parents who pointed out that the water tank may have been the cause of the children's sickness as it was in a state of neglect as it has not been cleaned for a long time. After investigation, the analysis of food consumed by the children at school, it was revealed that the "*mines*"(noodles) being sold at the school canteen contained caustic soda. Other case of food poisoning had already been reported at other schols such at that of Hugh Otter Barry in curepipe. Though the rules concerning food hygiene at school exist, they are not often respected and the school's administration does not often see to it that these rules are respected. It would seem that it is usually the PTA's of schools who chose the canteen owner so that the head teacher may not have much say in the way the canteen is being run as disqualifying a canteen owner may mean getting into conflict with the PTA, which situation any head teacher would be careful to avoid.

It would seem that many school canteens do not respect the norms established by the authorities. According to the "Food Act of 1998' all people who sell food have to obtain a "Food Handler's Certificate" and according to a small investigation carried out by Express (Express 18.3.02), it would seem that not all canteen owners possess one.

Other problem associated with the selling of food on school premises is the presence of cake vendors who carry out their trade outside the school gate if they are not allowed inside and they manage to sell their goods through the railings of the gate.

To counteract this problem, the Ministry of Education is coming out with a Policy Paper on Food Safety and hygiene in Schools and the factors which are going to be taken into consideration are the following:

- the building

- the equipment
- the food being sold
- the preservation of food
- the availability of running water

An investigation on schools premises, would show that many school canteens do not presently possess the above –mentioned requirements and children are at risk of being sick from food poisoning and food contamination and even at risk of being contaminated by communicable diseases if they eat and drink from utensils which have not been washed properly.

### **Library Facilities:**

Children from most of the schools in this study confirm that there is a library in their school. It would seem that at the time of the data gathering, that there was no library at the Camp Diable GS and at Roch Bois GS.

However it must be pointed out that the presence of a library at school does not mean that all the children are enjoying the facilities usually obtained at a library.

There are books available for only the upper primary children in most Government schools. This means that the children of the lower primary are not being given the opportunity to develop a culture of reading. Many of the children who do not like to read are those who come from culturally poor families where books and other reading materials are not available and the school could have been able to remedy to this deficiency by introducing the children to reading at a very early age.

According to the data obtained, only a few schools allow the pupils to take books to read at home. In most of the schools, children's answer were:

*“ Non, on n’a pas le droit de prendre les livres... On fait de la lecture a l’école”*

Allowing the children to take reading materials home would have encouraged more reading and perhaps diminish the dependence on television watching to which most children are addicted according to our research.

### **The Schools' neighbourhood:**

Through newspapers reports, it has come to our attention that some schools' neighbourhood can be a source of danger to the pupils. In February of this year (2004), several daily news papers reported the fact that about 10 pupils of Rose Belle North government primary school were taken to hospital as a result of some form of intoxication after a strange smell had been detected in the air. It would seem that the smell and subsequent intoxication of children may have been caused by the use of herbicide in the school yard by the school gardener. It has come to the attention of the authorities that the surrounding sugar cane fields can also be a source of danger as pesticides are also being used there in a more intensive manner the quantity used by a school gardener. For instance, cases of intoxication by the fumes coming from an insecticide had been reported at Trois Boutiques in 2001 where about sixty pupils had been intoxicated by the fumes of "Tamaron" which had come into their class. In 2002, the intoxication of school children by an insecticide called "Rogor" had been reported at the Vale, Fonds du Sac and in that same year about forty pupils had been reported as suffering from sickness due to the inhalation of fumes comes from two insecticides called "Cymbush" and "Vertimec". As a result of all these cases of intoxication, the authorities have commissioned an audit of all schools where children would be at risk from the fumes of insecticides. The report has revealed that about 55 primary schools are situated in areas where children at risk. The number of schools identified are the following: 10 in the Riviere du Rempart region, 25 in the Pamplémousses area, 8 in the Flacq and Bel Air region, 2 in the west, that is the Bambous area, 11 in the Rose Belle area, and 2 in the Souillac area.

The most recent case of intoxication of school children from fumes coming from insecticides being sprayed over sugar cane fields is that which occurred in August of 2004 at the school of Bheewa Mahadoo in Riviere du Rempart .

### **Conclusion:**

The child aged between five and twelve in Mauritius is being given access to primary education as there are schools in all corners of the Republic and there is even legislation to make education compulsory but the level of achievement in our



primary school system is a matter of concern to the authorities. According to official statistics, every year about 40% of children sitting for the final examinations (CPE) at the end of six years of study are failing. Reasons for this rate of failure are multiple, the social background of the child being one of the most important reason but there are also many factors which originate within the system and others which are school-based. As we have discussed above, it is a system which favours elitism through its system of evaluation and at the same time engenders its own pedagogy. This transmission model of teaching where children learn in a passive way is detrimental to large numbers of children even to the ones who pass their examinations as the individual needs of the child are not being catered for. In such a setting, large numbers of children are being intellectually neglected. This kind of teaching is carried out in school environments which are very often poor and shabby and do not support the full development of the child. This same school environment may be sometimes one which is at risk, not to say dangerous when we hear reports of children's intoxication from eating food at the school canteen or from insecticides sprayed in the fields around some schools. Therefore we can say that there are many aspects of our primary education system which go against the rights, welfare and interests of the child.

### **Suggestions for improvement in Education:**

#### **1. The Curriculum:**

- (a) Designing a proper curriculum for the primary sector. This new curriculum will not be too content-based but rather skill-based where the development of life skills and of higher-order thinking is promoted. The new curriculum should also be child-centred in real terms and not only in a rhetorical manner.**
- (b) The designing of a new curriculum would be the opportunity for introducing an integrated curriculum for the 0-7 group of children. In the context of an integrated programme for the early childhood sector (0-7), the evaluation system as well as teacher training should have to be reviewed.**

## **2. The Examinations :**

The whole system of evaluating primary school children should be revised. The evaluation system should also more skill-based rather than content-based. As explained above, it is only with the reform of the examinations that teachers will change their pedagogy .

## **4. The Teachers:**

In spite of training, teachers are not motivated to change their classroom practices mainly because of a strong school culture. A sort of Support system should be encouraged in each school . This would consist of volunteers who want to change their practice and they would be supported and advised by a roving team of “experts” who would meet them regularly and allow them to discuss about classroom pedagogy and about ways to improve.

## **5. The Head-Teacher:**

The head –teacher in the primary school is too concerned with administrative work rather than acting as a pedagogical adviser. Therefore there should be two officers at the head of a school: one concerned with administrative work and another with pedagogical matters. The pedagogical adviser should be the spear-head of the support group of the teachers.

## **6. Family-school-community partnerships:**

That family involvement is critical to children's academic achievement and social development has been proved by research throughout the world. Therefore programmes where families, and the community to which the families belong are engaged in a partnership to enhance the education of the children should receive greater support from the State. One of these programmes is the “Ecole Complémétaire “ initiated by a Catholic organisation. Other programmes like this should be initiated by the NGO's

and the State. Here it should be pointed out that school leaders and teachers must be adequately prepared to build partnerships with families and communities as this does not form part of their culture.

#### **7. Research:**

Effective reforms in education depend on a sound research base. Research will inform policy –makers about the sources of problems in the Education sector and suggest ways to solve those problems. Therefore it is essential that an autonomous Educational Research Centre be set up in the country in order to create new conceptual frameworks to guide policy and program development. The results of the research must be disseminated to teachers, teacher educators, school administrators, and policymakers in order to influence decision-making.

#### **7.Capacity Building and professional development:**

Effective reforms in Education will depend on competent and committed teachers to implement those reforms. The preparation and continuing professional development of teachers, administrators, and other professionals who work with children, youth, and families should be reviewed and strengthened.

#### **8. Networking:**

Teachers should be organised in networks, regional and even national. These networks should be encouraged with a view to improve classroom practice with the support of training. This would give teachers feedback and opportunities to learn from the experience of peers.

#### **8. Improving the Schools physical and cultural Environment:**

The physical environment of many of our pre-primary and primary schools need to be revisited and measures taken to improve conditions described above. Sports and recreational facilities should be developed within the

**school grounds and School libraries should be enriched so as to allow children to have access to books which attract them and encourage them to develop a disposition for reading. In this field, the partnership between the school, parents and the community should be sought instead of depending wholly on the Central Government. The head teacher should work in close collaboration with the school's PTA to try to find solutions to the schools' physical environment's problems.**

## Chapter 15

### THE STATE AND HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN

With the eradication of diseases such as smallpox, cholera and more especially malaria which was the greatest killer, there has been a constant improvement in the general health condition of the population of Mauritius since the end of World war II. The health situation was reflected in the rate of population growth. The annual rate of population increase had remained more or less constant, that is, at a rate of less than 1% , suddenly rose to 2.26% in 1952 to reach a peak of 3.12 % in 1962. In fact the Mauritian government allocates 9% of its total expenditure on the health services while in developing countries in general only 3% of the central government expenditure is allocated to health services. On the other hand industrialised countries like the United Kingdom and the United States allocate 15% and 22% respectively, of the central government expenditure on health.

Apart from a relatively high budget on health, the country can boast of 100% of the population having access to clean water while 99% of the population use adequate sanitation facilities. These, that is, access to clean water and sanitation facilities are in themselves great assets in ensuring a healthy population. The situation of water and sanitation is not too bright in some other countries near to us:

**Table 20- Water and Sanitation in some African and South East Asian Countries**

Countries	% of population using improved drinking water sources	% of population using adequate sanitation facilities
Madagascar	45	33
<b>Mauritius</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99</b>
Mozambique	42	27
South Africa	87	67
Tanzania	73	46
Singapore	100	100

On the other hand Mauritius compares favourably with a country like Singapore in terms of the population access to clean water and sanitation facilities.

### Health Care for children:

The health situation of the Mauritian child has considerably improved when compared to what it was in the fifties. It has been reported that when Professor Woodruff from the London School of Tropical Medicine came to Mauritius, " *he was amazed to see such large numbers of malnourished children. There were two cases of Kwashiorkor at Civil Hospital. Pot-bellied children with spindly legs could be seen everywhere.*" (Rajkoomar T:81). Professor Titmuss also observed that the Mauritian child in infancy was small in size.

With improvement in the health services, the birth rate of children the birth rate rose while the death rate among children registered a great decrease over the years. While the birth rate has stabilised with increased campaign of birth control, the death rate among babies, especially the new-born is a cause for concern.

### **Births:**

In 2002, 19,169 live births occurred in the island of Mauritius giving a birth rate of 16.3 per thousand mid-year resident population. The distribution of live births by sex showed a sex ratio of 1,031 males for 1,000 females in 2002.

### **Deaths:**

#### Infants' Deaths

Infants are described as being babies aged between 0 to 364 days. In 2002, there were 19,169 live births and 197 still births but during that same year 278 infants between 0 and 364 days, died because of various reasons. Of those 278 infants who died, 164, died under the age of 6 days, while 33 died between the age of 7 and 28 days, and 81 died between age of 28 days and 364 days.

According to statistics most of the infant deaths happens during the first four weeks, as nearly 71 % of them, that is, a total of 197 die during that period of infants' life.

**Table 21 The most important causes of Infant deaths :**

<b>Causes of Death</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of total deaths</b>	<b>Rate per 1000 births</b>
Slow Fetal Growth, fetal malnutrition and immaturity	83	29.85	4.3
Hypoxia, birth asphyxia and other respiratory conditions of newborn	49	17.7	2.6
Congenital anomalies	59	21.22	3.1
Diseases of the respiratory system	15	5.39	0.8
Injury and poisoning	10	3.59	0.5
Septicaemia and infections specific to the perinatal period	16	5.75	0.8
Birth trauma	8	2.87	0.4
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome	5	1.79	0.3
Ill-defined intestinal infections (colitis, enteritis, gastro-enteritis, diarrhoea)	3	1.07	0.2
Fetal and neonatal haemorrhage	4	1.43	0.2
Disease of the circulatory system	1	0.35	0.1
Meningitis	3	1.07	0.2
Other Causes	22	7.9	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14.5</b>

Health Statistics Unit-Ministry of Health & Quality of Life –2002

Among these causes of deaths of infants, the most important causes of death are the following:

1. -slow fetal growth, fetal malnutrition and immaturity –29.8 % of total number of infant deaths. Of these causes of deaths 94.7 % of children died in the first 4 weeks of life.
2. Hypoxia, birth asphyxia and other respiratory condition of new born –17.7%- 91% of these occurred in the first 4 weeks of life
3. Congenital anomalies- 17.9% - 55.3% of these deaths occurred in the first 4 weeks of life.
4. Septicaemia and infections specific to the perinatal period –4.6% - 83% of infants died of these causes in the first 4 weeks of life.

As highlighted above, most of those dying of these symptoms listed above, do so in the first four weeks. The first year is the most crucial in the life of a child though the first four weeks can be the most dangerous if proper medical care is not available.

In spite of these deaths, it is comforting to notice that the total number of infant deaths every year, during the last ten years has gradually diminished from 424 deaths in 1993 to 263 deaths in 2001 and 278 deaths in 2002.

The diminution in the number of deaths is more noticeable within the number of deaths due to “Slow Fetal growth” and “Hypoxia”. For “slow fetal growth”, it has gone from 134 in 1993 to 83 in 2002, while for “Hypoxia” it has gone from 114 in 1993 to 49 in 2002.

These reduction in the number of deaths may be due to improved health services for pregnant mothers and also to the fact that the population has become more affluent. There are not only deaths among the infants but also among the older children but fortunately very few die between the ages of 5 and 14. Thus in the 5-9 age group, only 0.2% of total deaths were registered in 2002, while in the 10-14 age-group, only 0.4% of total deaths were registered. In fact these are the lowest death rates compared to other age-groups.

These low death rates among children also give an idea of the rise in the standard of living of the Mauritian population in general. (H.S.A- 2002- p.67)

### **Diseases among children:**

According to hospital records and the Health statistics Annual (H.S.A) 2002, children suffer from a variety of diseases, a list of which is being given. In 2002, there were 7,726 children under the age of one year who were discharged from hospitals. Most of these children were suffering from **infectious and parasitic diseases** –(919) and **diseases of the respiratory system** (992) while a large number (3,986) suffered from certain **conditions originating in the perinatal period**. Other health problem include the following: neoplasms, endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases and immunity disorder, diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs, diseases of the nervous system and sense organs, diseases of the circulatory system, diseases of the digestive system,,diseases of the genito-urinary system, diseases of the skin and subcutaneous tissue, diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue , congenital anomalies.(H.S.A. p.61)

According to data obtained for this research from primary school children (aged about 10 mostly), most of those children are aware of their different types of medical problems, which have been identified as follows:

Fever 18%

Influenza -8%

Bronchitis –2%

Asthma – 3.4%

Tonsillitis 1.8%

Allergies – 1.8%

Tummy aches -2.5%

Gastroenteritis – 2%



Vomiting –1.8%

Measles –8%

Chicken Pox 8%

Eye problems -1%

Ear problems –1%

On the other hand about 8% claim that they did not have any serious health problem during their school year.

A good proportion of children did not answer this question because probably some are not able to describe their ailments or because they do not consider their health problems important enough to be described as diseases.

