

PRIMARY
CURRICULUM

21.11.00

**SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) – SPANISH, ITALIAN, GERMAN &
PORTUGUESE LANGUAGES**

(No. B/303) **Mr J.C. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will say if he intends to introduce the teaching of Spanish, Italian, German and Portuguese in primary schools for the benefit of those pupils who do not study oriental languages and, if not, why not.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the Ministry of Education & Scientific Research is presently engaged in a comprehensive review of Primary Curriculum with a view to adapting it to the needs of today's children and tomorrow's adults. We anticipate that the new proposed curriculum should be ready by the beginning of next year.

As things stand at present, in addition to English and French, Asian languages and Arabic are taught in primary schools and such classes are not restricted to any particular group of students.

Within the new curriculum on the one hand all necessary measures will be taken to facilitate access to the teaching of Asian languages and Arabic to all students. On the other hand, students opting not to start an Asian language or Arabic will be offered appropriate pedagogical activities.

We do not as at present have the required resources to envisage the generalised teaching of Spanish, Italian, German and Portuguese either at primary or secondary level.

YEAR 2001

PRIMARY CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT - CPE – SCIENCE AND INFORMATICS SUBJECTS (20/03/01)

(No. B/52) Dr. S. Chady (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Primary Curriculum Development Project, he will state –

- a. if Science and Informatics will be included for CPE examinations;
- b. if grading will be introduced, and
- c. his policy regarding the fate of oriental languages.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, proposals of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research relating to curriculum renewal at primary level have been submitted to Government and are presently under study. It would accordingly be premature and unhelpful to disclose details thereof at the present stage. In the circumstances, the hon. Member will appreciate that alleged details of the project published in the press are not necessarily accurate and may be misleading.

Nonetheless, I wish to thank the hon. Member for the interest shown in the matter and wish to assure him that any curriculum reform project of my Ministry will necessarily give due importance to Science, Information Technology as well as to Asian Languages and Arabic.

Once approval of Government is obtained, the proposals for curriculum renewal will be presented to the stakeholders of the primary sector for discussion.

In addition, I intend to renew the initiative of meeting with Members of Parliament to discuss proposed reforms in education and I do hope that this time round the hon. Member will attend. My earnest hope is that we be all guided by the national interest, the interests of the nation's children and that proposed reforms in education be considered in a non partisan perspective.

Dr. Chady: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to make one observation. I am glad that the Minister has said that whatever is being published in the newspapers is not official. I would have liked it if the hon. Minister would go to the press to explain that whatever is published therein is not from the curriculum nor is it the conclusion of any report, because this is creating a lot of confusion in the mind of people.

Mr Obeegadoo: I must confess, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I have not been made aware of any doubts, widespread in public opinion, on this matter. I can assure the hon. Member that, very soon, these proposals will be made public and will then be opened to discussion.

Once again, I wish to invite the hon. Member to attend the meeting of MPs. We had one a few months back, hon. Madun Dulloo and hon. Dr. Hookoom were there to discuss with all the other MPs of the reforms in education. I would invite hon. Dr. Chady to be in attendance next time.

Dr. Chady: If the hon. Minister will give us the date and time of the next meeting then we will be able to attend. Now that the hon. Minister has said that this is not creating any doubt in the mind of people, I would like to know whether this information about grading whereby a student who scores 4 A⁺ with 86 points each would be lesser considered than a student who has 2 A⁺ and 2 A of 99 points each for 2 A⁺ and 84 points for 2 A in comparison with a pupil who has 4 A⁺ with an aggregate of 344 points while the other pupil who has 2 A⁺ and 2 A will have an aggregate of 366 points. So, if this information is not emanating from the Minister's document, I don't know how this has been published in the newspaper. This is creating doubt in the mind of the people and this means that the grading system does not have any foundation.

Mr Obeegadoo: I would entreat the hon. Member to show a little patience so that very soon we can have some more meaningful discussion once Government has made public its proposals.

Dr. Chady: May I ask another question, Mr Speaker, Sir? All that has been said about grading, informatics and science does not make sense at primary level; we all know. There are no resources; the hon. Minister should not take us for a ride. After five and a half months, it is better for the hon. Minister to come up with whatever is concrete and besides he should have responded about those articles which appeared in the newspaper.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. When the project is made public, the resources will be there for the hon. Member to see.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS - EDUCATIONAL REFORMS - ABOLITION OF CPE RANKING, IT CURRICULUM, ETC. (17/04/01)

(No. B/204) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether in regard to educational reforms being proposed at the primary level, he will state -

- (a) whether ranking at CPE will be abolished;
- (b) how the existing inequalities in the present system of education will be reduced;
- (c) how the Information Technology programme will be implemented so as to minimize the disparities that it may cause; and
- (d) the time frame for the implementation of the new measures.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, concerning part (a), having regard to the proposed reforms in education at the primary level, I am proposing that ranking at CPE be

abolished as from the year 2002 so that this year's CPE examination be the last one to be held with the ranking system as we know it.

As regards part (b), the reform proposed aims at reducing the existing inequalities in the present system of education. The abolition of CPE ranking, will do away with the rat race competition in primary schools and will shift the focus on the needs of the child. The new primary curriculum aims at providing a broad-based education to all children and creating, through an integrated and child-centred approach, conditions for their full development.

With regard to part (c), Information Technology (IT) will be taught in all schools by a subject teacher and there will be a minimum of one computer laboratory in each school. The IT curriculum focuses not only on an understanding of IT, but also in its use across the curriculum.

The introduction of this new subject will provide opportunities for all children. By virtue of the "hand-on" and practical methodology and approach to be used, the teaching of IT will provide opportunities for collaborative learning among pupils.

As regards part (d), the Primary Curriculum Renewal Project will be phased in as from next year to be fully operational by 2004. The details are provided in a document which has been circulated to all Members of the House. As the hon. Member is aware, I also held a special briefing session on the subject at the National Assembly on Wednesday last and take this opportunity to thank all Members who attended.

As regards abolition of CPE ranking and associated reforms, details will be made public shortly.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, to enforce the IT programme, specialist teachers will be needed. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how he intends to overcome this problem?

Mr Obeegadoo: I do not foresee any particular problem, Mr Speaker, Sir. The procedures are under way for the recruitment, in a very short while, of teachers in sufficient numbers to take charge of our computer labs in primary schools. They will be offered a crash training course - as explained in the document which the Member has been communicated - up to the end of this year so that they be available for posting in schools as from next year and facilities provided for further upgrading in due course.

Mr Dowarkasing: We know today that the education sector is suffering a lot in terms of infrastructure; and now each school will be needing an additional IT lab. What is the hon. Minister's plan in terms of improving the structures of the schools?

Mr Obeegadoo: What is envisaged, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that wherever there are available spare rooms in existing primary schools, those rooms where they lend themselves to conversion would be converted into computer labs. Where that is not possible, at least one computer lab will be built. What is envisaged in that for all primary schools with one, two or three streams, we will have one computer lab. In schools where there are more than three streams, there will be, at least, two computer labs. Everything has been minutely planned. We foresee the need for the construction of 222 new computer labs. Funds have been made available. Government has already approved the plans. We are in the process of working with other Ministries concerned such as the Ministry of Public Infrastructure for the detailed phasing in of those constructions.

Mr Chumroo: Will the hon. Minister tell us whether the MIE has been organised to respond to the demands for the teachers' training so as to cope with the situation next year?

Mr Obeegadoo: That is under way, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, there is a combined effort of the MIE, of the NCITRC which is located at my Ministry and the Technical School Management Trust Fund to provide training and the infrastructural back-up for the training of those teachers.

