

Address of Hon (Mrs) L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun
Vice Prime Minister
Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
18 April 2024

Protocol

- **Dr. Besoondyal, Director, Mauritius Institute of Education;**
- **Mrs. Toorawa, Chairperson, Early Childhood Care and Education Authority;**
- **Mrs. Arekion, Director, Early Childhood Care and Education Authority;**
- **Seniors Officers of the Ministry and of the MIE;**
- **Educators;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I glad to be in your midst this afternoon for this session on the revised curriculum framework for the Early Childhood Education. Your presence here, is a clear indication of your commitment to the cause of Education.

As you know there was an urgent need to render the Curriculum more modern, more relevant to the present context bearing in mind the new scientific evidences guiding pedagogy in the sector.

We seek through this renewed curriculum to guide and support not only Educators but also all other stakeholders who have at heart the Early Childhood Sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You who are directly involved in the dispensing of pre-school education need hardly be convinced about the paramount significance of learning for the early childhood period. These are the foundation years. ***‘Tout se joue avant 6 ans avait dit Dodson dans son livre’.***

In fact, the development of cognitive processes, the development of psycho-motor skills and socio-emotional skills as well as the shaping of the character starts during the early years.

The preparedness '***La predisposition d'apprendre***' all depend on the Early Childhood Education. And this is where we should place our focus as well as resources. The return on investment are enormous.

I am sure that almost all of you are aware of the concept of the Heckman Curve. This states that Investment and interventions in the early years have the highest rate of economic returns and a profound impact on long-term outcomes. Indeed, these early investments can lead to educational achievement and employment prospects, and positive attitudes and improved health. The bottom line therefore is that early interventions must be prioritized during this critical stage of childhood.

This, to a large extent, explains why we have committed ourselves to the provision of free pre-primary education and the improvement in the quality of services being provided to the sub-sector. This is highly significant for ensuring Equity and Inclusivity; but you and I are also conscious of the significance we must attach to building up the solid foundation for a child's academic success, emotional development and social skills. And this will undoubtedly allow all children to enjoy a stimulating environment for future schooling.

Today's exercise provides the opportunity : for capacity building.

I cannot but emphasise the vital role that you Teachers are called upon to play so as to give all learners that you encounter the best chances to make their learning the most memorable, cherished and wonderful experience of their lifetime. On you lies the onus of nurturing a growth that will lead to their blossoming into the best kind of individuals.

You, Teachers, are the most important actors in this endeavour and you also need the right tools, the right training and the right kind of support to transform teaching and learning into rich, enjoyable and stimulating experience. I am glad that we have come up with a revised curriculum that enhance our capacity to deliver effectively in our classes. New methodologies, pedagogies that will enhance our classroom experiences.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, Swiss-born philosopher, writer and political analyst of the 18th century got it right when he stated that school is not a place where a teacher teaches but where children learn.

Early Childhood teachers do more than teaching in fact resort to multitasking. In fact, they do not only teach but also interact with the children, and it is the quality of your interactions with the children that matters the most.

That is what this revised curriculum is about, to give you the best innovative approaches to make your classroom the most enjoyable place your young learners would like to be in as you ignite their curiosity for new discoveries each and every day while keeping them both physically and emotionally safe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You will notice that while the revised curriculum addresses all the domains of development it also makes a strong case for play-based activities. This is based on the well-known and often repeated aphorism that young children learn best through play—play that encourages exploration, develops creativity and spearheads problem solving apart from developing language and motor skills.

You would be pleased to know that only last month, more precisely on the 25th of March, a Resolution was adopted at the United Nations for the annual celebration of an International Day of Play on 11th June. 137 countries, including Mauritius, co-sponsored the Resolution. A powerful case was made for Play as being a vital component of human development across the ages and as contributing to the holistic growth of individuals across the cognitive, social, emotional and physical domains.

This international recognition of the benefits of the power of play as one of the most effective ways to support creativity, social and emotional learning and emotional wellbeing fits in perfectly with the aspirations of this reviewed curriculum.

That being said, there is the ultimate question that we should respond to: ‘How will the early childhood sector progressively evolve and move ahead?’

I believe the answer is staring us in the face---by recognizing the value of Teachers, by empowering them through the provision of tools to plan a good child-oriented programme and by investing in their training and continuous development.

It is worthwhile recalling that all international bodies that have a stake in the fertile ground of pre-school education highlight the significance of capacity building of teachers: UNESCO has made it its mantra; The Tashkent Declaration adopted in 2022 expects all countries to commit themselves to not only encouraging at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education for all but also, most significantly, valuing the Early Childhood Care and Education personnel. The Association for the Development of Education in Africa, ADEA, has made foundational learning one of its priorities and rallies Ministers of Education of Africa around the necessity to invest in teacher capacity building to ascertain the provision of Early Childhood Development across the Continent.

This is all grounded in the conviction people are more likely to succeed at what they do and reach their full potential when found in the right environment and benefiting from the right conditions.

Dear Teachers,

My Ministry will do its utmost to create the conditions and the ethos in which you can best thrive.

Thus, the provision of Free Pre-primary Education has not only permitted the alignment of all ECE Teachers, whether under NRB in the private sector or under PRB in the public sector. Our aim is to raise the quality of all pre-primary schools and bring further improvement to make each school, whether public or private, one of excellence and high standard. Obviously, this won't happen overnight—but the will, the determination is there, and we all need to put our heads and hearts together so as to make things happen.

Thank you for your kind attention.