

TERTIARY

TECHNICAL SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TRUST FUND

YEAR 2021

THE INSTITUTE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY BILL (No. I of 2021) (20.07.2021)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I move that the Institute of Technical Education and Technology Bill (No. I of 2021) be read a second time.

The Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, provides for –

- (i) the setting up of the Institute of Technical Education and Technology to operate and manage technical education centres, and
- (ii) opportunities and pathways to students pursuing studies in technical and technology education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to pave the way to Vision 2030 and strengthen a whole-of-education national reform, Government took a bold step towards the reform of the technical education in the Government Programme 2020/2024. This calls for the setting up of the Institute of Technical Education and Technology to create more opportunities and pathways for students to pursue studies in technical education. Indeed, we need a diversity in the provision of educational pathways that recognise multiple entry and multiple exit points and address the existing sectoral occupational gaps to cater for an increasingly complex workforce.

We cannot, Mr Speaker, Sir, miss the boat. As we build skills for the present, we need to also build the skills for the future. We need to create the conditions facilitating the emergence of technicians and technologists who can join the university graduates to bring solutions to ever-more complex emerging areas of our economy.

This Bill is an important piece of legislation which will supplement efforts towards transforming our economy into a vibrant, innovative, knowledge-based and high skills one and for the country to be propelled to its next level of development.

Consensus today exists but we have to respond to the changing and unpredictable labour market needs, particularly now in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us all too well that exogenous shocks to our economy and our very fabric of life can come in any form and at any time. Building the skills to be resilient in the face of uninvited changes cannot be relegated to future generations, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Globally, it is widely recognised that the development of technical skills plays an important role in the social and economic development of nations. Long-established nations realised the veracity of this since quite some time while emerging economies and developing countries, aiming to transition into high-income economies, are also working towards the transformation of their educational ecosystems so as to facilitate this shift towards an advanced technological and skill-based economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this respect, countries like Singapore and South Korea have actively channelled secondary school students towards high-quality technical education to meet the higher order manpower needs of their economies. That is more than 50% of the secondary school students in Singapore are directed to technical institutes and Polytechnics. South Korea, for its part, is introducing incentives to enroll 29% of its secondary level students into technical education by 2022.

And what about Finland, renowned internationally for its excellent education system? It enrolls 42% of its upper secondary students in technical education, while the European Union average hovers around 47.8%. As for Germany's, the dual training system that is internationally acclaimed, it has 45.6% of students currently enrolled in upper-secondary technical education there.

Lately, different organisations like UNESCO, in its Strategy for TVET 2016-2021, the African Union Strategy for TVET 2016, and the SADC Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan for Development of TVET, 2018, all stressed the need for the development of higher technical education.

I believe, Mr Andreas Schleicher, the globally renowned OECD Director for Education and Skills, got it right when, in September 2020 interaction, he spoke of countries needing to operate a shift from qualifications focussed education upfront to skills-oriented learning throughout life.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact of the case is that recourse to a high-quality technical education is not an option anymore, but a necessity for an economy and an education system like ours. We need to equip the future generations to become the 21st century drivers of our economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, every stage of development brings to the fore the necessity for specific types of skills that respond to the needs of the day. This has been true for Mauritius. Thus, we have moved from an agricultural economy to a service-based one after going through the industrial phase. At each of those levels, specific skills were a prerequisite. Thus, initially, the use of repetitive, manipulative skills was the order of the day.

In its quest to move to a high-income economy, the country now has to revamp its technical education ecosystem to usher in more technological education. By this, I mean, the occupations relating to Industry 4.0 and progressively Industry 5.0 will require higher order technological skill sets. Students will need to develop higher cognitive competencies for the understanding of scientific concepts and their applications in the processes.

Whatever model of economic transformation we consider to be appropriate, productivity gains and innovation can only be achieved through higher calibre technicians and technologists.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our education system is being revisited to meet the human capital requirements for our economy to transit back to the high-income status. The reform of the technical education structure, hon. Members of the House will concede, is long overdue. The creation of ITET will provide a modern and hitech pathway, in line with the new emerging sectors of the economy, for students who complete Grade 11, ITET will provide a diverse range of learning areas and programmes across its centres around the island and in Rodrigues. These will be vectors to change people's mindset on technical education, and in so doing, rebrand it as an attractive modern option for students.