Mr Dowarkasing: Regarding the low-achieving schools, does the hon. Minister have any plans in terms of the IT Programme? Because those schools already get some special attention, and will that special attention be given in the IT Programme?

Mr Obeegadoo: Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. gentleman can rest assured that in whatever we are going to undertake in the educational field, priority of consideration will be given to the deprived areas of the country and to the special support schools.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PRIMARY SECTOR - REFORMS

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. N. Ramgoolam) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the proposed reforms at primary level, he will state –

- (a) the precise mechanism whereby the grading system will replace the present ranking system at the CPE examinations;
- (b) how will the proposed system be used for admission purposes in Form I in January 2003;
- (c) how will competency in Asian/Arabic languages be used for admission purposes; and
- (d) whether he will maintain the proposed extension of school hours and, if so, will he envisage any salary increase for teachers upon the introduction of the new curriculum.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to begin by thanking the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the interest shown in the work of the Ministry of Education & Scientific Research.

The House will recall that the Presidential Address of 3 October 2000, at paragraphs 129, 130 and 131, reads as follows:-

“129. An 11-year system of compulsory education will be established consisting of 6 years of basic schooling of primary level followed by 5 years of broad based secondary schooling to provide all students with the necessary skills and aptitudes. A technical studies stream will be made available for all interested students at secondary level.

130. A new curriculum for primary schooling will be introduced leading to an examination at the end of the primary cycle. CPE ranking will be replaced by an objective and equitable Grade System for the inclusion of oriental languages without prejudicing any children. Admission to secondary schools will be regionalised according to a formula guaranteeing a fair measure of parental choice and affording due recognition to the specificities of confessional secondary schools.

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PNQ (Contd)

131. Government will embark on an accelerated programme of construction of high standard secondary schools and form VI colleges regionwise. The whole approach to maintenance will be reviewed and infrastructural improvements carried out in existing education institutions”.

Having regard to parts (a), (b) & (c) of the question which relate to the proposed CPE grading mechanism, admission formula for Form I and inclusion of Asian/Arabic languages, the Ministry of Education & Scientific Research has strictly adhered to the philosophy and measures announced in the extracts of the Presidential Address just quoted.

At its last meeting on Friday 04 May 2001, Cabinet approved the broad proposals of the Ministry of Education & Scientific Research for abolition of CPE ranking and regionalisation of admission to secondary schools. My Ministry is now working on the specific measures and detailed modalities, including a precise time frame to translate into practice, as early as possible, the reform project. In the circumstances, the hon. Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that to venture tentative and incomplete answers to the very specific and sensitive matters raised in parts (a), (b) & (c) of the question would be premature and could lead to considerable confusion.

However, I propose to meet all the stakeholders of the primary and secondary educational sectors very shortly, to present to them the whole reform project. I propose to make a comprehensive statement on the whole issue at the first sitting of the National Assembly thereafter, and I shall arrange for copies of the document explaining the reform measures to be forwarded to all Members of the National Assembly. Furthermore, a full information cum discussion meeting for Members of the House will, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, be held on the premises of the National Assembly, and, as in the past, we shall look forward to the participation of Members from both sides of the House.

As regards part (d) of the question, the House will recall that on 29 March 2001, on the occasion of the launching of the consultative meeting for the educational primary sector, and in the presence of all interested parties, the primary curriculum renewal project was made public. Copies have since been sent to all MPs and a briefing session held here at the National Assembly on 11 April.

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For recall, the reform proposals aimed at broadening the primary curriculum to provide our children with an education befitting their needs and serving the national interest. Since then, we have engaged wide consultations and discussions with all the unions of employees of the primary sector, head teachers, inspectors, representatives of all PTAs of primary schools as well as with the *Bureau d'Education Catholique* to consider the modalities of implementation of the proposed reforms.

The initial proposals of the Ministry of Education did include a revision of weekly school hours, that is, an increase of 15 minutes for Standard I, no increase for Standard II, a decrease of 15 minutes for Standard III and an increase of 45 minutes for Standards IV to VI, and the document, made public, stated at page 9 –

“Discussions will be held with the relevant trade unions, to explore the implications of the new curriculum, including the option for existing teachers to assume responsibility for new subject areas against payment of an allowance”.

However, in a correspondence recently addressed to the Ministry of Education, four unions of employees of the primary sector have indicated that they disagree with the principle of the extension of school hours and they have publicly stated that same was not in their view negotiable and moreover would not, in any circumstances, be acceptable. Accordingly, it would appear that the idea of a salary increase linked to implementation of the new curriculum and specifically to the extension of school hours no longer arises. I have, on many occasions, emphatically stated that there is no going back on the introduction, on the phasing in of a new curriculum as from next year. However, we shall leave no stone unturned to obtain the support of all stakeholders, so as to effect the implementation of the reform proposals in the most conducive environment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, being given the importance of the forthcoming reforms for our country and its children, I shall, once again, appeal to one and all that this matter to be discussed and debated in a non-partisan manner, and I trust that I may rely on the Opposition's co-operation in that respect.

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PNQ (Contd)

Dr. Ramgoolam: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister of Education for his attempt to clarify certain points raised in the PNQ. The hon. Minister had made an appeal before to have the co-operation of one and all, including the Opposition. It is a difficult subject and I am sure that he now understands what are these difficulties. We are not here to *mettre des batons dans les roues*, but to find solutions which are acceptable to one and all, and we know what are the difficulties. Having said that, I must say that even though he mentioned what was said in the Presidential Address, there is a lot of confusion and that is why the question was asked. For example, I am surprised to hear the Minister say that, now, he proposes to meet all the stakeholders. I would have thought he should have met them first and then come with a solution, because, to me, that is the way for all sorts of problems that may arise. Therefore, can I ask the Minister whether he cannot, in any way, give some indication as to what kind of mechanism he is going to use for the grading system?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker Sir, let me assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I am in constant contact with all the stakeholders, that is, we meet with the stakeholders before the preparation of the reforms, during the preparation process and afterwards, to discuss the detailed implementation modalities. We did that for the primary curriculum renewal project and we are doing the same for the next phase of the reform, that is, abolition of CPE ranking and regionalisation of admissions. As I explained earlier, this is a very sensitive subject. At this precise point in time, the Ministry is finalising the details, fine-tuning the time frame for implementation. It would have been very easy for me to come here and speak in vague terms, dropping an idea here and there, but I am sure the leader of the Opposition would agree that could only contribute to creating even further confusion. I wish to assure the leader of the Opposition and all Members of House that it is a matter of a very short time – days indeed - for the reforms to be made public. Thereafter, I shall be only too happy to be given the opportunity to answer as many questions as possible, explaining all the details of the reform project.

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PNQ (contd.)

Dr. Ramgoolam: If the hon. Minister of Education says we will get more details - this is a question of days - how is it that he says in his first answer that he proposes to meet the stakeholders again? Why is the Minister going to meet them again if he is ready with the report?

Mr Obeegadoo: Whatever we are doing at education we are endeavouring to do so in full transparency and in permanent consultation, that is, before reform proposals take shape there are consultations albeit informal if needs be. During the preparation of the reform proposals there are contacts and meetings. Once the broadlines are agreed Government is invited to pronounce upon the proposals and in this case the broad proposals have been agreed by Government last Friday. We are now in the process of fine-tuning the proposals in terms of modalities for the implementation and we shall meet first and foremost with the stakeholders - not by way of a Press Conference or whatever, but directly at full information, session with the stakeholders whereby the document will be made public, all information given and we shall listen to their views as regards the specific modalities of implementation. We shall simultaneously send copies to all Members of the House and then we shall have, as a priority, a meeting on the premises of the National Assembly to which all Members of the Opposition will be conveyed; and I do trust that, being given the interest the Members are showing in the subject, they will attend the meeting.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Since the Minister says that he has been meeting them informally or whatever, that there has been constant meeting is he confident and optimistic that when he produces his final report that they will accept it and find that he has done a great job. Is he very optimistic about the end result?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given, first and foremost, the assurance to the Leader of the Opposition that this will matter not be dealt with in a partisan manner and that we shall have the co-operation and support of the Opposition on such a sensitive matter for the future of the country, I cannot but be optimistic.