### **Immunization Programmes:**

There are different types of immunization programmes for young children. There are immunisation programmes for pregnant women, for babies and for older children of the primary school age.

The immunisation programme for babies consist of vaccines against the following diseases: tuberculosis (BCG), diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus (D.P.T.), hepatitis B, and MMR (measles/mumps/ rubella).

The well - organised immunisation programme does not concern the babies only but also the expecting mothers.

The following table give an idea of the number of babies and pregnant women who have been immunized against diseases named above,

**Table 22 The number of immunisations in Mauritius**

Vaccines	Immunisations performed	Percentage of live births
<b>Babies</b>		
B.C.G.	16,658	86.9
D.P.T. (3 <sup>rd</sup> dose)	16,895	88.1
Polio (3 <sup>rd</sup> dose)	16,957	88.5
Measles /Mumps/Rubella	16,190	84.5
<b>Pregnant Women</b>		
Tetanus (2 <sup>nd</sup> or higher dose)	13,708	71.5

**Table 23 -Immunisation of 1-year –old children in some Indian Ocean countries and some South East Asian countries:**

Countries	% immunised in 2003					
	TB	DPT3	Polio3	measles	Hepb3	Pregnant women-tetanus
Madagascar	72	55	58	55	55	55
<b>Mauritius</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>92</b>	-
Mozambique	87	72	70	77	72	57
Seychelles	99	99	99	99	99	-
Tanzania	91	95	97	97	95	83
South Africa	97	94	94	83	94	52
Sub - Saharan Africa	74	60	63	62	30	53
Malaysia	99	96	97	92	95	-
Singapore	97	92	92	88	92	-

From the above-table we can observe that Mauritius is far in advance of many of the Indian ocean countries as well as of Sub –Sahara Africa in general in its immunisation programme for the one year-olds. More than ninety per cent of the one-year olds have been immunised from TB, DPT3, Polio3, and Hepb3 which are diseases which used to create havoc among young children and which still do in countries where an immunisation programme is not so well-established. In terms of immunisation of babies against diseases, Mauritius can compare itself with Singapore to some extent. It must be observed that the small island state of Seychelles has been able to achieve a degree of immunisation of 99% for all the above-mentioned diseases.

In Mauritius, there is an immunisation programme for primary school children also. This forms part of a programme of yearly visits a medical team from the Ministry of Health to different primary schools, which also include screening and examinations. The following extract from “Health Statistics Annual” 2002 informs us that in the primary school sector:

*“ 16,549 new entrants were immunized against **diphtheria, tetanus (D.T.) and Poliomyelitis**, 18,576 school leavers were immunized against tetanus. The staff of the Chest Clinic immunized 4,015 school leavers against **tuberculosis**.”*(p. xv)

According to data obtained for this research from the children data, 42% of the children were vaccinated when they were babies and also at school but there are some 37%

who were only vaccinated when they were babies. And the rest of the respondents do not seem to be aware of whether they had ever been vaccinated.

### **Health Infrastructure and Services for children**

Though there is no paediatric hospital in Mauritius , there is provision for paediatric care in all hospitals. In 2002 the number of paediatric beds in the hospitals were as such:

Dr. A.G. Jetoo	68
SSRN	57
Flacq	54
J. Nehru	65
Souillac	1
Victoria	79
Total	324

These figures include incubators and cots for newborns requiring special care.

Children with mental problems are being taken care of at the Brown Sequard hospital.

For primary health care, children are taken to the Health Centres, consisting of 20 Area Health Centres and 107 community health centres. The role of these health centres is the following: taking care of minor ailments, and injuries, maternal and child care and family planning as well as providing dental care in the Area Health Centres.

According to the HAS (p. xii)

*“There were also 13 health offices, chest clinic and a social hygiene clinic in operation as at the end of 2002. In the private sector there were 19 medical establishments on the sugar estates providing out-patient care. Out-patient care was also available in the twelve nursing homes (private clinics)*

For people living in distant villages or for one reason or another find it difficult to come to the hospitals or health centres, health care is dispensed by two mobile dispensaries and a mobile maternal and child health and family planning clinic. There are also two mobile dental clinics which cater mainly for primary school children in remote areas.

### **Mental Health of children:**

According to the health statistics (p. 25, 26), the Ministry of Health doctor examined and diagnosed a total of 25 primary school children and 5 pre-primary school children island wide as suffering from mental retardation . The real number of children suffering from mental problems may not be known as some parents prefer not to send them to school. Well-off parents take their children to private doctors while the poorer children are taken to the state hospitals.

The only hospital taking care of children with mental problems is the Brown Sequad Hospital. It would seem that out of 200 patients visiting that hospital daily, 5% suffer from a mental disorder. Some are examined and given drugs while a very small number is kept at the hospital in Ward 14, also called the adolescent ward where very young of less than 10 years old are also housed. According to those working there including the psychiatrists, it is a place which is in very dreary conditions and the children do not receive the appropriate care.

Treatment consist of giving medicines at fixed time and occasionally being examined by a psychiatrist. The room is austere with :

*“ une succession de lits recouverts d’alaises noires, une table de carrom et un tableau noir.”* (M. AhChoon – L’Express 14<sup>th</sup> October 2001)

The author of that article also added that the television had broken down and had not since been repaired.

### **Dental health of children:**

In 2002, 1,295 babies, 74, 059 primary school children and 6, 745 preprimary school children attended the government dental clinics. Between 1997 and 2002, the number of children seeking dental health care from the various health centres and hospitals has decreased for babies but have increased for the pre-primary group, and for the primary group. This means that cases of dental problems among children, especially those between 5 and 12 years old, have considerably increased from 66,645 in 1997 to 74,059 in 2002. On the other hand, the number of permanent fillings inserted in the teeth of school children in 2002 was 6,167, while in 1997, the number of fillings amounted to 14,031. The number of extraction of permanent teeth of schoolchildren has

not changed much except that it has increased slightly, from 1,678 in 1997 to 2,156 in 2002.

The decrease in the number of permanent fillings may be due to the fact that there is less tooth decay among the school children while on the other hand the fact that the number of tooth extractions has not changed may be due to the nature of the teeth being extracted, that is the teeth being extracted are mostly deciduous teeth ("dent de lait").

In general we can say that there has been considerable improvement in the dental health of primary schoolchildren. The reason for this may be that parents being more aware of dental problems through the media, see to it that their children follow the rules of hygiene. The data from the children's questionnaires seem to confirm this tendency to care for the teeth of children on the part of parents who train their children at an early age.

#### **Health Care at school level:**

According to teacher's reports, medical care at school level is very poor. In general there is some sort of first aid box but it would seem that in many cases the first aid box contain only some cotton, alcohol and "mercureochrome", that is, enough to take care of children who get mild injuries mainly while playing. There does not seem to be any provisions made for other more common minor ailments of children such as fever, influenza, head aches and tummy aches. There is also no provision for sanitary towels as well as advice for very young girls who are menstruating for the first time. Many of them feel scared and they have only their class mates to advise them or comfort them. The only form of medical care received is only a yearly visit of a medical team from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has established a programme of school visits by the nursing and medical staff of that ministry. The visits are organised for pre-primary as well as the primary schools. It must be pointed out that these visits are carried out once a year and that not all schools receive the visit of a doctor. In 2002, the nursing staff visited 210 pre-primary schools as well as 264 primary schools, while only 113 pre-primary schools and 232 primary schools received the visit of a doctor. The nursing staff screen the children for problems such as scabies, nits and lice, and dental

problems as well as problems of vision. The doctors on the other hand examine the children for more serious medical problems such as skin diseases, respiratory problems, ear conditions, eye conditions, dyslexia, mental retardation, underweight, overweight and abdominal pains etc. see table

The children with serious health problems are referred to specialists. In 2002, 843 primary school children have been referred to specialists while only 97 pre-primary school children have received similar treatment.

It must be pointed out that not all school children are able to be examined by doctors as these visits depend upon the availability of medical staff. In 2002, only 7,478 pre-primary school children have been screened by the visiting nursing staff while 4,259 have been examined by a doctor. On the other hand, 79,295 primary school children have been screened by the nursing staff and 27,256 have been examined by a doctor from the Ministry of Health.

It would seem that not all schools receive the visit of the Ministry of Health's medical team. (H.S.A. p. 25,26)

The health statistics for primary schools help us to notice that there are regional variations in the intensity of certain ailments and diseases between the different districts. The districts of Flacq and Moka register high numbers of children suffering from skin diseases. In 2002, there were 202 children,(nearly 35% at national level) diagnosed with skin diseases in the district of Flacq while in that same district, and 112 children (19% at national level) suffered from these same type of ailments . Though the number of cases for the district of Savanne is also relatively high for the year 2002, that is 101, the trend has been more pronounced for the Moka and Flacq districts during the last ten years.

It is remarkable that the children of the districts of Moka and Flacq are not only more liable to have skin diseases but also other ailments such as "Pityriasis Versicolor". Two hundred and twenty three( 223 ) cases (37% of national numbers) of this ailment have been registered in Flacq and 329 cases (55% of national figures) in Moka were also noted. Flacq has also the largest number of children suffering from enlarged tonsils/tonsillitis, that is, 54% of the total number in the country. and to a lesser extent 18% of school children of Moka also suffer from this same ailment.

Another ailment from which there is a higher incidence for children of the districts of Flacq and Moka is “abdominal pain”. Flacq registers 39 % of total cases while Moka registers 26 % of the national total.

The health situation for children in the districts of Flacq and Moka is quite alarming and demand an in-depth study of environmental conditions in those districts and the quality of the water supply. The research must try to find whether there is a correlation between all these ailments and whether they have common causes.

#### **Some Recommendations for the Health Sector:**

- **The development of a health plan for carrying out preventive medical care in the early childhood sector.**
- **The construction of a paediatric hospital with all the appropriate equipment and personnel.**
- **The presence of at least one pediatrician on duty at each of the hospitals of the country, everyday.**
- **The training of medical assistants mainly in the sector of paediatrics.**
- **Research must be carried out in the field of children’s diseases in Mauritius.**
- **Specific research must be initiated in the districts of Moka and Flacq to investigate the health/environmental situation .**

## Chapter 16

### THE STATE AND THE PROVISION OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN:

The State does not seem to be involved too much in providing leisure activities for the children of less than 12 years old.

According to the quantitative data obtained from the parents' questionnaires where question 10.3 asked them what were the leisure activities provided by the State in their locality, most of the parents answered that no facilities were available. It would seem that village boys are more advantaged in terms of leisure activities. Parents from the villages like Camp Diable, Grand Gaube and Rose Belle answered that there were activities in terms of indoor as well as outdoor games which were organised by the village council or the district council in the community centres or the village hall of these villages. These parents specified that most activities were games and tournaments favoured by boys mainly, that is, football and volley ball tournaments. Some parents have mentioned that there were no activities organised for the girls.

On the other hand in suburban localities like Roche Bois, Vallée des Pretres, Plaine Verte, and Stanley –RoseHill, the parents answered that there were no leisure activities organised either by the local government or the Central Government.

In the National Children's Policy, the authors of that report admit that :

*"The leisure and recreational facilities such as children's playgrounds within the community centre are not fully utilized due to lack of proper maintenance, lighting and safety. Children do not often get access to leisure and recreational activities such as water-based sports activities or the cinema because these are expensive" (NCP ,2003: 30)*

Apart from those activities organised by the various sports federations, from time to time, the Ministry of Tourism and leisure has organised family-based sports activities such as a day at the "Domaine les Pailles", a day at the sea-side (*Anou alle la mer*) but these are not regular features of our youngsters leisure activities.

Other activities organised by various ministries to cater for the needs of children in terms of leisure activities include the following:

- the organisation of musical competitions by the Ministry of Arts and Culture



- the opening of a creativity Centre by the MWRCDFW
- the setting up of Kids and Teens clubs by the National Children's Council.

These initiatives are very limited in scope and the majority of children are not able to take advantage of these facilities.

Since a few years ago, most primary schools have been organising their annual sports day. An event which receives the full support of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research. It remains an isolate activity as the practice of sports is not a regular activity in most government and aided primary schools.

Most of the activities of the Ministry of Youth and sports deal with the organisation of sports events and training activities for the adolescents.

The State is involved in providing for the leisure and sports activities in an indirect manner through the subsidies paid to the different sports federation which have initiated training activities for the less than 12 years old in a few disciplines.

Thus the Centre National de Formation de Football, has an "Ecole de Football" for the 7-11years group . There are training sessions which are being organised and 400 children are being trained. The coach is being paid by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

There is the "Ecole de Natation" which organises swimming lessons in the four national swimming pools. There are three levels of training and actually there are some 1000 children who are being coached for the three levels put together.

The Centre National de Formation d'Athlétisme is involved in the training of the very young athletes.

A very important sports federation which organises training sessions for the very young is the Tennis Federation.

The Ecole de Boxe also is involved in the initiation of the less than 12 group into the skills of boxing.

These training sessions organised by the federations concern only a small minority of children.

**Some Recommendations:**

- There should be a national plan of action in terms of leisure activities for the whole population of the Republic as it is being recognised that sports activities and exercises are important to keep the nation fit and healthy.
- Each village council or municipality should have a plan of action for the development of leisure activities catering for the needs of young children as well as adults.
- Apart from the provision of sports infrastructure, coaches and leisure activities organisers should be trained in order to be able to provide their services to the children as well as see to their security.
- Specific activities for girls should be organised.

It will be only through channeling the energies of the young people that they could be prevented from roaming the streets and fall prey to the dangers of alcoholism, drug addiction and from committing petty crimes.

## **The Child and Poverty in Mauritius**

More than 500 million children - 40 per cent of all children in developing countries - are struggling to survive on less than \$1 a day. Poverty is the main cause of millions of preventable child deaths each year. It also causes tens of millions of children to go hungry, miss school or be exploited in hazardous child labour. The number of people living in poverty is growing as globalisation fuels expanding markets across national boundaries and increases the incomes of a relative few while further strangling the lives of those without the resources to be investors or the capabilities to benefit from the global culture. A majority of the poor consist of women and children, as the two-tiered world economy widens the gaps between rich and poor countries and between rich and poor people. Global prosperity is at an unprecedented level. Yet the promise to give every child a good start in life remains unfulfilled. Children are often hardest hit by poverty: it causes lifelong damage to their minds and bodies. They are therefore likely to pass poverty on to their children, perpetuating the poverty cycle. Poverty reduction must begin with children.

There are various degrees of poverty in the Republic of Mauritius but we shall deal with the very poor. According to the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups, there are 210 pockets of poverty which have been identified throughout the island. The children of these poor constitute a very special type of children who are vulnerable to all sorts of deprivations and abuses, such as poor nutrition, poor health, delinquency, drugs abuse, etc. It is not within the scope of this research to give an in-depth report of poverty in Mauritius, but in this chapter, my aim is to present snap-shots of the situation of children trapped in the cycle of poverty and who live in some of the deprived areas which I have had the opportunity of visiting and carry out interviews.

According to official figures, there may be some 8,500 households who have an income of less than Rs 4,000.