While students may choose to join the labour market following completion of their programmes at the ITET, they will have the option to articulate into the polytechnics for further higher level technical education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what this Government seeks to create with the ITET is to provide a comprehensive pathway for students who may wish to embrace a practice-based, career-focused approach to education and at the same time, providing the flexibility for students to exit and re-enter the system at ease. Until now, this was the missing link, Mr Speaker, Sir.

What we need in this country is not an endless debate that pits technical against academic education. What we do need is a re-affirmation that both are complementary; both are equally necessary for a country at the cusp of a transition into high-income status to thrive.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned earlier, forward looking countries have a much high proportion of their students continuing in Technical and Technology Education. There, the institutions responded to provide the human capital which was needed. Today, industries which are future focused will be looking for more technicians and technologists qualified in a number of new areas. We are talking here, Mr Speaker, Sir, of Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Automation, Fintech, Green technology, Engineering Technology, etc. The ITET will provide an early grounding in such fields and prepare them for the higher studies at the Polytechnics and other institutions.

In our technical education ecosystem in Mauritius, we currently have the MITD, and the Polytechnics and now the ITET. While the MITD is responsible for vocational training for students after Grade 9 and re-skilling of workers under the Ministry of Labour, the Polytechnics Mauritius, under the aegis of my Ministry, provides the niche and specialised high end technical education. It also offers innovative programmes in healthcare and nursing, hospitality and tourism and emerging technologies directly in partnership with industry.

Let me now take a moment and situate the relevance and positioning of the ITET within the larger education ecosystem and in enriching the diversity of the offer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, not all of our secondary school students opt to move on to upper secondary education after Grade 11, after School Certificate. Many would rather choose to go for technical education and thereafter enter the world of work.

The gap that the ITET will primarily address is to broaden the array of opportunities available to our grade 11 students to move higher up in their educational and career paths in a number of technical and technological fields. These cover fields like, I have said earlier, the green technologies, robotics, food processing technologies, among others. These fields are both different and distinct in terms of level and scope from what the MITD or the Polytechnics offer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, once students will have completed the program of studies at the ITET, they could then move on to the Polytechnics and from there, should they so wish, to Universities to complete their degree cycle.

What makes this restructuring of the technical education landscape forward looking is that the roles and responsibilities of the different institutions will be more distinct thereby reducing duplication in terms of programmes on offer. Moreover, with Industry 5.0 upon us, it is foreseen that the ITET will build capacity and further expand and diversify its array of programmes. In the process, Polytechnics will move higher up the technical education echelon but with a heightened practical and applied focus.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the ITET is intended to start with five centres in Mauritius and one in Rodrigues which will be equipped and staffed to deliver the higher level technical and technology education. The five centres in Mauritius will be located at Piton, Port Louis, Ebene, Beau-Vallon and Flacq and the one in Rodrigues will be at Le Chou. The locations have been identified so as to be accessible to the students from all over the Republic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the first time, students in Grade 11 will have the opportunity to choose a pathway of their choice to move to an occupation-based stream which will also qualify them to move on ultimately to higher education. There will no longer be dead ends in the system. The ITET, Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd. and other technical education institutions will target at least 35% of the post School Certificate learners by 2030.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me now to introduce to the House the main provisions of the Institute of the Technical Education and Technology Bill.

Clause 2 spells out the definition for Technical Education and Technological Education –

- "technical education" means a combination of academic knowledge and practical skills acquired in classrooms and applied settings", and

- "technology education" means the study of the application of scientific knowledge and processes.

What we mean here, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the difference between practical skills required to execute a specific task and the understanding of knowledge of the scientific concepts behind this operation.

Clause 3 provides for the Establishment of the Institute of Technical Education and Technology which shall be a body corporate and an approved service operating under a Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now focus on Clauses 4 of the Bill. Clause 4 refers to the "Objects" of the ITET which relates to its responsibility for –

- (i) the provision and effective as well as efficient management of high quality technical and technology education in line with the Government Vision 2030, and
- (ii) the establishment of a number of partnerships.

These partnerships, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be evident in different areas, namely –

- (i) the award of technical and technology education qualifications either by ITET on its own or in partnerships with other recognised institutions and even the MES to enhance its certification with standards benchmarked on international levels;
- (ii) the design and development of appropriate curriculum for the provision of technical and technology education ensuring compliance with norms and standards, and
- (iii) as rightly spelt out, Clause 4 (g) of the bill reads as follows -

“Collaborate with industry and business sectors to deliver a skilled and work ready pool of technicians and technologists.”