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Dr. Ramgoolam: It is not just me and the Opposition; it is means the stakeholders that are important, that is why I am asking this question. The Minister will have our support provided we agree with what he is doing. If we do not agree he will not have our support. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he can give us an indication on the grading system? Will it involve a continuous assessment within that grading system? Can he say that or he is not in a position to tell the House?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is only a few days short. I would appeal to the hon. Leader of the Opposition to bear with us for a few more days and, thereafter, we shall be only too happy to respond to the detailed questions the Opposition may have.

Dr. Ramgoolam: If the hon. Minister is going to publish it in a few days there is no harm in telling the House whether the grading system will include continuous assessment. But I suppose that he is not prepared to say more about the grading system, because I want to know whether the best graded students will have access to the star colleges like Royal College, Curepipe or Queen Elizabeth College and so on?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot say more. However, should I be conferred the honour of having another PNQ addressed to me in the next few weeks, I shall be only too pleased to provide all the information.

Dr. Ramgoolam: The Minister has said that this would be the last year we have the CPE ranking system. When he himself was in the Opposition he was asking the Minister involved if it was the last time he was having the CPE exams as people wanted to know. I remember he said that people want to know about it even one year before. Can I just ask another matter that he referred to? I heard the Minister say that although the unions and other stakeholders were agreeable in principle to the extension of school hours but the question of payment and allowance does not arise because they say it is not negotiable. In other words will the Minister extend school hours or will he not?

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Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I have already stated very clearly that this year will be the last CPE examination as we know it, that is, with ranking. This year will be the last; and changes will be effected for the CPE examinations at the end of next year. That is being made public already. After the extension of school hours were announced – I have just given the details level wise at the primary level – the unions wrote to the Ministry and made public statements to say that they were against the principle of extending school hours and that it was not negotiable. We are, therefore, listening and talking to them. What is important for Government is that the reforms go through. There can be no going back, no turning on the principle of the reforms going through, that is, a new curriculum, a new set of subjects being introduced at primary level. The modalities as to how that is going to be done can always be discussed. The essence of the reforms is renewing the curriculum, introducing a broader curriculum with new subject areas. That is not negotiable from Government's point of view.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Can I have a precise answer from the Minister? In a blue paper it is said that in Std I the extension will be 15 minutes, nothing for Std II, 15 minutes for Std III and 45 minutes for Std IV to VI. Therefore, there will be an overall increase in time. Will he be extending the hours or will he try to reduce it so that there is no conflict with the unions who say they do not agree with the principle? I thought you had said they agreed with the principle.

Mr Obeegadoo: I do not want to be repetitive, Mr Speaker, Sir. I said that proposals had been made for the modalities. We are talking, listening and consulting as we always do, Government will then take a decision if we need to go back to Government on the modalities. In the meantime, we shall leave, as I said, no stone unturned, to ensure that we can take on board all the stakeholders so that we give all the chances of successful implementation to the proposed reforms.

Dr. Ramgoolam: On regionalisation, Sir, it is said in the Presidential Address and we also said it that we want regionalisation. Is Government going ahead with that? What is the time limit that the Minister is prepared to tell the House about the identification of schools? I suppose the Minister has done the school mapping and all this.

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Mr Obeegadoo: As stated in the Presidential Address the commitment which Government intends to uphold is that admission to secondary schools will be regionalised according to a formula guaranteeing a fair measure of parental choice and affording due recognition to the specificities of confessional secondary schools. So, it stands to reason from the paragraph I have just read that there will be within the mechanism to be defined a certain dose of flexibility so that there will be no single school, no single model imposed on each and every one. We believe that parental choice is a very important measure and principle which needs to be accommodated within the regionalisation formula.

Dr. Ramgoolam: I think we all agree that parental choice is important. That is why I ask the question and may be the Minister can tell us whether the best graded students will have access to the star colleges like Queen Elizabeth, Royal College of Cureipe etc. as he said that there would be a degree of flexibility?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as everybody knows, the mechanism of ranking is inextricably linked to the existence of perceived star schools. That is why abolition of CPE ranking has been a vexed issue for many years and any formula to address abolition of CPE ranking must perforce include consideration of the issue of star schools. I shall again appeal to the hon. Leader of the Opposition to bear with us for a few days while we fine-tune and finalise our detailed proposals.

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Dr. Ramgoolam: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a sad confusion by the way the Minister of Education is answering. What would be the flexibility that he will give for parental choice? Would he be able to give some explanation on that?

Mr Obeegadoo: Same will be clear within a few days and I shall, thereafter, be willing to answer any questions.

Dr. Ramgoolam: The Minister is not prepared to give details or only in a few days we will hear about it. Since the Minister is talking about his paper on training for IT and other new teachers that he will take, is he already going ahead with the training of those teachers? Because if you want to have, for a last time, the CPE examinations as it is, you will need those teachers very quickly. So, has this training started?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I share the concern of the Leader of the Opposition. We are working at full speed on the implementation of the proposals for the new curriculum. Masters IT Lab, as we may choose to call them, will be very shortly recruited and thereafter will be provided with a crash training course to allow us to phase in the introduction of IT in schools as from next year.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Where will the hon. Minister recruit those teachers from? Will he recruit them from the general pool or would he have specialised teachers?

Mr Obeegadoo: Teachers will be recruited from the public.

Mr Dulloo: Sir, this is most unacceptable. The Minister just keeps us in the dark and he keeps on talking. We are now in May. He says by the end of the year, this would be the last time that we are having the present examination system. So, next year there would be a new curriculum, a new system that would be put in. So, may I ask him whether he has informed the stakeholders and given them an indication? We are kept in the dark. This House is kept in the dark. Can we know whether indications have been given to the directorates, the heads of schools, teachers and parents, those doing fifth standard, for example, in what direction we are moving, what sort of formula as far as the new system is concerned, about the preparation for the curriculum?

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, as I said, the curriculum reform proposals were made public at the end of March. Since then I have been on television, on radio, I have talked to all the stakeholders, including head teachers and inspectors. I know my good friend, the hon. Member, apparently did not receive somehow the invitation for the last meeting. I shall personally ensure that the next time in all the briefing sessions he does obtain the invitation. I am grateful he, in fact, attended the first information meeting we had. So, yes we have been talking to the stakeholders. We have had a multitude of informal meetings indicating what direction we are moving in. Curriculum has already been publicised over the last five weeks and we will be actively engaged for the next few months in explaining, informing and popularising our reform proposals.

(Interruption)

Dr. David: That was planned, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. David: *400 bus et 2,500 dimounes! Ca même tout!*

Mr Speaker: Order please!

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have heard, at least, two indications from the Minister: one is regionalisation and the second one is that there will be Form VI schools. I have two questions. The first question is: how will grading be used as criteria for admission in these regional schools? The second question is: will the brightest students have access to QEC and Royal Colleges? Will there be Form I in Royal Colleges, QEC or not?

And the third question is: if you will have Form VI schools, how long will it take for QEC, for example, to phase in Form VI schools from what it is at the moment?

Mr Obeegadoo: First and third questions are most interesting and will comprise the backbone of the proposals to be made public.