*"There is also an estimation of some 2,000 squatters on State land spread out over several regions of the island."*( UNICEF :63). These pockets of poverty are to be found mainly in the suburbs of the main towns but the squatter colonies

may also be located in rural areas. I have visited three of those squatter colonies, namely in Roche Bois, Tranquebar, and Case Noyale and talked to some of the inhabitants.

### **Low incomes, borrowing and debt:**

The children of the poor suburbs and the squatter colonies belong to poor families who receive very low incomes from mostly unskilled jobs. As their regular job does not bring in much income, they are also engaged in doing some odd jobs from time to time. Very often these families cannot make ends meet and they have to borrow petty cash to buy food. The following transcripts give an idea of the precarious economic situation of these families.

This single mother from Tranquebar Port Louis tells how she manages her meagre finance (wages and pensions) while at the same time borrowing and even being late in paying her rents:

***Mais ou gagne assez pou paye... ?***

- *Pas assez. La meme mo dois loyer la.*

***Loyer commié ou payer ?***

- *Rs1000*

***Commié ou gagner dans ou travail ?***

- *Labas mo gagne Rs1200 plus mo gagne pension Rs2000.*

***Pension pou banne zenfans la ?***

- *Pou banne zenfans la oui.*

***Pou manzer tout ca li pas assez ?***

- *Li pas suffit.*

***Mais lerla ou gagne preter ?***

- *Ena fois. Ena fois couma dire mo gagne ene ti place dresser, couma dire mo dresser, lerla mo gagne l'aide, couma ca mo debrouiller.*
- 

Another mother from Tranquebar also speaks of money problems and how she gets into debts in order to be able to feed her children and send them to school with the appropriate equipment:

***Arrivé avant la fin du mois ou pena casse ?***

- *Oui, normal la nous pena meme la. Parski couma arrive le 3, le 4 fini, casse la fini nette.*

***Ou pas gagne tracas ?***

- *Mo bizin... tracas la, li la li mais seulement si mo prend tracas la compte, deja mo ena tension fort, mo pou plus affecté.*

***Mais banne zenfans la pas demande ou banne zaffaire ?***

- *Zot gagner. Mo trouve ene moyen mo donne zot. Mo prend credit dans la boutique. Couma dire juste pou zot kapave alle zot l'ecole. Dernierement mo pas ti... livre meme*

*kot pas encore fini gagne tous zot livres. L'année dernière mo ti gagne livres ek chose, madame M...ti aide moi ek livres. Li ti donne moi l'argent, ti dire moi acheter livres. Avec ena ene conseiller municipalité li aussi t aide moi, donne moi livres pou banne zenfans.*

Yet another mother from Case Noyale speaks of scarcity of money in the family and about how she and her family survive out of her meagre resources :

***Mais kot ou gagne casse pou vivre la tous les jours, ou bolom travaille ?***

- *Li pas travaille. Mais parfois kan ena casse, mo ena ene ti fond mo ramasse ça, et après mo alle tirer.*

***Mais couma ou fiar epou vivre la tous les jours ?***

- *Mais ek ça casse ki mo gagner la, mo même conner comment mo faire, mo casser, ranger. Mais la ça tifi la pou vine reste la, mo bizin alle rode ene travail.*

From these above quoted transcripts, we learn that these families live in highly insecure conditions and it is not surprising that providing the basic needs of the children becomes very problematic for the parents. Even when these basic needs are provided for the children, they may be of poor quality,

Some of the parents interviewed give an idea of the way they provide these basic needs and I am going to examine the situation concerning some of them, that is, food, clothing, shelter and education.

## **Food :**

These families together with their children may be suffering from undernutrition, that , there are times the children do not eat their fill and very often they are suffering from malnutrition as they may not be getting enough proteins and vitamins. The mothers make their utmost to feed their children conveniently and even going to the extent of buying food on credit as this mother from Tranquebar explains :

***Mais ki zot manzer ?***

- *Enfin tout ce qui nous gagner. Ou comprend, ce qui nous ena. Ena jour kan mo ena mo donner zot la viande, poule. Mais seulement mo pas prive... mo pas trop chose zot couma dire.*

***Mais pou alle l'école zot gagne tiffin ?***

- *Oui, zot gagne zot tiffin.*

***Ki ou donne zot pou alle l'école ?***

- *Disons le matin ena fois mo mettre, ena fois pena meme kitchose couma dire pou mette dans ca du pain la mais mo obligé, couma dire **mo prend credit**. Mo acheter fromage, sipa du beurre, ca mo acheter mo mettre. La mone gagne l'élevage poule, mo pe faire l'élevage, mais mo gagne dizef pou mo donne zot. Mo faire mo donne zot. Soit si mone cuit ene cari, cari la sec, lendemain mo rode ene tigitte pou mo mette dans zot du pain.*
- *Oui, zot amene zot du pain.*

For this mother, the bread given at school, which the children bring back home, is very helpful in feeding her children.

**Mais commié du pain ou kapave acheter par jour ?**

- *Le matin mo acheter 5 du pains. Tantot mo pas acheter parcequi kan zot sorti l'école, zot amene zot du pain. Lerla zot gagne ca meme zot manzer. Embarrassé meme mais ki pou faire ?*

**Mais dans tantot ki cari ou kapave pe cuit pou zot ?**

- *Ala couma mone fini gagne pension la, **mais mo paye imper dette**. Mais la mo ena ene ti casse, mais là mo pou alle acheter poule, couma dire faire ene ti la daube mo donne zot. Mais ena jour, couma dire la mo dresser, mo dresse kot ene madame ici là. Couma dire couma mo fini dresser madame la donne moi Rs75. Lerla mo garde ca, mo acheter cari couma dire tous les jours, comprend la ? Lot la donne moi Rs50.*

This mother from a squatter colony at Case-Noyale gives explanations about the eating habits of her children. The explanations seem to point to malnutrition as the children rarely eat meat and mostly eat vegetables.

**Zot mange la viande tous les jours ?**

- *Non, rare nous mange la viande. Nous mange légumes.*

**Kifer, pena le moyen pou acheter la viande ?**

- *Ena, mais zot plus content mange légumes.*

**Zot pas content mange la viande ?**

- *Non.*

**Dans ene semaine commié fois zot kapave pe mange la viande ?**

- *Dans ene semaine forcé deux fois.*

**Banne zenfans la plus content légumes ?**

- *Oui.*

Another mother speaks of the impossibility of buying meat for her children, so that they are forced to be vegetarian for economic reasons :

**L'école ki ou donne zot pou amener ?**

- *Du pain avec parfois cari, parfois du beurre.*

**Ou mange la viande tous les jours ?**

- *La kot ine arrivé pas kapave mange la viande tous les jours. Bizin mange ene ti peu grain sec, légumes.*

**Ou mange ou la viande dans dimanche ?**

*Oui, mais pas tout le temps. Quand ena lerla parski moi mo pas pe travaille pour l'instant et mo bolom, li ene dimoune malade. Li gagne pension. Au contraire lot fois ene banne dimoune pe dire moi si mo pas ti pou content pou faire ene snack la, mais fauder mo ena moyen. Et li pas facile pou gagne travail parski mo pas ene habitant ici. Avant mo ti pe reste St Paul après mone vine ici. Mais même ici li pas facile.*

Providing food for the children may be difficult but the parents do their best to provide it daily to their children. Providing clothes may be much more of a problem.

**Clothing :**

As this mother from Tranquabar explains, she does not buy clothes very often. The only occasions when clothes are bought is only on special days when there is a celebration :

***Mais bann linge tout ca ?***

- *Linge nous acheter ziste kan l'année. Couma dire nous acheter juste kan ene fete coume ca. Ca aussi mo prend lor credit.*

Even buying clothes may be on credit.

Many of these children and their parents may be getting the clothes of more well-off families as this grandmother who is the one to take care of her grand children, explains :

***Mais linge, zot mama ki donne zot linge ?( the mother lives and works in town)***

- *Oui, zot mama donner, après nous gagne imper la.*

***Ki sannla ?***

- *Beaucoup dimoune vine donne nous la.*
- 

These families sometimes get help from charitable institutions such as the Church.

**Leisure Activities :**

The squatter colonies are not provided with electricity so that the children are not able to watch television. This is explained by a mother of Case Noyale :

***Li guette télévision ?***

- *Pas guetter, pena télévision.*

***Li juste jouer avec so camarade la ?***

- *Oui.*

***Ene journée zot assizer la zot jouer ?***

- *Oui, parfois amene zot la mer, zot alle nager.*

***Kot ça, Berjaya ?***

*Non, derrière lacaz la.*

This mother has to take her children further away in the village of Case Noyale to watch television which means that watching television is not a daily activity as for the big majority of the children in Mauritius.

***Ena télévision lacaz ?***

- *Kot mo belle-mère.*

***Ici ?***

- *Ici pena. Mo bizin amene zot.*

***Zot alle guette ki films ? Ti comique ?***

- *Oui. Et letemps nous pe retourner ti fek commencé. Mais bizin vini, bizin vine cuit parski pena couurant la.*

**Mais ki zot metter, zot mette la bougie ?**

- *Oui.*
- 

During the day they spend their time playing outside in the grounds around their 'house', playing with the soil. In Roche Bois, I saw a two year old infant playing with the earth and having his hair full of earth while in another family ther were the children playing on the road and some jumping from relatively high walls. The mother watched without any worry.

Going for an outing may be an impossibility for some of the very poor. This is what is this mother from Case Noyal is explaining :

**Arrivé ou amene banne zenfans la promener ?**

- *Pas aller, pas ena moyen la pou amene zot. Parfois tifi la rode alle la mer mais mo pas kapave laisse li. Plutôt li alle l'école.*

**Mais zot pas sorti du tout ?**

- *Non.*

**Mais la zot kot ou sœur la ?**

- *Non, la zot kot mo papa la.*

**Mais ou papa contrôle zot ?**

- *Oui, et mo ena ene frère ki pas marier et ki pe reste la-bas la.*

**Couma dire toute la famille occupe zot.**

- *Oui. Souvent mo aller mo retourner a cause ça tifi la.*
- 

The above transcript also tells us about the situation in a broken family, where the children have been separated from their siblings for economic reasons.

## **Housing:**

The first thing which strikes the eye and shocks the onlooker, is the type of shelter in which those people live. Many have been constructed with pieces of flattened drums or pieces of rusty corrugated iron sheets and they can be described as mere shacks with small openings acting as windows and doors. Once inside one of these where there was a new-born baby, I discovered the walls were full of holes bringing in drafts, rain, and insects.

The type of poor living conditions in which some of the children of the Republic are struggling has been highlighted by some of our local news papers.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2003, an article entitled" A la cité La Chaux, La cité des Pauvres tells us about a settlement which has been dubbed "Cité Tol" and which



is : "un univers ou la pauvreté est omniprésente. Ici aucun robinet, aucun compteur d'électricité. Les enfants jouent nu-pieds sur une terre aride." (Hansley Antoine – 5-Plus Dimanche)

These constructions are very vulnerable in periods of bad weather, such as during the cyclonic season.

**Mais kan la pluie tomber, de l'eau pas rentre endans la ?**

*Noune bizin fouiller par devant, noune faire canal pou de l'eau dessane*

**Cyclone ki arriver ?**

- *Cyclone bien passe misere, la boue, de l'eau rentre dans lacaz.*

**Lacaz la pas crazer non ?**

- *Ti couler partout, de l'eau rentrer partout. Banne matelas zenfans, pas kapae dormi, bizin assizer ene nuit. Kan solei sorti, mette matelas sec.*

(Mother from Tranquebar)

The above transcript is very informative about what can be the conditions of the children during the rainy season or during cyclones.

### Lack of basic amenities:

These shelters are not provided with the basic amenities such as running water, electricity and sewerage. To obtain water for domestic purposes, they sometimes have to transport it in some containers from long distances or sometimes not too far from the settlement. The following transcript gives us an idea of the sanitary situation in the squatter colony of Case Noyale:

**Zot boire de l'eau bouilli ou bien de l'eau robinet ?**

- *De l'eau robinet. Au contraire fek gagner, pas ti ena de l'eau nannier.*

**Mais ki zot faire kan zot pas ti ena de l'eau ?**

- *Ti alle chercher débarquadeur kot garde cote la-bas, ti ena ene robinet. Lerla nous prend ça depi la-bas, nous passe bord la mer nous amene ici.*

**Mais toilette ?**

- *Ena ene ti toilette la endans.*

Another woman from Tranquebar testifies to the fact that there is no electricity in the settlement :

**Mais a soir pena la lumiere la ?**

- *Non.*

**Tout noir ?**

- *La haut ena, ici non.*

A mother from Case Noyale tells us that she lights candles at night :

**Mais pena électricité a soir ici ?**

- *Pena, mette la bougie.*

This may be the practice among most families of the settlement.

Some newspaper articles give us an insight into the miseries of the children of the poor. Thus, in an article dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2003 , entitled “**Les enfants face a la dure Réalité**” we find a description of the type of shelter in which those children live:

“

*“Les trois membres de cette famille résident dans une bicoque composee d’une seule chambrre faite de tole pourrie et de boi. Les seuls biens qu’ils possèdent y sont installés: un lit a étage pourvu de deux matelas usés, une vieille lampe a petrole qu’ils utilisent rarement pour preparer a manger car la plupart du temps ils utilisent le bois. Les vetements sont entassés dans des boites en carton. Le terrain sur lequel ils ont érigé leur taudis pour se protéger du soleil et du mauvais temps appartient a l’état.”*

*“Pas de toilettes, encore moins de salle de bain, c’est dans une riviere , attendant que la nuit tombe, que Martine et sa famille vont se baigner. L’absence des toilettes les obligent a faire leurs besoins dans un trou dans la terre.”*

### Lack of space :

These houses are very exiguous so that space is very limited in the houses of the poor . In one of the houses which I have visited in Tranquebar (not in the squatter colony), there is only one small room with a little kitchen at the front. This room is one of several, within a long building which has been constructed in such a way as to rent individual rooms to several families. The children in this particular room which I visited, do their homework on one small table, there are also a big bed taking half the room for the mother with her three children, a small cupboard, a small television which the children watch while sitting on the bed. The housing facilities of the poor is illustrated by this short transcript:

**Ene seule la chambre ou ena ?**

- Oui, ene seule la chambre ena.

**Tous enfants la meme ?**

- Oui.

### **Difficulties of access :**

Access to these shacks may sometimes be very difficult as I experienced during my visit to Tranquebar. Where these shacks had been constructed on the slopes of small dry valleys, it is very difficult to climb up or down those slopes even during the dry weather and one can imagine what could be the situation during the rainy

season. The inhabitants of these areas, adults and children have no choice but to bear with these difficulties as this transcript inform us:

**Mais tous les jours ou marche tout ca, ou grimpe tout ca ?**

- Oui.

**Mais kan la pluie tomber ki arriver ?**

- Kan meme la pluie tomber, bizin grimper.

**Mais kan li ti bebe, gramatin ou saryer li tout ca la ? Ou grimpe tout ca la ?**

- Oui.

**Ou pas tomber ou ?**

- Non.

**Ine gagne l'habitude grimper.**

- Ine gagne l'habitude.