This, Mr Speaker, Sir, says it all where partnership with industry and business is concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for Clause 5 we are basically concerned with ensuring the development of appropriate pathways for students to move seamlessly from the education

sector to the world of work. In this context, the Institute will strengthen links with the secondary schools and tertiary education institutions such that the secondary school students will be given better opportunities to eventually enrol in higher technical education institutions according to their individual choices and in line with their career aspirations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Clause 5 (f) of the Bill relates to capacity building. There can be no transformation in the provision of Technical and Technological Education without proper investment in high quality Continuous Professional Development to ensure better student learning outcomes and educational quality. Hence, one major function of the Institute shall be to ensure the continuous professional development of its technical and technology education staff in pedagogy, instructional skills, classroom practices as well as in adolescent development. Some of this capacity building can also be undertaken in industry based settings. Capacity building will also be responsible for elaborating teacher professional standards in line with international good practices to guide and harness the development of teachers throughout their careers.

It will also promote the training of trainers for adoption of relevant and updated competency-based teaching models. The Institute will equally foster international collaboration to keep abreast of developments in the different sectors of technical education and technology development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, learners have to be aware of the pathways and avenues in technical and technology education. Students, across the entire spectrum of competency, must realise how attractive and worthy such an education can be for their future. Hence, one major function highlighted is the strong branding of technical and technology stream for the facilitation in the choice of a suitable career path or further studies. This is explicitly underlined in Clause 5, sections (l) and (m) of the Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Clause 6 of the Bill deals with the conferment of powers of the Institute while Clause 7 refers to the admission of students. Clause 8 provides for the establishment of a Council for the administration of the Institute. The Council shall consist of a Chairperson and seven members and due attention has been given for a fair and adequate representation both from the public and private sectors. The term of office will be for a period of three years with the possibility of renewal, except for ex-officio members. Specific provisions have been made at Clauses 9, 10 and 11 for meetings of Council, disclosure of interest of members and setting up of Committees for specific purposes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Clauses 12 and 13 make provision for the establishment of an Academic Committee, which will act as an academic body of the Institute in preparing academic professional, technical and technology programmes and courses. It will also advise and make recommendations to the Council on all academic matters, including the control, general direction and management of examinations and research facility.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as provided for at Clause 14, the Institute will be placed under the administrative responsibility of a Director to be appointed by the Institute of Technical Education and Technology Council for the execution of the decisions of the Council and for the control and management of the institution. Clauses 15 to 18 are standard clauses and provide for –

- (i) the delegation of power to the Director with regard to activities of the Council, and
- (ii) the appointment and conditions of service of employees.

The Institute may, on such terms and conditions as it may determine, appoint such employees as it considers necessary for the proper discharge of its functions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, provision is made at Clause 19 for the Powers of the Minister who may give written directions of a general character to the Council in respect of its activities. I would like here to stress that we are talking of written directions and not verbal ones. This should allay whatever concerns or apprehensions that may exist with regard to extraneous pressure. In fact, this Clause shows the commitment of this Government to ensure transparency and accountability in the management process of the Institute.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Institute will need resources to finance its activities. In this context, Clauses 20 to 26 are standard ones which make provision for management of finance and accounts of the Institute.

Clauses 27, 28 and 29 relate to the miscellaneous provisions of the Bill which include Offences, Legal Proceedings and Promulgation of Regulations. Clause 30 pertains to amendments to be brought to the First Schedule of the Public Procurement Act and Statutory Bodies Act. The Institute will need to comply to the provisions of the Public Procurement Act and will be an approved service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of this ITET needs to be made without delay. This will be done as indicated at Clause 31, through the vesting of six centres of the MITD to my Ministry as specified in the Schedule of the Bill, namely -

- (a) the Professor B. S. Upadhyaya Training Centre in Piton;
- (b) the Knowledge Based Training Centre in Port Louis;
- (c) Sir Rampersad Neerunjun Training Complex-East Wing/School of Information Technology, Electronics and Communication (SITEC) at Ébène;
- (d) Lycée Polytechnique Sir Guy Forget in Flacq;
- (e) Le Chou Multipurpose Training Centre in Rodrigues, and
- (f) Technical Education Centre in construction at Beau-Vallon.