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As regards the second question which is also a very important question, let me assure all colleagues of the House that in no way will we entertain the slightest risk that the reforms could lead to a so-called *nivellement par le bas*. Democratisation of access to education cannot, should not and will not lead to any *nivellement par le bas*. That is why we are looking to what is recently being introduced in England, the special programme for gifted and talented children in particular fields to ensure that the schools, just as it is meant to focus on children with special needs, will also be called upon to identify support and stimulate the most gifted and talented children.

Dr. Boolell: Since the Minister said that there will be an accelerated programme of construction of secondary schools, can I ask him what will be the number of schools that will be constructed this year and next year to ensure that all children who succeed the CPE examinations will be guaranteed a place in a school which has the basic facilities?

Mr Obeegadoo: These figures have already been quoted publicly. The hon. Member is aware that we are proposing to construct more than 40 new secondary institutions within the next four and a half years and the first major effort will occur between now and next year to be operational in 2003. So, we are envisaging that more than 20 new institutions should be operational in 2003, but these figures have already been made public over the last few months.

Dr. Boolell: Can we then get a firm guarantee from the Minister that all children who succeed the CPE examinations will have a place in one of these schools which are going to be constructed up to year 2003?

(Interruption)

Mr Obeegadoo: As the hon. Member is aware we are going even further. Not only are we ensuring that all children who succeed the CPE examinations find a place in a secondary school, we now have a prevocational stream in all Form I schools, so much so that as from March of this year any child, whether he has passed or failed the CPE, can have access to Form I in a secondary school where he is being given the appropriate pedagogical support. We have gone two steps further. We are in the process

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of abolishing what I called apartheid in schools, that is, separate arrangements for those who failed and those who have passed. We are way beyond that. So, let me give the assurance that our objective, the fundamental pillar of the reforms in education is compulsory 11-year schooling so that within a matter of years not only will secondary education be accessible, but will be compulsory for all of our children.

Dr. David: A last question. I would like to know from the Minister whether there will be Form I intake in Royal College, Port Louis, Royal College, Curepipe, QEC and Dr. Maurice Curé?

Mr Obeegadoo: I shall ensure that within the next few days, a copy of the reform document be sent to the hon. Member.

Dr. Ramgoolam: I just want to get a confirmation from the answers that the Minister has just given. Will he be able to guarantee that each and every child in this country will have access, therefore, to star colleges, across the board, in spite of the flexibility that he says, according to parental choice?

Mr Obeegadoo: I am sure that the hon. Leader of the Opposition will agree that the concept of star should disappear altogether from the educational scenery. Our objective is not to train a few stars and condemn the vast multitude to a life in the wilderness, but the objective must be to give all possibilities to all of our children to develop to the maximum their potential in each and every field be it academic and non-academic without, in any way, sacrificing the development of the bright students.

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PNQ (cont)

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Dr. Ramgoolam: Mr Speaker, if you will allow me one more question because from the answer which the hon. Minister has given....

Mr Speaker: Being given it is an important subject, I'll allow you one last question.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Mr Speaker, Sir, it will depend on what the hon. Minister said. He said he does not want *un nivellement par le bas*. In other words, he doesn't want to bring everybody's level down. If the hon. Minister does not want to have this policy, he is bound to have some elites areas in the country; there is no other way. So, how would the Minister reconcile what he has just said with what he said before?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me very sincerely state that I shall be delighted to have the presence of the Leader of the Opposition in our forthcoming briefing and information session. I shall listen with the greatest of all possible attention to the views and ideas of the Leader of the Opposition.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Hon. David, please! Hon. Members should listen so that they won't come up with the same question when the Prime Minister's Question Time is over.

PQ. No. B/317 will be answered by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. Formally, it was addressed to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce.



D20p07cl/2

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PRIMARY EDUCATION - ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS –
SYLLABUS & CURRICULUM

(No. B/497) Mr M. Dulloo (Third Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in the context of Government's proposed plan for reforms in the educational sector, he will state how he proposes to ensure that English and Mathematics at primary level be not downgraded and their importance and scheme of work within the syllabus and curriculum be not reduced.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, earlier this year, I had the opportunity of presenting to the public a document entitled 'Curriculum Renewal in the Primary Sector'. The new primary curriculum aims at providing a broad based education with a wider range of subjects in line with best international practices. This new curriculum should be considered within the perspective of abolishing CPE ranking and 11-year compulsory schooling.

With the introduction of new subjects, it was initially proposed to extend the number of school hours. However, this proposal was objected to by the teachers' unions. The Ministry is therefore actually considering an alternative formula to accommodate a new curriculum within existing school hours.

In this regard, much care is being taken so that English and Mathematics be in no way downgraded and that they maintain the importance within the primary curriculum.

The curriculum materials for subjects including English and Mathematics will be formulated in such a manner so as to be sensitive to an integrated and a cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning.

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P.Q. No. B/497 (cont'd)

I am informed that teachers will be required to plan their teaching carefully both within a subject and across the various subject areas.

I am further advised that mathematical activities will take place both during Mathematics lessons and other subjects. A similar approach will be adopted for the teaching of English. This new approach will give a meaningful and richer dimension to classroom activities.

As regards the secondary curriculum, the Ministry has started working on proposals for renewal in line with the international best practice. Once again, Mathematics and English will remain of fundamental importance up to Form V and beyond.

Mr Dulloo: Sir, we take note of what the hon. Minister is saying, but what worries people is the fact that it has been stated in the suggested plan for reform that the same status will be given to all examinable subjects and for the purpose of grading, including Oriental languages, consideration will be given to the eight best subjects. The concern is that, when all the nine subjects will be given the same status, how is it that we are going to maintain, I do not say 'improve' for the moment, the existing allocation of time and also weightage in English and Mathematics? This is the main concern. Will the Minister clarify this point?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question of allocation of time is an interesting one. It is a good point. We have proposed a formula in the document which clearly spelt out that time allotted to the languages and to Mathematics would be at least maintained and where possible increased. Even now that a new formula is being considered where we would accommodate a new curriculum within the existing schooling hours, the same principle will apply. The hon. Member has my word. As regards weightage, I did explain that we need a change of mentality to understand the reforms which are about to take place. Up and until now, the CPE was the end point in the educational experience of many Mauritians. It was a question, so to speak, of life and death. Hence, this whole issue of

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P.Q. No. 497 (cont'd)

weightage which came in. But if we are able to view the CPE as one stage in an educational continuum which extends over sixteen years, then the question of weightage is of little importance. Within that perspective, with the efforts to obtain parity of esteem for all secondary schools, the CPE will increasingly become a certificate of achievement just as envisaged in the Action Plan approved by Cabinet under the former Government. So, the question of weightage eventually will no longer arise.

Mr Dulloo: Sir, there is a consensus in the nation that ICT should be a major component of our development strategy and, therefore, Mathematics and English would assume greater importance. The hon. Minister is saying that the allocation of time to languages will be maintained. As the Oriental languages will be given the same status as English and French, the allocation of time and the curriculum will be shared with the two other subjects, which means that the time allotted to English will definitely be reduced, whereas the tendency in Singapore, Korea, India and everywhere is to increase the curriculum for English and Mathematics. This is not clear even to teachers, parents and everybody as to the importance that would be given to English and Mathematics in the new development strategy of Mauritius.

Mr Obeegadoo: Let me repeat. The time allotted presently under the present time-table to English language on the one hand and to Mathematics on the other hand will not be reduced. I cannot be any clearer, Sir.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – IT COURSES

(No. B/890) Mr M. Chumroo (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will state if IT courses will start in primary schools next year and, if so, will he state what provision has been made in that connection.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, as the hon. Member will recall, earlier this year, my Ministry announced a new and extremely ambitious initiative to introduce Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in primary schools as a subject in itself in 2002. Such an initiative to wire all primary schools has few parallels in the developing world and, indeed, Singapore and Korea have only done so in the last five years. Hence, it represents an enormous challenge premised on a significant financial investment by Government, mobilisation of considerable human resources and rapid development of the appropriate expertise.