**Avec ti bebe dans la main ou dessane tout ca la ?**

*Oui, tous les jours.*

### **Poor living environment and associated problems :**

The people of some suburbs and the quatter colonies live in very insecure environment where risks is the common lot of all the families. As ther is no electricity , it is very risky to walk around at night but the inhabitants sometimes have emergencies and are forced to go out at night with their children, especially when they are sick :

**Là tout noir ?**

- Tout noir, partout noir.

**Zot reussi marcher a soir ?**

- Oui, nous marcher. N'importe ki l'heure nous zenfan malade nous marcher.

**Ine deja arrivé ou zenfan malade a soir, ou marcher ?**

- Oui, ine deja arrivé.

**Trappe piti dans la main ou aller ?**

- Oui.

This mother continues to tell about the transport problem especially at night when children are sick :

**Mais si couma dire zenfans malade a soir la, ki ou faire ?**

- Bizin marcher. Pas pou gagne transport, bizin marcher.

**Arrive imper, kitpart ou gagner transport ?**

- Non, pas gagner.

**Marcher meme alle ziska... ?**

- Ziska l'hôpital !

**Other(woman) :**

- Tout dernièrement la so tifi ti casse so lebras dans l'école, ti apporte li l'hôpital. Li ti marcher li ti vine zouene moi.

**Mrs N..... :**

- Oui, marcher.

***Mais ou pas prend bus en chemin ?***

*Casse meme, parfois pena casse. Mo bolom pas ti pe trop travail, pas ti pé gagner meme banne travail. Li aussi line deja faire l'operation lipié. Li pas kapave faire banne travail lourds, couma dire kot li gagner li aller coume ca. Parfois lerla nous embarrassé, tout zaffaire nous bizin manzer ci.*

**Poor Health Facilities:**

“Minority groups and the poor bear the heaviest burden of disease and death” (G. Craig -1999: 498).

The families living in these places which are very deprived in many facilities such as health facilities have to walk long distances to reach the hospital or when it is at night that the children are sick, sometimes, they have to wait for daylight to try to seek health care. This situation is explained by this woman from Case Noyale :

***Mais si jamais banne la malade ene coup ki ou faire ?***

- *Nous amene l'hôpital Rivière Noire, dispensaire la.*

***Mais a soir ?***

- *Bizin donne médecine jusqu'à gramatin, lerla guetter ki pou faire.*

***Mais ki médecines ou garder la ?***

- *Dimanche ti ena ene docteur ti vini la, ti donne nous médecines ; médecines pou zenfans, vitamines et après ine donne zot médecines les vers. Après ena ene dispensaire la haut la, nous amene zot. Mais a soir pena l'auto, bizin passe la nuit.*

If there are health care facilities in dispensaries, it is not very regular for consultations for minor ailments as this is the case for the inhabitants of Roche Bois who have to go to Jeetoo Hospital in central Port Louis for emergencies:

***Pena dispensaire ici ?***

- *Mais ici dispensaire ena ene seul fois docteur.*

***Ene seul jour ?***

- *Oui, juste dans lundi. Ca aussi une heure. Une heure l'après-midi qui li commence consulter.*

***Ziska ki l'heure ?***

- *Ziska trois heures.*

***C'est tout ?***

*C'est tout oui. Banne lezot jours ene pou banne diabète, sait pas quoi. Li dire ou ou bizin alle l'hôpital*

**Poverty and children at risks:**

Many children living in poor families run greater risks of meeting with accidents which may lead to serious injuries or even death. Tragic examples of such

occurrences are the cases of two infants burning to death within less than one month in two different localities, one in Rose Hill and one in Bambous. In both cases, the infant had been left in the care of a minor while the parents were at work or on some errand. Leaving infants in the care of irresponsible minors may be described as negligence. Another case of children having burned to death due to parental negligence occurred last year in Cap Malheureux. In that case two children of the same family as well as the father burned to death because of the use of candles for lighting in a shack made of wood and iron sheets and the parents were apparently drunk according to newspapers.

Numerous cases of parental negligence causing children's death have been reported in newspapers. These cases of death may have been caused by drowning, or being run down by motor vehicles on the road or even being crushed to death accidentally by their own parents' vehicles in their garage or courtyard.

These cases of deaths occur more frequently in poor families where parents are poorly educated and where the main priority is to eke out a living from some odd jobs and hence they have to take the risk to leave their children in the care of older children who may very often be irresponsible.

### **Poverty and child Abuse:**

Poverty also plays a role in child abuse. Though physical abuse of children may be found at all socioeconomic levels, it is less likely to occur in middle class families.

Poverty means that a whole family may be living in an exiguous area and this leads to promiscuity and a high risk of sexual abuse of children by the adults.

Another source of sexual abuse may be the step father. In these deprived families broken families are very common and mothers cohabiting with another man may put their daughter at risk. In fact, this is what is happening in many cases as reported at the Child Development Unit.

Unemployment, especially male, may be one of the risk factors leading to violence mainly against wives and children. This mother from Tranquebar explains the situation in her family where her children and herself have to suffer from violence from her unemployed and alcoholic husband:

*Li ti dans la drogue tout ca, mone séparé. Lerla mone reste rester lerla mone conne ene lot. Lerla mone reste avec li six ans mone gagne ca trois zenfans la. Li, li batter li. Li boir, li batter, li ti pe travaille avant apres line arrêté nette. Li batter li tout*

***Li pas ti pe travaille ?***

- *Palé travaille, nek boir.*

***Mais kot li gagne casse pou boir ?***

- *Li dire ou : camarade donne moi. Lerla depi ca couma dire mo éviter. Mo dire coume ca... mone alle femme battue, mone alle tout. Zot dire moi : madame, seule solution ou séparé, ou alle reste kot ene fami. Mais lerla mone alle rode ene lacaz pou mo rester ek mo zenfans.*

This case presents all the characteristics of those families where children are at risk with parents who are drug addicts, alcoholics and violent and the mother has changed partner for the worse.

Alcoholism is not only associated with the father. Numerous cases of physical abuse and abandonment by alcoholic mothers are being registered regularly. We must bear in mind though that alcoholism is not only a behaviour typical of the working class only. The CDU has had to deal with cases of children being physically abused in well-off middle –class families, though these cases are very rare.

Children who have been reported to be suffering from various types of abuse or from abandonment are taken under the protection of the Child Development Unit which through its Permanent Secretary is empowered through the Child Protection Law to have the children at risk taken away from their home and put in special shelters. This may not be an easy job as it is difficult to persuade these children to come away with strangers and for the violent parents to give away their children- it can even be risky for the child welfare officers.

Abandonment by parents, both father and mother, is another form of abuse suffered by children. For the year 2003, a total of 50 cases of abandonment have been reported at the CDU. Abandonment is generally by mothers who are prostitutes or who have got the child out of wedlock and this results in a number of children being without abode. Only for the period January to May 2004, 34 cases of children (17 boys and 17 girls) without abode have been reported. When these cases occur, the children are taken to the shelters found at under the responsibility of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Affairs.

### **Poverty and poor school performance and lack of schooling:**

According to research worldwide, poor school performance is generally linked with poverty. There is strong evidence of this association in many localities of Mauritius. An analysis of the CPE results in the primary schools of the Republic shows that the schools which register the lowest percentage of passes at the CPE are those which are situated in the disadvantaged areas where poverty is rampant. There are some 40 government and RCA primary schools which have registered a percentage of pass of less than 40% at the last CPE examinations (2003) and these schools are to be found mainly in the poor suburbs of the towns and in some rural schools where the school clientele is mainly the children of the poor. Some of the schools with a low percentage of pass have been listed below and we take note of the fact that all these schools are to be found in regions usually with a high percentage of poverty-stricken people.

#### **Primary schools with a low percentage of pass at the 2003 CPE examinations:**

<b>School</b>	<b>locality</b>	<b>% of pass</b>
Emmanuel Anquetil G.S	Roche Bois, P.Louis	9.15
Guy Rozemont G.S	Tranquebar, P. Louis	21.31
Nicolay G.S	P. Louis	26.17
La Briquetterie G.S.	Ste Croix , P. louis	26.32
G.RN.W. G. S.	P. Louis	28.36
Seeneevassen G.S	Cassis ,P. Louis	34.51
Dr Idrice Goomany G.S	Plaine Verte, P. Louis	39.8
Camp Levieux G.S.	Rose-Hill	30.51
Barkly G.S.	Beau-Bassin	30.77
Richelieu G.S.	Richelieu	32.71
Candos G.S.	Quatre Bornes	34.12
Cité Atlee G.S.	Curepipe	34.26
H. Parsad Ramnarain	Terre- Rouge	34.18
Case-Noyale R.CA	Case-Noyale	22.73
Jean Eon R.C.A	Grand Gaube	20.18

In fact, most of the schools registering a low percentage of CPE pass have been enlisted on a project of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research which aims at improving achievement in those schools since the last eight years. Different governments have attempted to deal with these problem schools, so much so that that this special group of schools have changed names more than once and we have heard of 'Project Schools', then later the 'Special Support Schools' (SSS) and now they have been regrouped as 'Zones d'Education Prioritaires' (Z.E.P.) schools.

Within this project, several initiatives have been taken to improve the conditions of life of the children going to these schools: food in terms of sandwiches are distributed and each pupil have been given a “carnet de Santé” followed by visits from health teams (doctors and nurses) from the Ministry of Health. Another aspect of the ZEP Project is the enlistment of “*Parents Mediateurs*” to liaise with the parents of those disadvantaged regions. This initiative is financed by the Private sector.

How far this project is being a success at the pedagogical level has yet to be researched!

The following transcripts of interviews of parents from those disadvantaged regions give us an idea of parental attitude to education and their children’s achievement. This mother from Roche-Bois has no illusion about her children’s level of achievement:

***Mais kan zot sorti l’ecole zot vini ki zot faire ?***

- *Kan zot sorti l’ecole zot vini, zot guette television. Parfois mo empeche zot.*

***Devoirs ?***

- *Devoirs zot faire. Mo tifi la pa conne nannier, li dir ou li faire devoirs li pas conne nannier.*

***Ki classe li été ou dir moi ?***

- *Cinquieme la. Nannier li pas conner.*

***Mais comment ou conner li pas conne nannier ?***

- *Mais 4 F. Chaque coup li amene 4 F are moi. Mo pou dir ou li conner, hein? Li pas conne nannier nannier li pas conner.*

This other mother from Tranquebar also speaks of failure and repeating classes in her family:

. *Deux ti alle college ene meme temps, Christine ti doublé, deuxieme l’année sixieme, Christian ti faire premier l’année line passé. Tous les deux ti passé mais mo ti gagne problemes.*

These children not only belong to families which are poor economically but also poor culturally. These are social settings where books are not bought and children do not possess the culture of reading and if newspapers are read, it is only to have a look at the television programmes as this transcript testifies :

***Mais to prend livres dans bibliotheque tout ca toi ? To pas lire ?***

- *Non.*

***To pas lire du tout ? Kifer ?***

- *Mo lire dans l’ecole.*

***Ki livres ?***

- *Bane passages.*

***C’est tout ? Jamais to prend livre pou lire ?***

- *Non.*

***To lire la gazette ?***



- Ene, deux fois mo prend.
- Ki interessant dans la gazette? Ki zaffaire ki to lire dans la gazette ?**
- Bane programmes.
- Programme television ? Apart ca, non ? Mais to pas guette bann nouvelle ?**
- Pas trop. (Boy from Roche Bois , interviewed in the presence of his mother)

Poverty is not only one of the causes of low achievement , it is also one of the causes why many children are not being sent to school by their parents as this newspaper extract informs us :

*“ Feu Nouveau, un mouvement regroupant une vingtaine de dames de la cité EDC de Rose belle et une cinquantaine des Forces Vives, tirent la sonnette d’alarme sur le nombre d’enfants, agés entre 8 et 12 ans, qui ne sont scolarisés pour des raisons qui sont liées a la pauvreté aussi par manque de volonté de la part des parents. Selon les chiffres compilés par leurs soins, ils seraient une trentaine. Le mouvement n’est pas indifférent a ce probleme qui pourrait avoir de graves répercussions sur la vie de ces enfants” (L’Express 31 Juillet 2003)*

Many of these children are going to be the “street children” who roam about in mainly the urban regions but lately this phenomenon has also been noticed in the rural areas

### **Poverty and vagrancy:**

On the 9th February of 2003, the Sunday newspaper “Le Dimanche” attracts our attention to the problem of children roaming around in the streets of towns and they are described as:

*“ tout simplement les victimes de la pauvreté. Ce sont des enfants qui errent les rues pour trouver de quoi apaiser leur faim. Un enfant qui marche des heures, des kilometres pour trouver quelque chose a manger.. Qu’on se le dise, tres souvent, ils se contentent de ce que les gens ont jeté.. un morceau de pain, de dholl pouri ou de roti!”*

The “*educateur de rue* “ who was being interviewed goes on to state that “ *des enfants ont été vus en train de manger de la terre, de l’éponge et d’autres choses inimaginables.....certains vont jusqu’a fouiller: Une fois j’ai dans les poubelles*” (extract from an interview of an “*educateur de rue*”)

One of the social workers speaks her mind:

*“Une fois j’ai rencontré deux gamins tout pres du marché de Rose Belle. Ils ramassaient des légumes avariés pour les emmener a la maison. Lorsque j’ai interrogé leurs parents, ils m’ont dit qu’ils ‘ont pas les moyens de les envoyer a l’école.”*

This kind of situation is confirmed by a social worker from Grand Baie that

*....beaucoup d’enfants vont dormir les ventres creux. Certains n’ont qu’un repas par jour. J’ai été surprise une fois de voir un enfant d’environ cinq ans en train de prendre de la terre . et mettre dans sa bouche*

*Il ne l’avait pas crachée. C’est n’est pas un enfant qui joue avec de la terre” (Le Dimanche 9/2/03)*

The situation of the street children was described by the “*educateurs de rue*” of the Ministry of Social Security

### **The Street Children:**

According to officers of the Ministry of Social Security, working with children labeled, “Street Children” there may be a total of 6,500 children roaming the streets of the towns or even of the big villages throughout the island. The officers of the “Street Children” project have physically identified only 1,200 of the street children and they have categorised the following types of street children:

- those living all the time in the streets
- those who occasionally come home
- those who roam the streets during the day and come to sleep at home
- those who spend their time in the streets as there is not enough space in their small home and their parents are at work (mainly in the cités)

In fact, poverty is the main reason which lead those children to abandon their home to live in the streets. The conditions in which they live make it easy to go into the street, such as this case where the house is so small that two of the children sleep in an old car outside at night. In some cases the parents themselves are known to encourage their children to beg in the streets. They even train them into the trade and may even be controlling the money obtained through begging.