These centres would be re-engineered into high-level technical education centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another transitional provision has been made for the assets of these training centres to be vested in the ITET. It is to be pointed out that the staff who are currently working in these centres, will remain on the establishment of the MITD retaining all their rights and privileges according to their conditions of service. However, they can apply to fill posts advertised by the ITET, in line with its staffing requirements.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now conclude my intervention. We believe that re-designing and providing a new orientation for the Technical Education sector is a matter of pressing urgency if we wish to develop an agile workforce to match the requirements of the economy. I wish also to emphasise that this Bill is future-focused and the ITET will serve as a means to promote a unified, sustainable and technologically advanced public network of technical education centres. These will provide work-based, on-campus and even online technical education across the country and beyond.

This Bill, Mr Speaker Sir, will be a landmark in our education ecosystem. It proposes to enhance the attractiveness of technical and technology education as an item uppermost on our agenda.

It comes at an opportune time in that it gives to the technical education its rightful place and serves to embed it in our entire education reform agenda.

The wheel, Mr Speaker, Sir, will now come full circle.

With these words, Mr Speaker Sir, I commend the Bill to the House and I thank you for your attention.

The Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank all hon. Members from both sides of the House who have intervened and contributed to the debates on the ITET Bill. This shows the keen interest generated on the issue of technical education and technology and its importance in an ever changing international education landscape. I have listened carefully to the constructive contribution of my colleagues on the Bill. Nonetheless, some hon. Members have raised some queries concerning this piece of legislation. However, I note with satisfaction that there is consensus on the need for high quality, higher technical education in the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has been assigned the portfolio for education, science and technology and it incorporates technical and technology education. We have engaged in a reform process in the whole of the education sector, a process which requires an adjustment of our legal and institutional framework governing technical and technology education.

We are in dire need of a new institution with well-defined and clear responsibilities to spearhead programmes of actions for this component of education. Our students have to be provided with opportunities and numerous structured pathways towards skills development to operate in an increasingly technical and technological environment.

Our policies and the education landscape have shifted according to the demands of the time and in a promising way towards one with multiple pathways to success. The concept of school/work/retire model is increasingly defunct and the future will see work and learning blend into one.

The ITET fully addresses this need to provide high quality technical education with a focus on industry-focused skills development. At the outset of our national reform agenda, the World Bank had peer reviewed and validated numerous planks of the reform as positive changes for the future. Furthermore, the 2021 World Bank Country Economic Memorandum has indicated the need for champion agencies to spearhead higher technical education in Mauritius to address the middle to high skills needs, especially in line with the emerging sectors of the economy and as part of a more demand-driven approach. This point has been stressed by both hon. Callichurn and hon. Bholah. Furthermore, our policy for technical education dates as far back as in 2014 when we came forward with Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd and planned for an overall of the technical education system.

In fact, we had a number of studies carried out that have guided and better shaped our strategies for technical education. A research team from Harvard came up with an in-depth diagnostic of the sector and reinforced our conviction that we are on the right track.

The ITET will be geared towards delivering technical and technology education with a culture of innovation and a passion of learning.

It is the role of Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, to act as a catalyst and facilitate the implementation of the restructuring process, and I must stress, Mr Speaker, Sir, that education is very high on our agenda and Government has supported and invested massively on human capital. That is what we are doing as a responsible Government.

I will now come to some of the issues that have been raised by hon. Members. After having gone through the various interventions, I noted with satisfaction that in fact, there is agreement from both sides of the House about the importance and the usefulness of the ITET.

It indeed responds to a felt need for right kind of human resources that constitute our human capital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now address one of the qualms of the hon. Member of the Opposition, hon. Dr. Gungapersad. I think he is misguided on the roles of a regulator as against that of a service provider. I appreciate his reference to the Skills Development Authority but he should know that when we presented the Bill, we made it crystal clear that the SDA is meant to be a regulatory body that has oversight over the broad ambit of the skills ecosystem. Conversely, this Bill refers to objects and functions that clearly define the six technical education centres as providers of technical education. Let me reassure the House that there is no mission drift here. The roles are clearly allocated for each institution and that applies as well to the MITD. My colleague, hon. Callichurn, clearly stated that the MITD will continue to operate with well-defined mandate.

There is also agreement that we need a well-articulated policy which is the case and which addresses pertinently issues raised by hon. Members in regard to skills mismatch, rebranding of technical education and youth empowerment as well as inclusiveness.