The project has been slightly delayed for two reasons. Firstly, an international Request For Information (RFI) has been issued to ascertain what precisely is an offer on both the hardware and software markets for computerisation of schools. This has proved to be a lengthy process.

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(No. B/890) (contd)

Furthermore, the analysis of the RFI response has necessitated expertise which is unavailable locally. In actual fact, the preliminary analysis of the RFI response is presently under way with the participation of a World Bank ICT expert. Thereafter, the proposed formula for the introduction of ICT in primary schools will have to be approved by Government, prior to a formal international tendering exercise. Hence, the unavoidable delay, but then again, Mr Speaker, Sir, one cannot be too cautious when treading on such new and complex ground.

A second reason for the delay is to be found in the necessity to build ICT laboratories in some 200 primary schools. At present, given the unprecedented programme of constructed and related infrastructural developments in the secondary sector, the resources of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure are stretched to the absolute limit. Accordingly, the huge task of preparation of work specification, including the architectural and engineering dimensions as well as the actual building works for each ICT laboratory, have had to be put off.

Nonetheless, as things stand, our objective remains the introduction of ICT in as many primary schools as possible in the latter part of next year. To that end, the following measures are relevant:-

- (i) syllabuses for ICT in schools have been finalised with the assistance of foreign experts and may be consulted on the web site of the Ministry;
 - (ii) some 330 ICT teachers will, in the next few weeks, be recruited on a contractual basis, referred to the MIE for a certificate of proficiency course early next year and be made available for initial posting to schools during the third term of 2002;
 - (iii) pedagogical materials for teachers and students, as appropriate, are currently under consideration at the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (NCCRD);
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(No. B/890) (contd)

- (iv) as regards hardware and software procurement, as already explained, the tender exercise should be launched early next year; and
- (v) a survey of all primary schools has been undertaken to assess as precisely as possible the number of ICT laboratories which may have to be built.

I wish to assure the hon. Member that Government is closely monitoring implementation of the School IT Project and will leave no stone unturned, to ensure that the project is realised as soon as possible, subject to all necessary precautions being taken to avoid the numerous pitfalls highlighted by the experience of other countries.

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**PRIMARY SCHOOLS - CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION –
INTRODUCTION**

(No. B/358) **Dr. R. Beebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, he will state if the subject of good citizenship will be examinable this year and, if so, whether new books have been printed and are already in use for this purpose.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that the Curriculum Renewal Project in the primary sector, which is in force since March 2001, provides for a number of new subjects including Citizenship Education, to be introduced in an incremental manner over the period 2001 – 2005.

Having regard to the specific question as to whether Citizenship Education would be examinable this year, the reply is in the negative, if the hon. Member is referring to the CPE examination. However, Citizenship Education has been introduced on a trial basis in upper primary classes since last year and may be assessed in Stds IV & V this year.

Concerning the ancillary question of books, pupils of upper primary have since last year been provided with trial material and teachers have been requested during the briefing sessions held with them to focus on specific chapters for the time being.

Consequently, the question of new books for Citizenship Education will only arise at the appropriate time in the light of feedback received on the trial material currently used.

Dr. Beebeejaun: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether it is the Government policy to have an examinable subject like good citizenship and, if so, when will it start?

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P.Q. No. B/358 (cont'd)

Mr Obeegadoo: It is Government policy to introduce new subjects in the primary sector in line with the Curriculum Renewal Project. On the basis of the introduction of a subject for teaching purposes, that subject may well lend itself to assessment or to examination.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have asked a specific question and the Minister should give a clear answer. When will it be examinable? I think it is the stated policy that it will be examinable at CPE level and it was scheduled for 2003. Has the Minister changed his mind and, if so, when will it be examinable?

Mr Obeegadoo: If the hon. Member is referring to the CPE examination, the Opposition should understand once and for all that we are trying to break out of the CPE ranking syndrome where all education focused exclusively on CPE examination. When the hon. Member says examination, is he referring to Std I, II, III or VI? We cannot assume that all education is about CPE. That is not what the reform in education is about. Let me make it very clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. All subjects are there to be studied and assessed. Citizenship education has been introduced at primary level, it may well be introduced at lower secondary level in years to come and at whatever level it is introduced, it can be assessed and it will be assessed.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that you have no control over the answers, but for God's sake, could we have a clear simple answer to a simple question? Has it been the policy of the Government to have the subject examinable at the end of this year and, if so, why is it not being implemented, and when will it be implemented? Why can't we have a simple answer?

Mr Obeegadoo: The question says: whether it would be examinable this year. The simple answer is 'no'. It will certainly be assessed in years to come.

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P.Q. No. B/358 (cont'd)

Dr. Beebeejaun: Could the Minister give us a time frame? We did not get a clear answer as to why these books are not found in the classes yet.

Mr Obeegadoo: I have already provided the answer, Sir.

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PRIMARY SCHOOLS – ICT TEACHERS

(No. B/394) Dr. R. Beebeejaun (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the ITC teaching training, he will state how the human ware component of 327 or so ICT teachers recruited, trained, and posted to primary schools are discharging their duties of ICT teaching according to a transitional syllabus in the absence of the two other major components, namely, laboratory and provision of hardware and software.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the decision to introduce ICT in primary schools reflects the overall objective of my Ministry to impart life skills to our pupils through a broad-based education tailored to meet the needs of the country.

In 2001, the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications came up with the School Information Technology Project which had the similar objective of imparting IT skills to our pupils at an early stage and improve the quality of education through the use of IT as a supporting tool. Accordingly, when the primary curriculum renewal project was announced, it provided for the introduction of ICT within the primary curriculum.

The SITP, as it has been conceived is certainly unprecedented in Africa and has few known precedents in the whole developing world. Government was, therefore, fully conscious of the scope and magnitude of the project as well as of the likely constraints and possible delays. Nonetheless, Government had the required farsightedness to make of the SITP one of its priorities.

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P.Q. No. B/394 (Cont'd)

In spite of the fact that two major components of the SITP, namely the construction of IT laboratories and the procurement of the relevant hardware/software are still outstanding many conditions which have already been fulfilled to pave the way for the full scale implementation of the SITP in due course. In this respect, I wish to point out the following -

- (i) the transitional syllabus for the teaching of ICT in Stds I – VI which sets out the basic competencies and skills which the pupils need to acquire has been finalised. The syllabus provides for the introduction of ICT as a subject before being integrated in later years across the curriculum;
- (ii) a plan has been worked out for the construction of IT laboratories including the conversion of existing available classrooms. On the basis of that plan, action is proceeding with the imminent launching of tenders for the construction of the IT laboratories in phases, one overlapping with the other;
- (iii) concerning the procurement of the hardware and software, an international request for information was issued in July 2001 and a request for proposal, that is, an international invitation to tender was issued in December 2002. The tenders are currently at evaluation stage; and
- (iv) finally, regarding the human ware, if I may so expressed myself, 330 ICT teachers have been recruited and trained at the MIE and have been posted in the schools as from January 2003.

As regards the specific point raised by the hon. Member as to the teaching of ICT in the schools, I wish to point out that, in anticipation of possible delays and practical difficulties, teachers have been trained to use whatever number of PCs available in school to which they are posted to attempt first level computer awareness. My Ministry is fully supportive of the Cyber Island ambition of Government and pending the full scale

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P.Q. No. B/394 (Cont'd)

implementation of the SITP, pupils are being exposed to ICT and all stakeholders are being sensitized to the need to be proactive to sustain the process. The response is most encouraging and I am pleased to point out that at this stage, there is an IT corner in more than 60% of our schools whereas in the remaining schools there is at least one PC. Furthermore, private sector organisations have volunteered to donate second hand computers to our schools. The modalities of which are being worked out.