The “Street Children” project permits the officers to have an eye on only 440 of them without taking them out of the streets. As there are only 8 “street educators” who are on this project, only 160 of the children are under the constant monitoring of these educators, that is, 20 children under the care and supervision of each educator. The age of these children vary from 3 to 18 years. The following table gives us an idea of the age of these children:

Age	Boys	Girls	Total
0 - 3	1	1	2
4 -7	0	7	7
8 -11	21	22	43
12 -15	50	24	74
16 -18	26	3	29
18+	4		4
Total	102	57	159

Nearly 80% of these children are below the age of 15 and most of them are boys. We must bear in mind that these are only those children who are under the care of the street educators. The children are barely educated and many may be illiterate if we examine their educational background:

Officially at school but mostly absent: 3

At school but do not seem to be able to learn anything: 3

Some have left school completely: 28

A few have never been to school: 4

Some fall prey to drug addiction (1.89% ) while others are simply idle (22.6% )

The educators have even identified about 13 cases of children who have not been officially declared, that is who have no birth certificate. Some may have been victims of some sort of abuse at home or even some parents want to get rid of them because of lack of financial means to take care of them. The different types of abuse have been categorised thus:

Type of Abuse	%
Moral abuse	13.8%
Social Abuse	10.6%
Physical abuse	8.8%

Children living in such conditions as described above, cannot but have a lot of emotional and behavioural problems. Thus the educators have observed that the children are always on the defensive and very often they have relations of conflict with others. Living in the streets may mean living according to the law of the jungle where the fittest will be able to “*tracer*” (creole word). They also show signs of being emotionally disturbed while at the same time wanting to uphold their self-esteem:

*“Mo pas content zotte appelle moi zenfants de rue.”* (reported by one educator)

These children fend for themselves by begging (5.66%) or by doing some odd jobs in the informal sector. Some may steal for themselves or they may be member of a racket who operate in places of dense crowds like markets or bus stations. Some of the girls fall easy prey to prostitution.

A particular group of boys who are mostly adolescents, that is, aged between 12 and 18, live permanently in the streets of Port Louis. This means that they sleep in abandoned buildings, under bridges or any place where they can be safely protected from bad weather and they are always moving from place to place. These youngsters are CPE failures but they are very resourceful and they form a sort of community in which they help each other while being employed in some odd jobs, such as working at the market, with the hawkers at the Champ de Mars or even at the “Jardin de la Compagnie” where they solicit clients for the prostitutes. It is difficult to identify these young people as, having substantial amount of money at their disposal, very often they are well-dressed and equipped. Some are known to be engaged in gambling which activity may sometimes allow them to get even more money. The educators suspect that they may be engaging in homosexual habits.

The Ministry of Social Security and welfare of senior Citizens has launched this project of taking care of the Street Children but up to now there are only eight educators who must take care of only 159 children while others are left to fend for themselves. This project is a praiseworthy one but a lot has still to be accomplished in order to be able to cater for the identification of the rest of the street children and try to cater for their needs. The educator /children ratio is one educator for twenty children which means that the care given is inadequate as these children need individualised treatment. Each case is a specific one and the child needs to be approached carefully as otherwise there may be rejection of the sort of help being offered. The educators have explained that it may take days sometimes before a street child may be approached and it may even take longer to reach them within the shell which they have built around themselves. The main aim is to win their trust first and then to work towards a change of behaviour. These educators need to understand the social background and the values of these children before trying to make them adopt mainstream values. In some cases it may involve persuade them to take a bath. Such kind of approach needs a lot of intense training of the educators.

The actual educators are being trained while taking care of those children but more street educators have to be recruited and trained in order to be able to take in charge those children with numerous difficulties.

According to the educators, they are working in difficult conditions such as working at odd hours in risky areas. They need to adapt to the conditions and make themselves available to their protégés at any time. In spite of all the difficulties, the street educators seem to be registering some success, as the following table, demonstrates the different type of success obtained according to the children's readiness to accept help:

#### LES RESULTATS OBTENUES PAR TRANCHE D'AGE PARMI LES ENFANTS SUIVIS

RESULTATS	0-3 ans		4-7 ans		8-11 ans		12-15ans		16-18ans		18 ans+		Total	%
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Relation de confiance établi			2	7	17	22	41	31	18	2	4		144	90.5
Ont été vaccinés				2			1						3	1.89
<b>Ont été déclarés</b>	1	1						1					3	1.89
Déclaration en cours				3		5	1			1			10	6.29
Contact avec la famille établi	1	1	2	7	15	19	37	15	18	2	2		119	74.
Assistance médicale obtenue		1	1	4	3	1	1	5	3	1	2		22	13.8
Retour dans la famille								1	1	1			3	1.89
Fait le va et viens dans la famille							8	1	8		1		18	11.3
Placer dans des famille d'accueil							1						1	0.63
Palcer dans des foyers					1		2	1		2	2		8	5.03
Placer dans des écoles primaire			2	4	6	5	2	1					20	12.58
Placer dans des écoles pré-voc							3						3	1.89
Placer dans des centres de formation									3	1			4	2.52
Eu accès dans des centres de jeunesse			1		11	10	20	6	12	1	1		62	39.9
Eu accès dans des centres sociaux					6	7	16	16	9		2		56	35.2
Eu accès dans des centres de femme					1			4					5	3.14
Eu accès dans des centres de créativité					5	4	2	9					20	12.5
Placer dans des centres d'alphabétisation					1		2	2	1				6	3.77
Initiés au NYAA							8	8	10		1		27	16.9
Ont plus d'hygiène et sont plus propres		1	1	4	16	10	22	18	14	1	1		88	55.3
Plus réceptif aux messages			1	3	16	16	42	20	20	1	1		120	75.4
Referrer dans des centres de déintoxication					1		1		1				3	1.89
Sensibiliser aux dangers de la toxicomanie					2	1	14	7	17	1	2		44	27.6
Sensibiliser aux relations seuelles non-protégé							6	6	12	2	2		28	17.6
Sensibiliser aux VIH/SIDA							20	9	13	2	1		45	28.3
Sensibiliser à l'importance de l'éducation			1	6	11	15	21	18	5	1	2		80	50.3

Réduire la fréquence de pratiquer la mendicité					4	4	4		4				16	10.0
Arrêter de pratiquer la mendicité					1		1		1				3	1.89
Diminuer la consommation de colle					1		1		7				9	5.66
Arrêter de sniffer de la colle					2				1				3	1.89
Ont bénéficiés d'aide sociale					1	1	2						4	2.52
Eveil à la sexualité						3	10	7	12	1			33	20.7
Ont eu accès à une carte d'identité											1		1	0.63
Ont eu accès à un acte de naissance (copie)			1				2		2		1		6	3.77
Ont pu ouvrir un compte en banque									1				1	0.63
Aide à la maternité										1			1	0.63
Ne vont plus à la soupe populaire					1		4		7				12	7.55
Ont participé dans des activités d'éveil scolaire				4	7	6	8	7					32	20.1
Placé dans une école secondaire							1						1	0.63

These statistics have been provided by the “éducateurs de rue” themselves.

### Poverty and Child Prostitution:

Poor children are the most vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

In a study made by the University of Mauritius, entitled “ Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of children in Mauritius” and commissioned by the Ministry of WRCDFW, a close co -relation between poverty and child prostitution was made. Though about 34.8% of the child prostitutes did not answer the question relating to parental income, it is clear from those who gave an answer, that is, 65% of the respondents, that the most important reason enticing these children towards prostitution was poverty as most of them came from families with very meagre incomes:

*“For those who did provide the information, the mean family income per month works out to Rs.4058 for the children’s families of origin and Rs.4,600 for the families for the sex workers. For 44.5% children, the family’ monthly income is less than Rs.5,000. This clearly puts the families of child and adult sex workers among the poorest sections of the population, which is confirmed by the fact that most of the main earners were in low skill/low income occupations like bricklaying, factory jobs, fishermen and the like.”(p.34)*

Though the problem of child prostitution does not affect children of less than 12, there is a certain number of children aged 12 and above who are being commercially exploited. According to the UOM report 29.5 of these children are aged between 12 and 15.

**Suggestions:**

Poverty cannot be alleviated on an *ad hoc* basis by food donation ,clothing donation and even financial allowances though these forms of aid may be of some help temporarily.

- Ecological studies of low-income children, their families, and their schools must be undertaken to understand the problem of poverty in specific localities.
- There should be an integrated approach towards the improvement in the living standards of children and their parents living in deprivation, that is, in the provision of adequate food, clothing, shelter, sanitation health care, education etc.
- In any plan to alleviate poverty, the target population itself should be actively involved so that they can claim ownership of it and this in itself will motivate them to strive towards getting out of the cycle of poverty.
- The poverty alleviation plan should take into consideration the specific profile of the target group on terms of ethnic group and culture and the physical environment of the locality.
- At the educational level, help should not be limited to providing the children with the necessary equipment (books, bags, copybooks and writing materials) to go to school but there should be the promotion of sustainable family-school partnerships
- This family school –partnership should be a source of support to parents in terms of advice and counselling but the teachers should receive intensive training in counselling. There could be creative approaches to family educational involvement based on family strengths, mutual respect, trusting relationships, and parent empowerment
- From this family-school partnership could come a parenting programme where parents and teachers could co-operate together with the aim of improving the standard of achievement.
- Each locality should be encouraged and helped to develop a centre where educational support is provided in the form of a library, computer room, creativity centre etc. where those children who are culturally deprived could be

able to enrich their knowledge and skills and where they could come when they are out of school instead of roaming the streets. A culture of reading should be developed.

- Aid workers such as social welfare officers, street educators and counsellors should as far as possible be people of the same locality as those who are going to be helped. Otherwise, the aid-workers can be rejected by the local community.
- In such a context, strong emphasis should be placed upon training of human resources.

#### Street children

- educators need to be recruited mainly from the same area as their clients in order for them to have an empathy for the children.
- Educators based in schools where these cases of absconding for the streets exist
- Educators need pre-service training together with in-service training- training must be on-going as conditions keep changing.
- A special centre with a psychologist attached to it, needs to be set up to accept the difficult cases.
- All help programmes would be facilitated by good communication.
- An evaluation framework and constant monitoring would also be of great help to achieve progress.



## Chapter 18

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Since Mauritius signed the CRC, considerable progress has been accomplished in the best interests of the child. In fact, the CRC has had a lot of influence upon child welfare legislation in Mauritius as well as in other parts of the world. This report has highlighted the accomplishments in that field but has also revealed the shortcomings and deficiencies concerning the treatment of the child. These problems have been described very often in an in-depth manner which it is hoped will raise awareness among policy makers of governmental bodies, NGO's and the media about the condition of the child in the Republic of Mauritius. Through this report, it is hoped that many aspects of the condition of the child in this country will be clarified and it will permit the necessary appropriate actions to be taken by the authorities concerned.

Actions which will ensure the protection of the rights of the child as well as improve the material and emotional condition of the child must be the responsibility of the family, the community and NGO's and the State with the latter spearheading and monitoring all these actions. At the same time any plan for the enhancement of the condition of the child in the Republic of Mauritius should take into account the following encompassing principles of, **sustainability, integration, relevance accountability** and **empowerment** in order to be successful. How these principles should be incorporated in all action plans concerning child welfare is being explained here:

#### **Sustainability:**

All actions should not be on an *ad hoc* basis, where large sums of money are being spent on an event which lasts for a day or even a few days and then is heard no more. Actions should be planned for long periods of time in terms of plans like a five-year plan, with a specific budget to ensure that the plan is sustainable throughout that period of time.

**Integration:**

Actions should not be isolated but should form part of a plan where all the needs and rights of the child are being taken care of in a holistic manner. This is where the family, the community and the State should work in close collaboration. Any recommendation which can be made to strengthen the already existing legal and institutional framework for the protection of children and the safeguarding their interests, cannot be made on an ad hoc basis. There must be an integrated plan to deal with all problems concerning the child in Mauritius.

An integrated approach to the improvement of the child is highly relevant in deprived areas where the children of the poor are deprived of basic needs. For example bad health condition may originate from poor nutrition and sending children to schools mean providing them also with the appropriate pieces of clothing and footwear. Children of the ZEP schools are being provided with some of their basic needs such as food and health care but there are deprived children in many schools of Mauritius which do not fall under the ZEP responsibility.

Integrated actions should take place also at the community level to help the parents in need because the child can only be helped if the home background also is being remediated.

**Accountability:**

In order to avoid duplication of actions, wastage of resources and as well as incoherence in the overall accomplishment of the action, each individual and organisation working for the welfare of the child, should be accountable for their actions at the community level as well as at the level of the central body controlled by the government.

**Relevance:**

The local context should be given consideration in the development of a programme which is appropriate for the children of Mauritius. Traditionally programmes concerning the enhancement of the condition of the child have been designed on the basis of “scientific” knowledge developed by child psychologists

and sociologist from Western countries. Those programmes have been grafted on to local contexts where cultural norms may be completely different from those of Western countries. In many of the developing countries, these programmes have not been totally successful as they had made abstraction of the local context.

At the same time, relevance is a key –concept which policy makers must keep in mind when dealing with children from different socio-economic groups. What is relevant for children from disadvantaged background may not be relevant for children from the lower middle class or from the upper middle class who may be disadvantaged in only certain aspects of their life.

In the context of relevance, the training and education of the different care-givers, childminders, teachers and even parents, the local norms and practices must be taken into consideration and given their due importance.

Decision-makers and different stakeholders must strike a balance between the scientific knowledge and the local practices and traditional values.

### **Empowerment:**

Individuals, families, the community and service workers in the field of child -caring, should be given the skills and tools to make the right decisions concerning child -rearing and protection. They must not only be empowered through material help in form of pensions but also through education and training. The community also should be empowered through financial help as well as the provision of services and skilled human resources. Members of the community should help to empower the deprived families.

### **Operationalisation of action plans :**

The implementation of plans for the welfare of children should be in terms of actions which involve the following:

- Partnership
- Capacity building
- Education and Training of parents and personnel of organisations and institutions who are stakeholders in child welfare.

- Amendments in existing legislation to aspire for more effectiveness
- Enhancement of support Services
- The content of existing plans should be amended to cater for the shortcomings and deficiencies.

## Chapter19

### CONCLUSION:

These days there are several activities and manifestations being organised by the Ministry of WRCDFW and other NGO's in the name of **"the child"** in Mauritius. Among these activities and manifestations, we remember those which made the headlines in the media, that is: "Say Yes for Children", "Sixteen Days , Sixteen Rights" organised by the Bureau of the Ombudsperson for children. During these well-intended manifestations, all the children of Mauritius are being considered as if they consist of one homogeneous entity with the same conditions of life. At the same time the whole rhetoric of official discourses is upon the upholding and safeguarding the "Rights" of the Child. Yet this piece of research has demonstrated that all the children of Mauritius are not experiencing the same conditions of life. This research has also revealed that studying the condition of the child in Mauritius is also equivalent to studying the differences among children and all the inequalities in childhood in the Republic.

This research, which is limited to the study of the condition of children aged between 0 and 12, has made it possible to obtain an insight into child rearing practices in Mauritius, and an overview of the contribution of the Mauritian State as well as NGO's in the protection of the rights of children and the promotion of the welfare of the child.

Throughout this report, we take cognizance of the fact that the condition of the child in Mauritius is dependent not only on parental care and responsibility but also on society at large through the State and NGO's who are major stakeholders in the promotion of children's welfare and the protection of the rights of children and even sometimes in the protection of children from parental abuse and neglect.

