

Speech of

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**Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Tertiary Education,
Science and Technology**

Teacher's Day 2020

L. E. F. Teachers' Centre, Quatres Bornes

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A very good morning to all of you.

It gives me immense pleasure to be in your midst today on this very significant and symbolic day, as we celebrate World Teacher's Day 2020.

Let me, however, first of all, wish you all a very Happy Teachers' Day.

You deserve this special day all to yourselves.

This year's celebration has been themed "**Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future**" by UNESCO.

To-day, I wish to situate my address to you in a different context, one that has been marked by various challenges when we have had to strive to ensure continuity in education.

I said it already in different forums and I say it again today: the tremendous dedication and commitment of our Educators enabled us to achieve and sustain our endeavour and determination to ensure "Continuity of Education".

Ladies and gentlemen

The GTU has been at the forefront in supporting my Ministry's initiative for the delivery of lessons prepared by Educators and which were broadcast on the four channels at the MBC.

This assignment had to be taken in challenging circumstances within a tight schedule and the outcome was the consequence of timely and able teamwork of the Ministry, the GTU and our Educators who stood at the forefront, and worked round the clock.

As an unprecedented event, the COVID-19 pandemic acted as an acute constraint. We have had to quickly reinvent ourselves, and devise new and pedagogically sound ways of teaching. The exemplary contributions teachers made in providing remote learning, supporting our learners, preparing lessons to be broadcast on national television channels, remaining connected with learners and their learning, and ensuring that learning gaps in the curriculum were being mitigated speak highly of their leadership skills.

Ladies and gentlemen

In this beginning-of-the-new decade of the 21st Century, we need an educational model that truly empowers and provides opportunities for our children but where we also start thinking differently.

When we embarked on the NYCBE reform, we ensured that we would be offering an education system that helps each child optimise his potential by inculcating in him values such as life skills, literacy, numeracy and social skills.

Today, more than ever, confronting the emerging challenges compel us to realise the importance of Continuous Professional Development. We unanimously concur that innovation is one thing that has emerged amid new circumstances this year. We are more than ever conscious that

adaptation, transformation and reinvention are the three keywords that will drive the educational landscape from now on. The shift away from exclusive classroom teaching has led to new perspectives and understandings on the ways in which we can teach.

This year's theme

“Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future”

is a clear call to all of us, whatever our position in this education system. It prompts us to be in a state of preparedness and to start envisioning education differently. The future that we imagine is one where teacher will play a more prominent role in supporting learners and their learning journeys.

And that future is NOW!

We are aware that there are new ways in which we can teach today. We are standing at a juncture where knowledge and mastery of ICT in teaching and learning have become imperative. This brings in its wake the ever-growing need to reinforce our capacity and those of our Educators.

On this same platform in the past, we have been speaking of the B.Ed programme and I am happy to see that today, despite the many hurdles, it is now a reality.

But we cannot think of professional development exclusively in terms of academic qualifications. Rather, we are talking more of the domain of collaborative teaching, of sharing of good practices, of establishing a community of practice.

Dispensing education in the true sense of the term can more be seen as falling within the exclusive domain of one teacher facing a class. I believe

that we should be heading towards more within-school collaboration; towards a constant sharing within a cluster of neighbouring schools at the zonal level.

Dear Educators

I have always trusted in the key role that you can play in building resilience and shaping the future of education and of the teaching profession whilst giving the necessary support and guidance to our children.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our children are the pillars of our strengths and the beacon of our hope for the future, for a more prosperous to-morrow.

Our children will be the drivers of our economic growth.

They will have to work relentlessly to sustain our welfare state.

Yet, we should not forget that teaching is the most immediate process for supporting learning and for enabling learners to acquire expected competencies.

We all know that the foundation that builds a person in life is to a great extent based on the knowledge and education he gets from his teacher.

As Robert Frost puts it, an Educator is

“not a teacher, but an awakener.”

I am sure, every one of us who remembers his education remembers the teacher first, the one who inspired him and invested in him the curiosity to discover more knowledge and who guided and mentored him and led him towards wisdom.

We know that the teacher is and remains the heart of any educational system.

As a teacher, you talk to and with the child, not at the child, you assist the learners and inspire them, you are a role model who inspires and encourages our children to strive for greatness, live their fullest potential and see the best in themselves. They learn through you, through your commitment to excellence. You not only watch them grow, you also help them grow.

Your role as teacher should therefore be seen as a transformer of the child and, provide, as Swami Vivekananda, has said

“an education by which the character of the child is formed, the strength of his mind is increased, his intellect is expanded, and by which he can stand on his own foot.”

I would like to extend my gratitude to teachers for the selfless service and relentless effort that you provide in shaping our youth, in guiding them to becoming the right and virtuous citizen our country.

You deserve our thanks and congratulations.

Thank you for your attention.