Sir, if one is not ambitious, one achieves nothing and there can be no progress without risk taking. The ICTP is a case in point.

Dr. Beebeejaun: I thank the Minister for the reply. Maybe through ignorance on my part, I always thought that computer teaching was about was 'see and touch' and if you do not have 'see', and you do not touch, you cannot progress. I am a little curious. About three weeks ago, we had water therapy without water. This week we had ICT courses without the appropriate equipment. I would ask the Minister – we had the same reply two months ago – if he can tell us what is the situation as far as the 34 IT labs are concerned.

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(No. B/394) (contd)

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, a couple of weeks back, further to the intervention of hon. Dowarkasing at adjournment, I referred to the fact that for many, many years, including the years when the Labour Party was in Government, instead of teaching practical for science subjects at SC or HSC level, students were taking a paper called 'alternative to practicals'. This is nothing new. As regards ICT, I wish to state, again, I would rather be ambitious for my country and achieve half of my ambitions than, over five years, neither attempting nor achieving anything. Let us be very serious about this. There are now serious delays because no other Government - not the previous Government - thought of introducing IT in schools. So, I thought that my hon. friend, the good doctor, would have spared himself the embarrassment of provoking me to remind the Labour Party of its standstill act in the educational sector over five years before the change in Government. So, let me repeat, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Obeegadoo: We are very serious about providing opportunities to all children, wherever they live across the Republic, whatever the social status of their parents, access to ICT in schools, and we will achieve our target.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, could we have a simple reply? Two months ago, it was said that tenders had been launched. Have they been launched? Where are we with the 34 IT laboratories?

Mr Obeegadoo: As I have explained, there are type designs established by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure for IT laboratories. On that basis, there is a first batch of some 30 IT laboratories, for which the tenders are being launched.

CA/D11/P08/2
(No. B/394) (Contd)

Dr. Beebeejaun: It is such a serious matter. I concur entirely with the declaration of the Minister, and this is why I am disturbed of what is going on. We have children who are learning about computers and who have seen a computer once and never again. A little girl of seven years old informed me that last year a computer was shown to them once and that's all. How can we teach children about computers if there are no computers? How many second-hand computers have been donated to the Ministry, how many are functioning, and how many are in use?

Mr Obeegadoo: Let me again state that, up to September 2000, there was no project implemented in schools for introduction of ICT. Right now, there is an ongoing exercise for the procurement of hardware and software. We have reached the evaluation stage. The whole process should be completed within a few months. This is an unprecedented exercise. Government is being very careful, very cautious, taking on board international expertise, to make sure that we don't go wrong in a field where developed countries have gone wrong, and it has cost billions to these States. As I said, all our schools, right now, have, at least, one or two PCs. In some schools – the most fortunate ones, in well-to-do areas – the PTAs have contributed and have, themselves, set up an IT laboratory, and we are very thankful to them. We have invited head teachers and ICT teachers to be proactive, working with local community organisations, NGOs, to obtain computers, to create IT corners where students can start familiarising themselves with ICT. I just mentioned the fact that 60% of our schools – that is a tremendous response and I would like to place on record our appreciation of the role of teachers and head teachers – now have their own IT corners, although there is no IT laboratory as such. Private organisations have been coming to us - If the hon. Member puts a direct question, I will provide the figures – proposing to provide us with second-hand PCs. It is not just a question – I am sure the hon. gentleman will agree – of taking up the organisations on their offers without the required technical advice being made available by the Ministry of IT as to the possibility of adapting those PCs to our needs and their practical installation in schools. But, the process is on and I can confirm that as a fact.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Where are we with the project management or project management team? There was going to be an appointment very soon.

CA/D11/P08/3
(No. B/394) (contd)

Mr Obeegadoo: The tender for project management service is being evaluated at the very same time as the tender for hardware and software procurement. So, within a number of weeks, I expect that the tender will be awarded.

Mr Duval: May I ask the hon. Minister how he can reconcile the fact that we are here left with asking or waiting for second-hand computers in our schools, with the billions of rupees that have been spent on buildings in the cybercity? How are we going to arrive to a cyber island if this is the situation in our schools?

Mr Obeegadoo: Across the world, this is what is done. It is one way of involving local business, NGOs, community organisations in schools. The school IT project is an ideal project for the school to root itself within the community and for organisations operating in the vicinity of the schools to partake in the life of the school community. So, in the most developed countries of the world, it is standard practice for private sector organisations, firms working with schools, so that given the rapid replacement rate of computers in business organisations, the school community stands to benefit.

Dr. Beebeejaun: I would like to know whether there has been a problem of vandalism at schools regarding ICT equipment and the measures he is taking.

Mr Obeegadoo: There has been no reported case of vandalism concerning ICT equipment, but we are very alive to the importance of properly securing whatever ICT equipment will be placed in schools.

Dr. Boolell: Is the Minister aware of a case of vandalism that was reported to his Ministry in respect of an RCA school in Vieux Grand Port?

Mr Obeegadoo: Concerning ICT equipment, I am afraid I would not be aware.

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PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS - SOCIAL SCOURGES - CURRICULUM

(No. B/425) Mr A. K. Gungah (Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether the curriculum at both primary and secondary levels is geared to prepare the students to combat, and do away with, social scourges affecting our society.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I believe it important to guard against the simplistic tendency of regarding the school as the source of all problems or alternatively as the provider of solutions to all problems. In actual fact, a school is a reflection of society just as children at school reflect their parents.

Having said that, I agree that the school, as a social institution, has a crucial role to play in the process of socialisation and in the transmission of moral values to pupils as an integral part of their preparation to face life ahead.

In this respect, the curriculum renewal project implemented since March 2001 places a high premium of life skills through the introduction of new subjects like Citizenship Education and Health and Physical Education while, at the same time, upholding the core traditional subjects. Further, my Ministry will soon come up with an improved school management scheme, including the release of a School Management Manual, which will lay emphasis on discipline in order to make of our pupils responsible citizens of tomorrow.

Finally, there are non-governmental organisations like the Rotary Club and parastatal organisations like NATReSA which are collaborating with my Ministry to create a greater social awareness among pupils so that they may rise up to the challenge of citizenship in an ever more complex world.

Mr Dujoo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that in the meantime, those social scourges like drugs, prostitution, physical violence or violence against property are insidiously penetrating our schools. What he is doing about that in the meantime?

Mr Obeegadoo: Obviously, Mr Speaker, but there is nothing new to that. The fact that the schools do reflect social problems, that is a fact. It has always been the case, it is the case not only in Mauritius, but in all countries of the world and day by day, there are new challenges confronting us; and as I said we are working in different ways revising the curriculum, reinforcing discipline in schools, working with other agencies and NGOs outside to rise to the challenges.

Dr. Beebejaun: In his speech on the budget of 2002, the hon. Minister specifically mentioned the issue of manuals in Citizenship Education. In his last reply, about two weeks ago, he talked about trial material being issued to standards 5 and 6. What is the difference? Why this change?

Mr Obeegadoo: I cannot see how this question arises from the substantive question put.

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D37P07CO4

**CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION - EXAMINABLE SUBJECT
IN STANDARDS IV & V**

(No. B/661) **Dr. J. B. David (Fourth Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will say why Citizenship Education has not been included as an examinable subject this year at national level in Standards IV and V.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in the curriculum renewal in the Primary Sector document of March 2001, it was stated that Citizen Education would be introduced as a new subject in the primary schools in 2002 and would become examinable at Certificate of Primary (CPE) level as from 2003.