As in all cultures of the world, the children are highly valued in this country because they represent the most important agent in the continuity of the human species and of its cultural heritage. They represent the hopes for the future of

humanity. That is why parents as well as the community do their utmost to provide the best of care to the children of the Republic with each stakeholder doing so within the limits of its means. Unfortunately there are children in Mauritius as well as in rest of the world who suffer from maltreatment and abuse and are being put at risk by their family. On the other hand, children are also being put at risk and their rights are being infringed upon also by some decisions or the lack of decision-making on the part of the authorities.

In most families in Mauritius, children are not only brought up with the necessary care and attention which will promote their healthy development but also in many families the parents transmit the values and traditions of the family as well as of the community to which they belong. Parents generally hope that these values and traditions will be perpetuated in future generations and in this way ensure continuity of the culture.

Throughout this research we realise that the children of Mauritius cannot all be lumped together and considered as one homogeneous group as each child belongs to a particular family where standard of living and the family values and traditions will depend to a large extent upon the social class and the social status of that family within the structure of Mauritian society. The main focus of this research has therefore been to demonstrate differences in the living conditions of children in Mauritius.

Most parents are aware of the fact that they must provide for the needs of the child to ensure that he/she will grow into a complete adult. They try their best to provide for their children's:

- physical well-being and development (feeding, bathing, clothing, medical care in case of illness, providing a safe shelter, and keeping the child safe and free from harm);
- psychological well-being and development (providing emotional security, nurturing and giving affection);
- social well-being and development (socialisation, facilitating the child's interaction with others outside the home, that is, within the community, at school, and other places).

The quality of the care provided by the parents as we have learned throughout this report, depends to a large extent upon the degree of economic capital, social capital and cultural capital at the disposal of the family. The higher the position of the parents on the social ladder, the more abundant their material wealth. This means also that the children of the richer classes are treated with better quality and quantity of food, clothing, medical care, housing conditions and educational facilities than those of the labouring classes. As usually the parents in the higher social classes are more educated than those of the working classes and form part of influential social networks, this means that their children are thriving within a family environment with a rich cultural and social capital. This cultural and social capital is strongly lacking in most families of the working classes. Research in many countries of the world has shown that educational success or failure is closely linked with the quality of the cultural capital of the family and that career advancement of individuals is usually closely linked with the social capital of the family.

The result is that children are living and developing in different family cultures influenced by the economic social and cultural capitals of the family which can also be coloured by ethnic practices and values.

Inequalities between social classes have always existed but since Independence and the onset of industrialisation, the social fabric of the country has been undergoing considerable changes.

The family itself has changed from the traditionally extended family to more nuclear families. The mother is working outside the home and very often comes home later than the children. All these changes in the social setting means that children are more on their own and very often are missing the emotional support which they need to grow into a complete human being. This is a form of deprivation from which children of all classes may suffer and which can lead to problems in the adult life of these children. As this aspect of the condition of the child is not visible not much is being done to cater for the needs of these children.

Even with the process of “nuclearisation” of families, there are some families, where the grand parents live with the nuclear family or may live nextdoor or in the

neighbourhood, and have an important role to play in child rearing as they are the caregivers in the absence of the working mother.

With industrialisation and economic development, there has also occurred a process of social mobility, with members of the working classes moving into the middle class and members of the middle classes moving in to the upper middle class as a result of greater access to education since the seventies. In fact the upper layer of the working classes have a style of life which is very close to that of the lower middle class. A slow “*embourgeoisement*” of the working class family is taking place.

Consequently, with the possibility for social mobility, changes in the condition of the child is constant.

The State’s contribution in supporting the development and growth of the child in Mauritius has considerably expanded since Independence as the government was committed to the ideal of a “welfare state”. At the same time, the economic advancement of the country, during the last 35 years, has led to improvement in the provision of free education, health care and more recently the provision of leisure activities to a limited extent to children of less than 12 years old. Though progress have been recorded in these fields, there are still a certain amount of weaknesses and inadequacies at institutional level.

With free education, more children are having access to education but the system is riddled with problems which have yet to be solved. These problems include a high rate of failure (about 40% ) at the CPE examinations, poor pedagogical practices of teachers, the poor physical environment( school building,school yard, toilets and playground ) in some schools and the abuses of private tuition. In matters of health there are beds available for the treatment of sick children in all the regional hospitals the number of beds are not sufficient and there is still a crying need for a children’s hospital in this country. Medical teams from the Ministry of Health visit primary and pre-primary schools every year and children are screened for diseases. As these visits are on a yearly basis, they do not allow for an in-depth health care for the children who may suffer from different ailments



between one visit and the next. It is usually the children of the poorer classes who may be suffering from this scarcity of medical care at school.

The results of this research also points to the fact that the state is intervening in the eradication of injustice and abuse towards children and try to improve the quality of life of the disadvantaged children. Considerable progress has been recorded in matters pertaining to the protection of abused children and those who are at risk through the promulgation of a series of laws, such as the “Child Protection Act”. The deprived children of poor families have not been forgotten and this taking in charge of the deprived or abandoned children is exemplified by the “street Children” project of the Ministry of Social Security.

Even if the government has set up an important legal and institutional framework to safeguard the interests of the child and protect him/her from abuse and risk, the implementation of the laws and the effective functioning of the institutions responsible for the protection of children in Mauritius is hampered by a series of inadequacies which can be listed as follows:

- limited economic resources
- Lack of trained human resources
- Poor leadership and lack of vision
- Bureaucratic procedures
- Loopholes within the existing laws which lead to delay in taking actions to protect the child.

#### Limited Resources:

Although Mauritius is a rapidly developing country, and it is not considered poor enough to receive aid from an organisation like UNICE, the government still does not dispose of considerable economic resources like developed countries which means that the actions in favour of the child though praiseworthy are limited to only children who are suffering from abuse and are at risk and even for these children, the most immediate needs are being taken care of and actions very often are being taken on an *ad hoc* basis.

#### Lack of trained and appropriate personnel:

The work of the Child Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of WRCDFW is being slowed down and sometimes being made ineffective by the shortage of trained human resources, ie, there are only four psychologists and five child welfare officers at the CDU . The few who are actually in service find it difficult to cope with the amount of work and the result is that the CDU is not functioning in an effective manner. The lack of trained human resources is being felt in several governmental as well as NGO's responsible for the condition of the child in Mauritius.

#### Poor Leadership:

The human resources are not only limited but they are being poorly managed as those who have the authority to take actions seem to be lacking in planning, decision-making and problem-solving skills. This constitute a very big handicap for the effective running of State institutions.

#### Bureaucratic Procedures:

Very often those leaders who wish to act rapidly in cases of emergency find themselves bogged down in bureaucratic procedures which hamper heir actions.

#### Loopholes within the legal framework:

On other occasions, it is not only the heavy bureaucratic procedures which hinder actions but the way the law has been spelt out or can be interpreted in different subtle ways. These loopholes within the legal system very often slow down the procedures in the protection of the child especially when she is at risk in her own home.

With all the best intentions and actions in favour of the child, the State institutions responsible for the welfare of the children in Mauritius have still a long way to go before becoming effective.

Governmental Actions in favour of he child has up to now been mostly of a protective nature, protecting mainly he child at risk and being abused.

traditional attitude towards a child's failure or success in life is to put the onus of achievement upon the formal educational process. Eventually the differential treatment met by the children of Mauritius since their entry in this world will have an impact upon the type of individuals who enter the school system and who will have differential access to success

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## APPENDIX I

### Questionnaire for Primary School Children

## QUESTIONNAIRE POUR LES ENFANTS DE PRIMAIRE.

Bonjour, je m'appelle Peggy  
Veux-tu t'amuser avec moi et  
répondre à mes questions?



❖ 1.1 Comment tu t'appelles?\* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

❖ 1.2 Quel âge as-tu? J'ai \_\_\_\_ ans et je suis né/e en 19\_\_\_\_.

❖ 1.3 Moi, j'habite à Port-Louis, et toi? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

❖ 2.1 As-tu été dans une école maternelle auparavant? Si oui, laquelle? Et où se trouvait-elle?

i) Oui: 😊 Elle

s'appelait: \_\_\_\_\_ et se

trouvait à: \_\_\_\_\_.

ii) Non: 😞

❖ 2.3 Comment s'appelle ton école actuelle et où se trouve-t-elle?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



❖ 2.4 Dans quelle classe es-tu?

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❖ 2.5 Quel est ton sujet préféré à l'école? Pourquoi ce sujet?

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❖ 2.6 Quel sujet aimes-tu le moins? Pourquoi ce sujet?

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❖ 2.7 Aimes-tu aller à l'école? OUI/NON? Pourquoi?

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❖ 3.1 As-tu des amis à l'école? Comment s'appellent-ils?

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❖ 3.2 A quoi jouez-vous pendant la récréation?

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❖ 3.3 Il y a-t-il un professeur qui vous montre à faire du sport et des exercices? Quels sports?



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❖ 3.4 Il y a-t-il un professeur qui vous montre à dessiner et à peindre?

---

❖ 3.5 Il y a t-il une bibliothèque dans ton école?

i) Oui. 😊      ii) Non. 😊

❖ 3.6 Si oui, empruntes-tu des livres et des bandes-dessinées?

i) Oui, j'emmène des livres à la maison..... 😊

ii) Oui/ j'emmène des bandes-dessinées à la maison..... 😊

iii) Non, mais on fait de la lecture à l'école..... 😊

iv) Non, on n'a pas le droit de prendre les livres..... 😊

❖ 3.7 Quels sont tes livres et bandes-dessinées préférés?

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❖ 4.1 Prends-tu des leçons après l'école? Si oui, combien de leçons par semaine?

1: 😊      2: 😊      3: 😊      4: 😊      5: 😊      Plus: 😊

❖ 4.2 Quelles leçons prends-tu?

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❖ 4.3 A quelle heure rentres-tu à la maison?

i) Quand je n'ai pas de leçons? \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Après les leçons? \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 4.4 Comment rentres-tu à la maison?

i) Avec papa en voiture..... 😊

ii) Avec papa en marchant..... 😊

iii) Avec maman en voiture. .... 😊

iv) Avec maman en marchant. .... 😊

iv) Par le van. .... 😊

v) Le bus de l'école. .... 😊

vi) Je prends le bus. .... 😊

vii) Avec le voisin..... 😊

viii) Je marche seul/seule..... 😊

ix) Autre: \_\_\_\_\_.



❖ 4.5 Qui t'attends à la maison quand tu rentres?

i) Maman. .... 😊

ii) Papa. .... 😊

iii) Ma grande sœur ou mon grand-frère. .... 😊

iv) Grand-mère ou grand-père. .... 😊

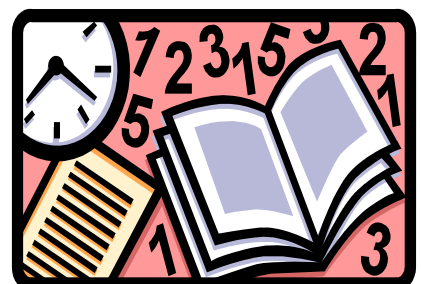
v) La bonne. .... 😊

vi) Il n'y a personne à la maison. .... 😊


vii) Autre: \_\_\_\_\_.


❖ 4.6 Quand fais-tu tes devoirs?

i) En rentrant de l'école. .... 😊



ii) Dans l'après-midi. ....


iii) Dans la soirée. .... 


iv) Le matin avant de partir. ... 

❖ 4.7 Combien de temps prends-tu pour faire tes devoirs?

---

❖ 4.8 Qui t'aide à faire tes devoirs? i) Je les fais seul. ... 

ii) Maman. .... 

iii) Papa. .... 

iv) Autre:

---

❖ 4.9 Regardes-tu la television ou écoutes-tu de la musique pendant que tu travailles?

i) Oui.  ii) Non. 

❖ 4.10 Aimes-tu faire tes devoirs? Pourquoi?

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❖ 4.11 D'après toi, quelle est l'utilité de faire ses devoirs tous les jours?

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❖ 4.12 Raconte-moi en quelques lignes ce que tu fais d'habitude après l'école jusqu'à ce que tu ailles au te coucher le soir.

---



Maintenant que nous sommes amis, si nous faisons plus ample connaissance? Maman dit que je suis grande pour mon âge, j'ai 10 ans, je pèse 30 kilos et



❖ 5.1 Quelle est ta taille et combien pèses-tu?

i) Taille. \_\_\_\_\_ ii) Poids. \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 5.2 Quel âge ont tes parents?

i) Papa. \_\_\_\_\_ ii) Maman. \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 5.3 Où travaillent-ils?

i) Papa. \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Maman. \_\_\_\_\_

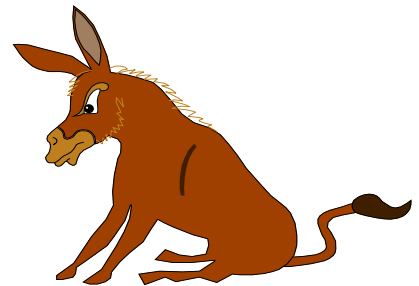
❖ 5.4 Qui te gronde quand tu n'es pas sage?

i) papa. .... 😞

ii) maman. .... 😞

iii) Papa et maman. .... 😞

iv) Autre: \_\_\_\_\_.



❖ 5.5 Quelle est ta punition quand tu as désobéi? \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 5.6 Combien de frères et soeurs as-tu? Quel âge ont-ils?

i) Je n'ai pas de frère et soeur. 😞

ii) J'ai \_\_\_\_\_ frère/s qui a/ont \_\_\_\_\_ ans.

iii) J'ai \_\_\_\_\_ soeur/s qui a/ont \_\_\_\_\_ ans.

❖ 5.7 Il y a t-il d'autres personnes qui habitent chez toi? Si oui, qui?

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❖ 5.8 Quand est-ce que tu visites grand-père et grand-mère?

i) Du côté de mon papa:

---

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ii) Du côté de ma maman:

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❖ 6.1 Laquelle de ces fêtes religieuses célèbres-tu en famille?

i) Cavadee. .... 😊

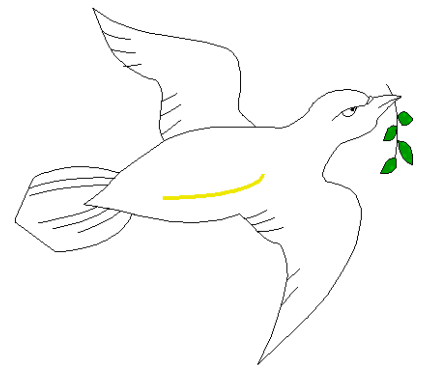
ii) Eid ul Fitr. .... 😊

iii) Ganesh Chaturhi. ... 😊

iv) Maha Shivaratree. .... 😊

v) Paques. .... 😊

Autre: \_\_\_\_\_



❖ 6.2 Où vas-tu prier et quand?



i) Eglise. .... Quand? \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Mosquée. .... 😊 \_\_\_\_\_

iii) Temple. .... 😊 \_\_\_\_\_

iv) Autre: \_\_\_\_\_.