I must stress, Mr Speaker, Sir, that education has always been very high on Government agenda. The Prime Minister has always believed in the youth and invested massively to ensure that they get what they deserve. This Government came up with sponsorship for the SC and

HSC examinations. The Prime Minister came up with the free Tertiary Education Scheme and a revamped and reinforced national apprenticeship programme.

As highlighted by some hon. Members, it is a paradigm shift not *'du déjà vu'* or *'du déjà entendu'* as we are now dealing with a new strategic thrust focusing on technical and technology education. We are not reinventing the wheel, Mr Speaker, Sir. Many countries like Korea, Singapore, Germany have successfully gone through this technical education development trajectory. I must stress that unlike what hon. Ramful stated, in Singapore they have vocational education centres, the ITE and the Polytechnics, very much the setup that we have here now.

Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, TVET is being applied in a generic manner that often results in a loss of focus. What this Bill is meant to achieve, is a clear differentiation between vocational, technical and technology education. This means that different forms of technical education are best achieved through different curricula, different pedagogies and different models of competency-based learning. This disaggregation serves two purposes –

1. a more streamlined and harmonised approach to both policy orientation and the allocation of funds for greater efficiency, and
2. ensuring better alignment between the needs on the labour market and the skills secured by learners through the exposure to the disaggregated segments of technical education.

Some Members referred to the splitting of institutions and duplication of responsibilities and a congested framework. Let me reassure the House that there is no such duplication of functions and wastage of resources. If one refers to the provision in the budget for the Financial Year 2020-2021, due appropriation has been made such that the centres have the necessary carry forward provision. The issue of sustainability of Government finance is already taken on board and I wish here to thank my colleague, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for ensuring that in the last budget we had managed to come up with this carry forward element. I would refer here to Vote pertaining to Technical Education both recurrent and capital (Sub Head: 4-105).

Mr Speaker, Sir, reference has been made about research and studies prior to embarking on the ITET. As stated earlier, relevant and extensive researches have been undertaken prior to embarking on our technical education reform.

Again, I wish to enlighten the House that the project for charting out the National Skills Development Strategy was initiated when HRDC was under the aegis of my Ministry. Sector skills surveys were initiated in a number of fields. Studies on green technology were also carried out while curriculum development was also undertaken by our partners, the Singapore Corporation Enterprise.

The outcomes of many studies undertaken have served as useful inputs in the articulation of the ITET framework. Some hon. Members cannot claim that this initiative was devoid of any research in driving it forward. It is also sad that one Member of the House, who has intervened, has not been able to distinguish between technical education, vocational education and technology education.

I wish to reiterate again, in no uncertain terms, that MITD will offer vocational courses, provide training to unemployed and also address reskilling of workers specially through the National Apprenticeship Scheme and also would admit students after Grade 9 who would wish to join vocational training. My colleague, the hon. Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, clarified this in his speech. True it is, the world will be dominated by technology and innovation and we are providing funding precisely where required, that is, to drive the knowledge agenda by furthering technology education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure Members of the House that the existing collaboration with international organisation in the technical and vocational education will be sustained. In fact, they will be strengthened with the setting up of the ITET.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for the query raised regarding the orientation of Lycee Polytechnics, Sir Guy Forget, the specificity of its setup, curriculum and the French oriented system in place will be maintained. However, while maintaining the specificity, the curriculum and equipment will be readapted with the needs of the ITET and considering the evolution in the economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the ITET is intended to address the issue of low perception, often attached to technical education, but its objective is to increase the attractiveness of and the enlistment in the technical stream. It is meant to eliminate dead ends in the technical education systems and provide students with career progression and access to high levels of certification throughout, thus providing them with enhanced economic mobility.

The ITET will accordingly rebrand the sector and carry out sensitisation program and training for educators and for career counsellors and this with a view to promoting technical

and technological education and bringing along the necessary change in the mind-set of people. The infrastructure of technical education centres will be upgraded to provide conducive environment to students including equipment and other facilities. Hon. Ramchurrun rightly stated that ITET will contribute in our process of making Mauritius an Education Hub. Opportunities will exist for cooperation between ITET and other technical and technological institutions, both at the regional and international level.

Moreover, we expect students from countries of the region to come over to Mauritius and they would be welcomed to join the ITET. We already have collaborations with a number of surrounding countries, countries in the region, Reunion Island, so forth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me also refer to one point raised regarding the post of Director. It will be up to the Board to determine the profile of the Director, the qualifications and experience. We do not want to be prescriptive in our approach, Mr Speaker, Sir, and direct the Board that it would be an Engineer or someone else who should drive the Institute. The terms and conditions of service will be determined by the Board.