Accordingly, Citizenship Education was introduced on the basis of a trial material prepared for the upper primary in October 2001. In this respect it is worth pointing out that it is good pedagogical practice for new subjects to be first trialled and evaluated before becoming compulsory, as has been the case in the United Kingdom, France or Australia.

As soon as Citizenship Education was introduced, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research started receiving representations from different quarters, particularly from the teachers and the unions to the effect that the contents of the trial material required review and further improvement. The end result is that in some schools the subject has been taught, while in others the trial material has only been partly covered, if at all.

In the circumstances and after discussions with the unions of the Primary Education Sector employees, an incremental approach has been preferred and it has thus been agreed that Citizenship Education will not be formally examined for the Standard V end-of-year assessment this year but that instead, there will be an optional and flexible assessment on the basis of the topics of the trial material which teachers have covered so far.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, I have got two questions. The first one is that this trial material has been evaluated. Can the hon. Prime Minister submit to the House copy of the report of the evaluation?

D37P07CO5
PQ No. B/661 (contd)

The Prime Minister: The substantive Minister is not here. I am not aware whether there has been an assessment. If there has been, I shall discuss with the substantive Minister and if it is in order for it to be circulated, it would be circulated.

Dr. David: In fact, I can inform the House that there has been an evaluation.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, you said that there should be no statement.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David, your duty is to ask for information. If you already have information, you do not have to ask the question. Put your question, please.

Dr. David: The second question is: does not the hon. Prime Minister think that it is a state of confusion, that only a few weeks before the exams students of Standards IV and V have had their time-tables and then were informed that the Citizenship Education would not be an examinable subject at national level, that each school, this year, would go according to its own whims and caprices?

The Prime Minister: It is not a question of whims and caprices, Mr Speaker. There are two parts to the question which the hon. Member has put. I have already answered the second part. Being given the situation and after discussions - because my colleague dialogues a lot with the trade unions - it has been agreed, as I said, in the last part of my question, that there would be an optional and flexible assessment on the basis of the topics of the trial material which teachers have covered so far. So, I have covered that part.

D37P07CO6
PQ No. B/661 (contd)

As far as the other issue is concerned, that is another question. If a question is put, it will be fully answered; that is why the exams have not been announced earlier as was the case before. My colleague, the hon. Minister has given explanation to that. So, that is another question and he has said that he wanted to *dédramatiser* the whole issue as we rely less and less on tight exams. But that is another issue and the situation is perfectly under control. There has been no *cafouillage*. It was planned to be that way.

Dr. David: There has been no *cafouillage*! In fact, there has been, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Prime Minister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Again the hon. Member is making statements instead of putting questions.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David, what was the need for you to say that "there has been *cafouillage*". You have to put questions.

(Interruptions)

Are you going to discuss and argue at Question Time? Now, if the Minister says X and you are going to say Y, we will never finish. It will become a debate. It is not the time to argue. Let us see what the Standing Orders say. It says that the purpose of putting questions is to ask for information, which is within the knowledge of the Minister. That is all.

Dr. David: The hon. Prime Minister talks about dialogue and says that it is ongoing at the Ministry. Does he not think that this dialogue should have taken place right at the beginning of the academic year, instead of at the end, when examinations are nearing?

The Prime Minister: I have given the explanation as to what problems arose for upper primary. The trial material was circulated. I have explained that this caused negative reactions and Mauritius being Mauritius we took full account of those reactions and as a result we are now in the situation that has developed.

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P.Q. No. B/661 (cont'd)

Dr. Beebeejaun: Can I ask Prime Minister whether this trial material was submitted to teachers for comments on standard and quality before passing it to pupils?

The Prime Minister: There are questions about how the trial material was prepared later on. But, as I said, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Education, *est un homme de dialogue* and he is always discussing with the unions and, therefore, with the teachers through the unions, and all required consultations did take place.

Dr. Beebeejaun: I did point out to the Prime Minister ...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should put his question.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Beebeejaun: How am I going to put a question if ...

Mr Speaker: We will never finish.

Dr. Beebeejaun: How am I going to put a question if I do not pick up what has been said.

(Interruptions)

we accept the concept the dialogue. What we are asking is that a dialogue should have taken place before and not after events becoming such a mess. That is what we are asking.

The Prime Minister: It has taken place before, during and after.

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P.Q. No. B/661 (cont'd)

Dr. David: Can we know what instructions were the students given from January to recently as regards examinations and that subject to be made examinable at national level? What instructions did they have throughout?

The Prime Minister: The students are not given instructions, Mr Speaker, Sir. This subject was taught in different ways by different teachers, as I have explained. The Ministry gave instructions to the head teachers and to the teachers, but let us admit that this is trial. It is being introduced and, therefore, the examination part thereof is not taking place this year, as I have explained.

Dr. David: Can we know, therefore, what is the reason for this trial and error?

The Prime Minister: Better achievements for the Minister and the teachers and the students, Mr Speaker, Sir.

21/10/03 (91)

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

B/661 The Honourable Fourth Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West (Dr David)

To ask the Honourable Minister of Education and Scientific Research:-

Whether he will say why Citizenship Education has not been included as an examinable subject this year at national level in Standards IV and V?

DRAFT REPLY ON 21.10.03

Sir,

1. The House will recall that in the Curriculum Renewal in the Primary Sector document of March 2001, it was stated that Citizen Education would be introduced as a new subject in the primary schools in 2002 and would become examinable at Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) level as from 2003.
 2. Accordingly, Citizenship Education was introduced on the basis of a trial material prepared for the upper primary in October 2001. In this respect, it is worth pointing out that it is good pedagogical practice for new subjects to be
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first trialled and evaluated before becoming compulsory, as has been the case in the United Kingdom, France or Australia.

3. As soon as Citizenship Education was introduced, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research started receiving representations from different quarters, particularly from the teachers and the Unions to the effect that the contents of the trial material required review and further improvement. The end result is that in some schools the subject has been taught, while in others the trial material has only been partly covered, if at all.

4. In the circumstances and after discussions with the Unions of the Primary Education Sector Employees, an incremental approach has been preferred and it has thus been agreed that Citizenship Education will not be formally examined for the Standard V end-of-year assessment this year but that instead, there will be an optional and flexible assessment on the basis of the topics of the trial material which teachers have covered so far.

21/10/03 (10)

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

B/662 **The Honourable Fourth Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West (Dr David)**

To ask the Honourable Minister of Education and Scientific Research:-

Whether he will state why the Citizenship Education trial material has not included Maha Shivaratree and Divali as national festivities in module Our Multicultural Heritage?

REPLY

Sir,

When it was decided to introduce Citizenship Education as a new subject, a panel composed of Mr. Abdool Cader Kalla, Mr. Ramesh Ramdoyal and Mr. Lindley Couronne was assigned the task of preparing the pedagogical material for the teaching of that subject at the level of Standards IV, V and VI. It was subsequently decided to have a trial material for upper primary instead of textbooks proper. In the trial material produced, Maha Shivaratree and Divali as well as Assumption Day were indeed not included among the festivals dealt with in Part IV of the trial material, namely "Our Multicultural Heritage". The reasons for that omission are as follows:

- (i) As I have just indicated, it was initially planned to produce three separate textbooks for Standards IV, V and VI respectively;
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- (ii) the Maha Shivaratree, Assumption Day and Divali festivals were to be included in the Standard VI textbook;
- (iii) the Standard V textbook was the first one to be ready in October 2001 and it was eventually decided to convert it into a trial material for Standards IV, V and VI.