6.3. A quelle communauté appartiens-tu?-----

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❖ 7.1 Chaque matin, lorsque je bois mon thé, j'aime bien manger du pain avec de la confiture; et toi que prends-tu au petit-déjeuner?

i) Je ne prends pas de petit déjeuner. ... 😞

ii) Des céréales. (Corn-Flakes etc...) ..... 😊

iii) Des fruits. .... 😊

iv) Du pain. .... 😊

v) Confiture, fromage etc... ..... 😊

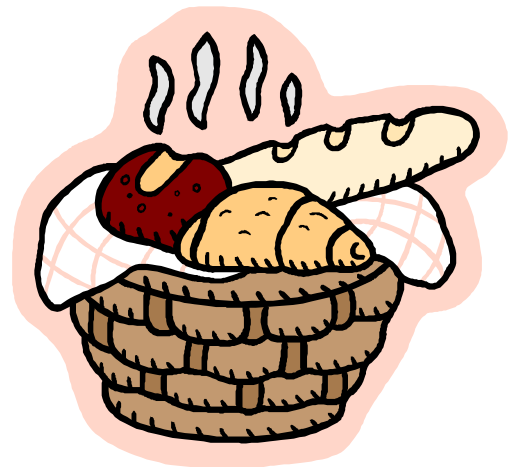
vi) Du yaourt. .... 😊

vii) Du lait. .... 😊

viii) Du chocolat. .... 😊

ix) Du thé. .... 😊

x) Du café. .... 😊



❖ 7.2 Qu'apportes tu à manger à l'école?

---

❖ 7.3 Que manges-tu chaque soir à la maison? ( Plusieurs réponses.)

i) De la viande. .... 😊

ii) Du poisson. ... 😊

iii) Du poulet. .... 😊

iv) Du Pain. .... 😊

v) Du riz. .... 😊

vi) Des légumes. 😊

viii) Autre:

❖ 7.4 Qu'est ce que tu aimes le plus manger?

8.1 Combien de fois te baignes-tu par jour? À l'eau chaude ou à l'eau froide?

1: 😊 2: 😊 3: 😊 +: 😊 Eau: chaude 😊 froide 😊

❖ 8.2 Combien de fois te brosses-tu les dents par jour?

1: 😊 2: 😊 3: 😊 +: 😊 Autre: \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 8.3 Combien de fois te laves-tu les cheveux par semaine?

1: 😊 2: 😊 3: 😊 +: 😊 Autre: \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 8.4 As-tu eu de la grippe ou de la fièvre cette année-ci? Quand?

i) Oui: 😞 ii) Non: 😊 iii) Quand? \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 8.5 T'es-tu absenté/e de l'école cette année en raison d'une maladie?

i) Oui: 😞 ii) Non: 😊 iii) Quelle maladie? \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 8.6 T'arrive-t-il d'avoir mal au ventre?

i) jamais. .... 😊

ii) De temps à autres. .... 😞

iii) Une/deux fois par semaine. .... 😞

iv) Plusieurs fois par semaine. .... 😞

v) Tous les jours. .... 😞



❖ 8.7 As-tu des maux de tête?

- i) jamais. .... 😊
- ii) De temps à autres. .... 😐
- iii) Une/deux fois par semaine. .... 😐
- iv) Plusieurs fois par semaine. ... 😐
- v) Tous les jours. .... 😞

❖ 8.8 Portes-tu des lunettes? Si oui, dans quel but?

- i) Oui: 😊 \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) Non: 😊 \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 8.9 Quelles sont les maladies que tu as eu depuis que tu es petit/e?

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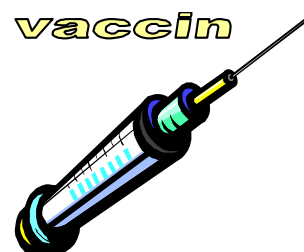
❖ 8.10 Quand je suis malade:

Quelle médicaments?

- i) Maman/ Papa me donne des médicaments.... 😞 ↔ \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) Je vais au dispensaire. .... 😞 \_\_\_\_\_
- iii) Je vais à l'hôpital. .... 😞 \_\_\_\_\_
- iv) Le docteur vient à la maison. .... 😞 \_\_\_\_\_
- v) Je vais voir un docteur. .... 😞 \_\_\_\_\_
- vi) Je vais à la clinique. .... 😞 \_\_\_\_\_
- vii) Autre: Qui? \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 8.11 As tu été vacciné/e?

- i) Quand j'étais petit/e. 😊
- ii) A l'école. 😊
- iii) Je ne sais pas. 😊



❖ 8.12 As-tu déjà rencontré un spécialiste pour:

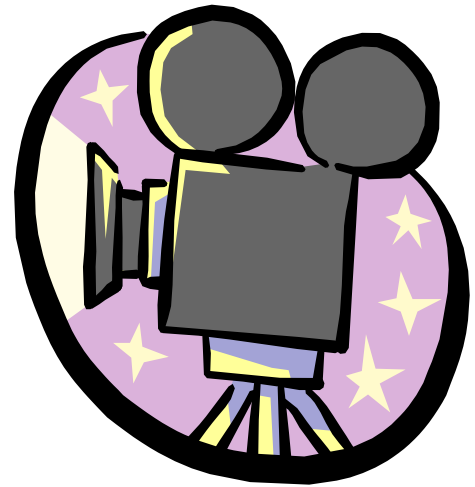
- i) Tes yeux. 😊 Pourquoi? \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) Tes oreilles. 😊 \_\_\_\_\_
- iii) Tes dents. 😊 \_\_\_\_\_
- iv) Autre: \_\_\_\_\_.

❖ 9.1 Quand regardes-tu la télévision ou la vidéo?

- i) Le matin, avant d'aller à l'école. .... 😊
- ii) L'après-midi. .... 😊
- iii) Le soir. .... 😊
- iv) Le week-end seulement. .... 😊
- v) Pendant les vacances et les congés. ... 😊

❖ 9.2 Que regardes-tu à la télé ou sur video?

- i) Des programmes éducatifs. .... 😊
- ii) Des documentaires. .... 😊
- iii) Des dessins-animés. .... 😊
- iv) Des films anglais. .... 😊
- v) Des films français. .... 😊
- vi) Des films indiens. .... 😊
- vii) Les informations/news/samachar. 😊
- viii) Autre: \_\_\_\_\_.



❖ 9.3 Quelles sont tes émissions et programmes préférés?

- i) \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 9.4 Quels sont tes films préférés?

i) \_\_\_\_\_

ii) \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 9.5 Quels sont tes dessins-animés préférés?

i) \_\_\_\_\_

ii) \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 9.6 Qui sont tes acteurs et actrices préférés?

i) \_\_\_\_\_ et ii) \_\_\_\_\_

iii) \_\_\_\_\_ et iv) \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 9.7 Quels genres de musique aimes-tu écouter?

i) \_\_\_\_\_

ii) \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 9.8 Quelles sont tes chansons préférées?

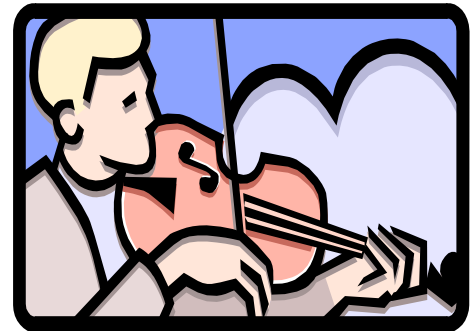
i) \_\_\_\_\_

ii) \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 9.9 Qui sont tes chanteurs et chanteuses préférés?

i) \_\_\_\_\_ et ii) \_\_\_\_\_

iii) \_\_\_\_\_ et iv) \_\_\_\_\_



10.1 A quoi joues-tu à la maison quand tu as fini tes devoirs ou pendant le week-end?

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❖ 10.2 Avec qui joues-tu?

- i) Avec papa. .... 😊
- ii) Avec maman. .... 😊
- iii) Avec mes frères et soeurs. .... 😊
- iv) Avec mes camarades dans la rue. ... 😊
- v) Avec des amis/es dans la cour. .... 😊
- vi) Autre: \_\_\_\_\_.

10.3 Qu'est-ce que tu aimes faire pendant les vacances?

- i) Aller à la mer. .... 😊
- ii) Jouer avec mes amis. .... 😊
- iii) Regarder la télévision. .... 😊
- iv) Jouer à la maison. .... 😊
- v) Faire des sorties. .... 😊
- vi) Lire. .... 😊
- vii) Apprendre. .... 😊
- viii) Faire du shopping. .... 😊
- ix) Autre: \_\_\_\_\_



❖ 10.4 As-tu déjà été en voyage? Si oui, où?

\_\_\_\_\_

❖ 10.5 Si tu as l'occasion de voyager, où irais-tu?

\_\_\_\_\_

❖ 10.6 Suis-tu des entraînements dans un sport quelconque? Où?

- i) Aucun..... 😊
- ii) Football. .... 😊 Où? \_\_\_\_\_
- ..... 😊



iii) Natation. ....

iv) Badminton. ....

v) Judo. ....

vi) Basket-ball. ....

vii) Tennis. ....

viii) Equitation. ....

ix) Autre: .....

❖ 10.7 As-tu un animal de compagnie à la maison?

i) Oui. C'est un: .....  
qui s'appelle: .....

ii) Non. ....



❖ 10.8 Qui s'occupe de lui/ d'elle?

❖ 11.1 Est-ce que tes parents te donnent de l'argent de poche? Si oui, combien par jour ou par semaine?

i) Oui. J'ai \_\_\_\_\_ roupies par \_\_\_\_\_. ii) Non.

❖ 11.2 Est-ce que grand-père, grand-mère ou d'autres membres de la famille te donnent de l'argent de temps à autre? Qui?

❖ 11.3 Que fais-tu de ton argent de poche?

❖ 11.3 Si on te donnais 100 roupies, que ferais-tu avec? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

❖ 11.4 Sais-tu combien coute:

- i) Un pain maison. \_\_\_\_\_.
- ii) Un kilo de riz. \_\_\_\_\_.
- iii) le bus, de chez toi à ton école. \_\_\_\_\_.
- iv) Une paire de Dhall-Puri. \_\_\_\_\_.
- v) Un Rounder. \_\_\_\_\_.
- vi) Un ticket de cinéma. \_\_\_\_\_.
- vii) Un litre d'essence. \_\_\_\_\_.
- vii) Une livre de Pomme d'Amour. \_\_\_\_\_.



Ouah, merci pour ton aide, c'est super! ... tu es vraiment sympa.  
Oups, excuse-moi, j'ai oublié!  
Encore quelques petites questions,  
s'il te plait... okay?



❖ 12.1 D'habitude je parle le Français, mais, avec *mo bane* camrades, *mo bien kontent cose Créole*, ils m'apprennent aussi le Bhojpuri *and at school, I usually speak English with my teacher* et toi quelle langue parles-tu?

i) A l'école avec tes amis: \_\_\_\_\_

ii) avec ton professeur: \_\_\_\_\_

iii) A la maison: \_\_\_\_\_

❖ 12.2 Qu'est-ce que tu vas faire après la CPE? Pourquoi? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

❖ 12.3 Dans quel collège voudrais-tu aller après le Primaire? Pourquoi?

\_\_\_\_\_

❖ Qu'est-ce que tu veux faire quand tu seras grand/grande? Pourquoi?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX II

### Questionnaire for Parents

## **The Condition of the Child in Mauritius.**

Number:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Code:

(For field investigators.)

**Note: Responses to this questionnaire are anonymous and will be treated in strict confidence.**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.**

## 1. LOCATION

1.1 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1.2 Urban ☐ Rural ☐

## 2. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FAMILY

2.1 Ethnic group: ☐ (Hindu, Muslim, General Population, Chinese)

2.2 Specify ethnic group:

Hindu: i) Bhojpuri. ☐ Muslim: i) Bhojpuri. ☐ General Population: i) ☐  
European.  
ii) Tamil. ☐ ii) Arab. ☐ ii) Mixed. ☐  
iii) Marathi. ☐ iii) Other. ☐ iii) African. ☐  
iv) Telegu. ☐ iv) Other. ☐  
v) Other. ☐

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

2.3 Type of Family: i) Nuclear. ☐ Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
ii) Extended. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
iii) Joint families. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
iv) Divorced/ Separated. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
v) Single parent. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
vi) Reconstituted. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
vii) Cohabitation." Concubinage". ☐

		A	B	Age of members:
2.4 Members of the Family living together.	i) Father.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	ii) Mother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	iii) Sons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	iv) Daughters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	v) Grandfather.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	vi) Grandmother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	vii) Uncle.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	viii) Aunt.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	ix) Cousins.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	x) Others (Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

A: Tick the box where applicable.  
B: Number. (Sons, cousins, etc)

2.5 Any other details about the family:

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### 3. PARENTS' EDUCATION

Institutions attended

3.1 Father's Education. i) Primary. ☐   
ii) Secondary. ☐   
iii) Sc/ Hsc. ☐   
iv) Tertiary. ☐   
v) Others. ☐   
vi) Last class attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
vii) Still studying: \_\_\_\_\_

3.2 Mother's Education. i) Primary. ☐   
ii) Secondary. ☐   
iii) Sc/ Hsc. ☐   
iv) Tertiary. ☐   
v) Others. ☐   
vi) Last class attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
vii) Still studying: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. INCOME

4.1 Father's Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

4.2 Father's Income: i) No income. ☐  
ii) Less than Rs.2000. ☐  
iii) 2000 / 4000. ☐  
iv) 4000 / 8000. ☐  
v) 8000 / 12000. ☐  
vi) 12000/ 18000. ☐  
vii) 18000/ 25000. ☐  
viii) More than 25000. ☐

4.3 Do you have a part-time job? ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4.4 Mother's Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

4.5 Mother's Income: i) No income. ☐  
ii) Less than Rs.2000. ☐  
iii) 2000 / 4000. ☐  
iv) 4000 / 8000. ☐  
v) 8000 / 12000. ☐  
vi) 12000/ 18000. ☐  
☐

4.6 Do you have a part-time job? ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



vii) 18000/ 25000.

viii) More than 25000.

☐

4.7 Other Member's Occupation and Income (range):

4.8 Working Children Income:

4.9 Other Sources of Income:

i) Rent.

☐

Give details:

ii) Interest.

☐

iii) Pension.

☐

iv) Any pension for children.

☐

v) Others.

☐

4.10 Debts:

☐

4.11 Sons Helping at Home:

No.

1

2

3

Hours per day

i) With household chores.

☐☐☐

ii) In the field.

☐☐☐

iii) In the workshop.

☐☐☐

iv) In shop.

☐☐☐

v) Helping hawker-parents.

☐☐☐

vi) Other.

☐☐☐

4.12 Daughters Helping at Home:

No.

1

2

3

Hours per day

i) With household chores.

☐☐☐

ii) In the field.

☐☐☐

iii) In the workshop.

☐☐☐

iv) In shop.

☐☐☐

v) Helping hawker-parents.

☐☐☐

vi) Other.

☐☐☐

## 5. LIVING CONDITIONS

rent etc)

5.1 Housing:

i) Owner.

☐

ii) Tenant.

☐

iii) Squatter.