As for the fields of study, likewise, we cannot specify in the object of the Bill, the fields of study be it green technology or digital technology. We should not limit the coverage of the technology education. Priority fields of study will evolve with time and we shall adjust. We want the system to be dynamic, we want it to be flexible, we want it to be able to adjust to the demands of the economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a point was also raised with regard to the Council. The Council will be represented by both public and private sector representatives and consideration may be given to the representation on the Council of registered professionals. I believe it will ensure greater professionalism and will allow enhanced cooperation with a wider prospection of the private operators and professional bodies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the importance of training and capacity building for our SME sector should not be understated. Hon. Bholah rightly stated that SMEs, micro, small and medium enterprises face particular challenges due to scarce human resources. They often struggle to keep on top of new developments and technologies and encounter difficulties in finding and retraining qualified staff and providing them with adequate training. So, SMEs argue that current TVET programmes are too generic and not sector-specific as some sectors might need vocational training for manual and semi-skilled workers while other sectors might need

technological education for specialised technical occupations. Mr Speaker, Sir, ITET will address all these.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the concerns of some hon. Members about what will become of the teaching and non-teaching staff of the MITD, I wish to reiterate that there will be no loss of jobs. Hon. Callichurn had clearly stated MITD will be reorganising its activities with the additional staff of the training centres vested in my Ministry. Moreover, any staff of the MITD willing to join ITET may apply for the post advertised by the ITET.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in such circumstances, the rights and privileges of an officer will be as per established procedures laid down by the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to state that there are many teachers, instructors who were engaged in technical education and who obviously have done a wonderful job. These unsung heroes, as stated by Dr. the hon. Gungapersad, I would like to remind him that the person who had set up the IVTB was in fact the Director, Mr Suresh Munbodh. When he did all that and he ensured that at that time, he could provide skilled labour force for the economy, I would remind Dr. the hon. Gungapersad that when the Labour Party came into power in 1995, the first thing that they did was to ask Mr Munbodh to take leave, to go away. He did the work but he was no longer required. So, there are a number of unsung heroes definitely and we need obviously to stress that they did a wonderful work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards funds for the institution, provision has been made in Budget 2021-2022 from meeting the recurrent and capital expenditure of the technical education centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, unlike what the hon. Member of the Opposition, hon. Ramful stated, I wish to remind the House that the full measure of the reform cannot be reduced to a myopic view of isolated snapshots of student performance but rather requires a holistic view of all the facets be it quantitative or qualitative dimensions seen as an amalgam after a full nine-year cycle of the change process. We cannot do so and we cannot gage its success by taking these snapshots.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the ITET will undoubtedly create a nexus between education and employment, that is the industrial and business domains. The ITET will work closely with businesses, industry related stakeholders, the HRDC, Business Mauritius, amongst others, for the promotion of technical education.

As a caring and responsible Government, we have always delivered and will continue to deliver on our promises. This is the pact we made with the nation, a pact we will honour, Mr Speaker, Sir.

One hon. Member has been focussing on digital technologies which is but one component of the ITET programme delivery whilst it is admitted that is an area that cuts across a number of fields. Yet, ITET mandate goes beyond digitalisation but also a wide array of fields of study as already highlighted in my intervention. ITET will offer the right mix of industry-oriented programs which will bring a direct value added to the technical and technology education. It will also deliver on provision of skills for promotion of green technologies and this will support our sustainable development initiatives and the UN SDG goals, more specifically Goal 4.3 and 4.4.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me also reassure the House that ITET will have an all-inclusive and gender-neutral approach in the program delivery where ITET will be innovative is that student centricity will not come at the expense of employer centricity. It will create a win-win situation for not only the learner but also for industry and for the country as a whole.

I hope that I have cleared the points raised by my colleagues. I would like once again to thank all those who have intervened from both sides of the House in the debate on this Bill.

I can, Mr Speaker, Sir, in all modesty, state that the reform and transformation that we have embarked upon in the whole of the education sector have earned the plaudits and general consensus of all stakeholders. *Et, je suis convaincue, M. le président, que cette législation ne sera pas en reste.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Do you commend the Bill to the House?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I certainly commend the Bill to the House, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.