☐

Any other information: (size of land, live in flat,

- 5.2 Type of House: i) Cement.  
 ii) Wooden.  
 iv) Iron sheet.  
 iii) Others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1: number of rooms.  
 2: number of bedrooms.  
 3: kitchen.  
 4: Dining room.  
 5: Living room.  
 6: TV room.  
 7: Bathroom.  
 8: Toilets.  
 9: Garden, yard.  
 10: Garage.

5.3 Specify:

2. *Sleeping arrangements:* \_\_\_\_\_

3. *Type of Kitchen:* \_\_\_\_\_

7. *Bathroom, outside or inside:* \_\_\_\_\_

8. *Toilets, outside or inside:* \_\_\_\_\_

5.4 Give More Details:

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5.5 Water: Availability of Running Water at Home: ☐

5.6 Water Cuts. Time for Water Coming to the Taps: i) In the morning. 

from

to

  
 ii) In the evening. 



5.7 Do You Have a Water Tank? ☐

5.8 Lighting: i) Electric. ☐ Money spent on lighting and other electrical consumption  
 per month? ☐

ii) Gas lamp. \_\_\_\_\_

iii) Petrol Lamp. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

iv) Candle light. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

v) Others (Specify). ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

vi) No light. ☐

5.9 Transport Facilities: i) Private car. ☐ Money spent on fuel per month? \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Company car. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

iii) Van. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

iii) Lorry. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

- iv) Motorcycle. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- v) Bicycle. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- vi) No transport. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

- 5.10 Transport to School: i) With father. ☐ Money spent per month? \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) School van. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- iii) School bus. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- iv) Bus. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- v) Walk. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- vi) Others. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

- 5.11 Meeting Place for the Whole Family: i) Bedroom. ☐ Give details: \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) Kitchen. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- iii) Dining room. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- iv) Living room. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- v) TV room. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- vi) Other. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. CHILD- REARING PRACTICES

- 6.1 Type of Food – Babies: i) Breast Feeding. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) Powdered milk. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- iii) Soup and vegetable. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- iv) Other food given. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

6.2 Pregnant mothers eating habits - Did you take any special care about your eating habits when you were ☐ pregnant? \_\_\_\_\_

- |                              |                  | S                        | D                        | How many times per week? |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6.3 Food, Grown Up Children: | i) Meat.         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____                    |
|                              | ii) Fish.        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____                    |
|                              | iii) Chicken.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____                    |
|                              | iv) Bread.       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____                    |
|                              | v) Rice.         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____                    |
|                              | vi) Fruits.      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____                    |
|                              | vii) Vegetables. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____                    |

viii) Vegetarians.


ix) Others. (Specify)

6.4 Number of Meals per Day? i) For children.

ii) For parents.

6.5 Do the children eat in the morning before going to school? ☐

6.6 Type of breakfast:

6.7 Eating outside the home. How often? I) The family.

ii) The children.

6.8 Where?

6.9 How often is fast food (bought by parents/ what) consumed?

i) Sons.

ii) Daughters.

iii) Members of the family.

6.10 How much money is spent on food each month?

6.11 Pocket money to school - How much? S

D

6.12 How is pocket money spent? i) Transport.

ii) Food.

iii) Clothes.

iv) Games.

v) School materials.

vi) Saving.

vii) Others.

6.13 If saved where is money kept? i) Bank.

ii) Piggybank.

iii) Father.

iv) Mother.

v) Others.

☐☐

6.14 How/ when do they plan to spend the saving?

## 7. HEALTH AND HYGIENE.

7.1 Sleeping Rituals:

School days.

Weekends.

Holidays.

At what time do the children wake up? i) Babies.

ii) Grown up.

7.2 Sleeping Rituals:

School days.

Weekends.

Holidays.

At what time do the children go to sleep? i) Babies.

ii) Grown up.

Number of times/ day.

Once a day.

Every two days.

Other.

M F

S	D	M	F	S	D	M	F	S	D	M	F	S	D
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7.3 Hygiene: i) Number of baths.

ii) Teeth brushing.

iv) Clean clothes.

S: Sons.  
D: Daughters.  
F: Father.  
M: Mother.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7.4 Health/ Common Diseases in the Family?

7.5 Flu how Often?

7.6 Children with Physical Disabilities: ☐ If yes, number of children: ☐

7.7 Type of Disability of the Children: \_\_\_\_\_

7.8 No of Children who have died: 

No.	Age?
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

 \_\_\_\_\_  

<input type="text"/>
----------------------

 \_\_\_\_\_

7.9 Type of health Care for: i) Babies. 

A	B	C	D	E
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

  
ii) Grown up Children. 

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

A: Hospital.  
B: Clinic.  
C: Family's doctor.  
D: Home medicine.  
E: Traditional medicine.  
F: 'Traiteur'

7.10 Minor Aliments and Serious Diseases taken care of at:

- (M: minor, S: serious.) 

M	S
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

  
i) Hospital. 

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

 \_\_\_\_\_  
ii) Clinic. 

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

 \_\_\_\_\_  
iii) Family's doctor 

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

 \_\_\_\_\_  
iv) Home medication. 

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

 \_\_\_\_\_  
v) Traditional medicine. 

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

 \_\_\_\_\_  
vi) Witch doctor. 

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

 \_\_\_\_\_

7.11 Are Medicines at Hospital and Health care easily Available? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7.12 How Much Money is spent on Medicines Each Month? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7.13 How often are Parents Absent from Work because of Children Illness? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 8. SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION

C: Class.  
R/G: Rank or grade (CPE, SC, HSC...)  
T: Number of tuitions.

8.1 No of Children going to School:

	R/G	T	Age.	Sex.	School/ University/ Other.	C		
i) Primary.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
ii) Secondary.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
iii) Tertiary.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

8.2 If Children are at Secondary or Tertiary Level, what were their previous schools? \_\_\_\_\_

8.3 Have you chosen your children's schools? If yes why? Or has it been imposed by the state?

8.4 Drop out of School:      Sons      Daughters  
What Age?                  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_

8.5 Membership of PTA: (Are you a member of a PTA?) ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

8.6 How often do you attend the PTA Meetings? \_\_\_\_\_

8.7 How often do you/your Spouse meet Head Teachers? \_\_\_\_\_

8.8 How often do you/your Spouse meet Class Teachers of each Child? \_\_\_\_\_

8.9 Membership at a Library? ☐ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

8.10 If yes, How often are Books Borrowed and what Type of Books is Borrowed?

	How often?	What books?
<u>Sons:</u> i) Educational.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
ii) Magazine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
iii) Novel	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
iv) Classic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
v) Adventure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
vi) Sci-Fi.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
vii) Horror.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
viii) Comics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
ix) Others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<u>Daughters:</u>		
i) Educational.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
ii) Magazine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
iii) Novel	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
iv) Classic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
v) Adventure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
vi) Sci-Fi.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
vii) Horror.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
viii) Comics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
ix) Others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

8.11 Does the Family buy Books for Children, Magazines and Newspapers? How often? ☐

Specify and when?

i) Books: \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Magazines: \_\_\_\_\_

iii) Newspapers: \_\_\_\_\_

iv) Others: \_\_\_\_\_

8.12 Do the children read newspapers regularly?

i) Everyday: ☐ ii) more than three times a week: ☐ iii) Once a week: ☐ iv) Other: ☐



Specify:

8.13 Where does the Children Study? i) Own room. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ii) Kitchen table. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
 iii) Dining table. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
 iv) Special place for study. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
 v) Other. ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

8.14 Do the Children watch TV or listen to Music while Working? ☐

8.15 Who helps with Homework?

	S	D	1	2	3
i) Father.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Mother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Elder brother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Elder sister.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v) Other (Specify).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi) Nobody.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

S: Sons.  
 D: Daughters.  
 1: School days.  
 2: Fridays.  
 3: Weekends.

8.16 How much time is spent on Homework Everyday?

i) Sons: School's homework: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition's homework: \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Daughters: School's homework: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tuition's homework: \_\_\_\_\_

8.17 How much money is spent in tuitions monthly?

i) Sons: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ii) Daughters: \_\_\_\_\_

8.18 Language: Spoken at home. At school.

	S	D	S	D	Explain:
i) Bhojpuri.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
ii) Chinese.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
iii) Creole.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
iv) English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
v) French.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
vi) Others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

8.19 What would you like your children to be when they grow up?

i) Sons: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Daughters: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## 9. RELIGIOUS PRACTISES.

9.1 What type of religious practice? i) At home. \_\_\_\_\_  
 ii) Outside. \_\_\_\_\_

9.2 Time spent on religious practice? i) At home. \_\_\_\_\_  
 ii) Outside. \_\_\_\_\_

9.3 Do the children attend religion classes? i) At school. \_\_\_\_\_  
 ii) Other. \_\_\_\_\_

9.4 Do the children assist or participate to religious festivals? How often? (E.g. Grand-Bassin, Pere-Laval, Haji.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. LEISURE ACTIVITIES

School days.

Weekends.

Holidays.

	Son	Daughter	S	D	S	
D						
10.1 Time spent with:						
i) Father						
ii) Mother						
iii) Relatives						
iv) Friends.						
v) Neighbors						

10.2 How is time spent: Before going to school? After school before bedtime? During weekends and Holidays? (S: sons, D: daughters.)

	(Before going to school)	(After school before bedtime)	(Weekends and holidays)
i) Indoor games.....	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Sports and outdoor activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Homework.....	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Tuition.....	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

v) Household Chores.....							
vi) Jobs outside home.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
vii) Gardening.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
viii) Music.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
ix) Reading.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
x) TV or video.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	S	D		S	D		S
D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
xi) Cinema.....							
xii) Computer or videogames...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
xiii) Working in fields, shop, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
xiv) In the streets with friends...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
xv) At the seaside.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
xvi) Scouting.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
xvii) In bungalows.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
xviii) Religious activities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
xix) Others.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

10.3 What are the Leisure Activities provided by the State in your Locality? \_\_\_\_\_

10.4 Do you make use of these facilities? i) Family: ☐  
ii) Children. ☐

10.5 If yes, When? \_\_\_\_\_

		S	D	
10.6 Hobbies	i) Singing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Explain how and why? _____
	ii) Piano, Guitar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	iii) Stamp Collection.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	iv) Sewing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	v) Others (Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

10.7 Do the children are involved in extra-curricular activities like Theatre, Music, Dancing etc? ☐

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

10.8 Do the children practice a sport regularly? Which one?

i) Sons: \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Daughters: \_\_\_\_\_

10.9 Do they receive coaching in a particular sport? 

S	D
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.10 Which one, where and how much does it cost monthly?

i) Sons. \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Daughters. \_\_\_\_\_

10.11 Would you like your children to be '*professionally*' involved in a sport or cultural activity?

Which one and why?

i) Sons. \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Daughters. \_\_\_\_\_

10.12 Membership in a club: 

S	D
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

i) Sons: \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Daughters: \_\_\_\_\_

	S	Time.	D
Time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.13 How much time is devoted to these activities? i) After school.

ii) During weekends. 

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
--------------------------	----------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
--------------------------	----------------------

iii) During holidays. 

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
--------------------------	----------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
--------------------------	----------------------

iv) Others. 

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
--------------------------	----------------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
--------------------------	----------------------

10.14 How much money is spent per month in club activities?

i) Sons: \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Daughters: \_\_\_\_\_

10.15 Type of equipment for leisure activities at home:

	S	D
i) Radio.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Computer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) TV.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10.16 Children and television: How much time is spent on television or video daily?

School Days	Weekends	Holidays
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

i) Sons:

ii) Daughters:

10.17 What do the Children watch on TV or video?

S D

Give examples:

i) Cartoons.

☐☐

ii) English films.

☐☐

iii) French films.

☐☐

iv) Hindustani films.

☐☐

v) Documentaries.

☐☐

vi) Educational programmes.

☐☐

10.18 Do you have Internet at home? ☐

10.19 Do the children have access to Internet? ☐

10.20 Do you look at the children when they use Internet? ☐

## 11. DISCIPLINE

11.1 What are some of the Rules and Regulations of Discipline in the Family? \_\_\_\_\_

11.2 How are the Children punished when they disobey?

Mother

S

D

Father

S

D

Explain:

~~i) Serious talk.~~

☐☐☐☐

ii) Scolding.

☐☐☐☐

iii) Deprivation.

☐☐☐☐

iv) Give tasks.

☐☐☐☐

v) Beating.

☐☐☐☐

vi) Other.

☐☐☐☐

11.3 How are the children rewarded for good conduct and obedience?

i) Sons:

ii) Daughters:



## APPENDIX III

### Questionnaire for Primary School Teachers

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

1. Age:
2. Sex:
3. Academic and Professional Qualifications:

S.C., H.S.C., T.C.P. A.C.E., Degree

4. No. of years of experience in primary school teaching:
5. Schools in which you have worked:

Schools	year (if possible)
---------	--------------------

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| (i)   |  |
| (ii)  |  |
| (iii) |  |
| (iv)  |  |

6. The school in which you are presently working:

- (i) Where found?
- (ii) School Population:
- (iii) No. of Teachers:
- (iv) No of classes
- (v) Is there a library?
- (vi) Are pupils allowed to take books from the library? How often?

.....  
.....

>.....  
.....

- (vii) Describe the school yard. (asphalted, grass, earth and dusty)

.....  
.....

- (viii) what are the sports facilities available in your school?

.....  
.....

- (ix) What kind of indoor games are available to pupils?

.....  
.....

- (x) What kind of games do the pupils more commonly play during recreation?



- .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 (xi) Is there a school canteen?
- (xii) What type of food are being sold there?
- (xiii) Are vendors allowed inside the school grounds?
- (xiv) What type of goods do they sell?
- (xv) Total number of taps in the school yard:
- (xvi) No. of taps in the toilets:
- (xvii) Is there a water tank? Does the water which pupils drink come from the tank?
- (xviii) Are there water cuts during the day? Give details
- (xix) How many toilets are there for boys and for girls?  
 .....  
 .....
- (xx) Describe the toilets in terms of cleanliness and conditions:  
 .....  
 .....
- (xxi) Equipments

Facilities used?	Number	Where found?	How frequently
T.V			
Video			
Computer			
Printer			

More details if any?

.....  
 .....

- (xxii) No of pupils in each class:
- (xxiii) How are the pupils seated?

(xxiv) How would you describe your own classroom in terms of lighting, space, equipment, visuals ?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(xxv) How would you describe the classrooms in general in your own particular school?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

7. Do you write lesson plans or do you write lesson notes?

.....

8 How often do you write them?

8. do you write them for all subjects during the day?

9. Do you write objectives?

10. How long is your lesson plan? (no of pages)

11. Make a list of teaching strategies used by you:

.....  
.....  
.....

12. Which one do you most commonly use?

13. Why do you use this method for teaching?

14. What are the constraints which you have to face in your every day practice?

.....  
.....

15. What is the attitude of your head teacher and inspectors toward using new teaching strategies?

.....  
.....

16. Do you teach the following (if yes , how often?)

Creative Education: I

Physical Education:

17. Why do you or do not teach those subjects to your class?

.....  
.....

18. Are there other teachers who teach physical education in the school grounds?  
Which grades?