2. However, after negative reactions were recorded, a companion volume was immediately produced and three other festivals namely Maha Shivaratree, Divali and Assumption Day were included therein. The said companion volume has been circulated in all primary schools since April 2002.

21/10/03 (11)

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

B/663 The Honourable Fourth Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West (Dr David)

To ask the Honourable Minister of Education and Scientific Research:-

Whether Citizenship Education will be included as a subject at CPE level in 2004 and, if so, will he say (a) when will the manual therefore be ready and when will teachers get sufficient training and (b) when will teachers, students and responsible parties be definitely informed of the decision of the Ministry?

REPLY

Sir,

As proposed in the Curriculum Renewal in the Primary Sector document of March 2001, Citizenship Education will be examinable as a subject at Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) level in 2004 on the basis of a one year syllabus, the practical modalities of which are being worked out and will be made known to all parties concerned before the end of the year. This has been discussed with the Unions and their proposal to take on board the teacher's perspective has been agreed to.

2. As regards the question as to when the manual will be ready, it is to be noted that the trial material for upper primary is already available to all pupils and teachers concerned. Additional pedagogical material will be worked out for 2004 with the involvement of teachers, as suggested by the Unions. For January 2005, arrangements will be made to provide new textbooks.

FROM :

PHONE NO. :

21/10/03
OCT. 21 2003 11:58AM P1

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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

B/664 The Honourable Fourth Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West (Dr David)

To ask the Honourable Minister of Education and Scientific Research:-

Whether, in regard to the publication of the Citizenship Education manual, he will inform the House of the amount disbursed so far to prepare (a) the trial material and (b) the pre-press work?

DRAFT REPLY on 21 October 2003

Sir,

On the assumption that the question relates solely to the preparation of the trial material for upper primary prepared in January 2002, the reply is as follows:-

- (a) an amount of Rs 1,889,086.00 has been disbursed as allowances to six resource persons for the preparation of the pedagogical contents of the trial material;
 - (b) the cost of printing of the trial material inclusive of the pre-press works amounted to Rs 5,040,000.00
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SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) - PHYSICAL EDUCATION

19/8/2003

(No. B/610) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether his Ministry has established a plan regarding the teaching of Physical Education in primary schools and, if so, will he make a statement thereon.

Mr Obegadoo: Yes Sir, a plan exists and was made public in the form of the Curriculum Renewal Project for the primary sector which was announced by Government in March 2001. That document which aimed at a broadening of the school curriculum, to equip pupils with essential life skills, provided for the replacement of Movement Education "ME" by Health & Physical Education "HPE" as a subject of study.

Health & Physical Education is meant to help students develop a lifelong commitment to a healthy and active style of living by educating them to fully develop their physical potential. As from January 2002, the new subject has been gradually introduced in Standards I and IV. It was extended to Standards II and V this year and should be taught at all levels of primary schooling next year.

As regards the teaching of Health & Physical Education, all the primary sector teaching staff; by virtue of their training at the Mauritius Institute of Education, hold the required competencies. In addition, briefing sessions are organised having regard to the new Health component. In keeping with international best practice, the teaching of Health & Physical Education has been entrusted to class teachers whereas PE instructors do provide assistance in a number of schools.

D33/IF/P06/3

In order to ensure that all primary school children are afforded the relevant opportunities, a survey of existing sports and more generally playground facilities in all primary schools is under way and should provide essential data for the necessary steps to be taken. In addition, sports kits are being provided to all primary schools.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me one supplementary. I would like to ask the hon. Minister how will he achieve all this. I am just confining myself to zone 3 which includes my constituency where only a sum of Rs305,000 has been voted directly under the item Physical Education, for 71 institutions in that zone. How is he going to achieve this physical education scheme?

Mr Obegadoo: Sir, I am not certain to which vote item the hon. Member is referring to. Let me repeat what I have said. There is a new subject of study which has been introduced, teachers have been trained, briefing sessions are being offered and the new subject is being taught throughout the primary cycle, that is, for next year it will be throughout the primary cycle. That concerns the curriculum and the teaching. As regards infrastructure, a survey is under way. We are working towards the establishment of norms and standards. Just as we have specific areas of so and so square feet inside a classroom per pupil, our objective is to establish norms and standards for playground and sports facilities which will allow us to identify those few primary schools which should not have sufficient space for arrangements to be made, for instance, with local authorities so that sports facilities in the vicinity can be placed at the disposal of school children. Sports kits are as a matter of course provided to primary schools, this is an ongoing process. At any point in time one or two primary schools may be deprived of sports kits and as I said this is an ongoing process and we are reassuring that all schools do have the necessary facilities.

Mr Paya: Will the Minister say whether his Ministry has worked with the Ministry of Youth and Sports concerning technical support for all the infrastructure in primary schools?

Mr Obegadoo: We are in contact with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and some sports federations, for instance, tennis have been working with us to provide the required assistance.

D33/IF/P06/4

Mr Chumroo: I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether we have any regular time-table at the primary schools for sports.

Mr Obeegadoo: Yes, certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are P.E. slots within the time-table, but then, the perception is that, unfortunately the subject has not elicited the response we would have expected both from teachers and parents, because it is not an examinable subject.

mr/d08w03.02

LITERACY AND NUMERACY PROGRAMME

(No. B/344) **Mrs F. Labelle (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the literacy and numeracy programme, he will state -

- (a) whether particular materials have been produced, and whether the programme is being implemented in all primary schools and,
- (b) if so, at what time of the day do teachers work on this programme.

Reply: A complete set of guidelines for teachers of Standard I to Standard VI have been prepared on the basis of feedback obtained from teachers and have been made available to all the schools as from the beginning of this academic year;

As far as I am aware, the programme is being implemented in all the primary schools as from July 2003 and instructions were given to all heads of schools to ensure implementation. In this respect, they have been provided with a standard time table making allowance for a weekly slot of 75 minutes for literacy and 50 minutes for numeracy and which they are at liberty to modify to suit the convenience of their schools depending on the number of streams it has as long as the time slots are respected. Consequently, the time of the day which teachers work on the national numeracy and literacy strategy differ from school to school.

D08W04CO1

SCHOOLS - ACCESS TO INTERNET

(No. B/352) **Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the access to Internet to schools for the financial year ending 30 June 2003, he will -

- (a) state if 96 per cent of the sum budgeted therefor remained unspent and, if so, the reasons therefor, and
- (b) table a list of schools connected to the Internet.

Reply: It is presumed that the question relates to State secondary educational institutions run by my Ministry in as much as it is not our policy to provide internet access to primary schools at this stage.

A provision of Rs2 m. was made under item "Access to Internet to Schools" of the Capital Budget for financial year 2002/2003. Out of this amount, Rs79,500 were spent as at 30 June 2003. This item was meant for the purchase of IT equipment and relevant software to enable access to Internet by students of State Secondary Schools. However, since there was another item under the Capital Vote of my Ministry for purchase of equipment and furniture for secondary schools with a voted provision of Rs48m., it was considered more appropriate for the bulk purchase of IT equipment and the software to be effected from that item. An amount of Rs8.6m. was thus spent on IT equipment and the software for schools for the financial year ended 30 June 2003.

Consequently, for the financial year 2003/2004, only a token provision of Rs10 was made under the item "Access to Internet to Schools."

With regard to part (b) of the question, 34 State secondary educational institutions are connected to the Internet. The list of schools is being placed in the Library. As and when new school buildings are being completed and computer facilities provided Internet access is being supplied.

18 May, 2004

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ICT SCHOOL PROJECT

(No. B/433) **Dr. B. Hookoom (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, regarding the ICT school project in primary schools, he will -

- (a) give the present number of IT laboratories built and fully equipped with hardware and software;
- (b) say whether children have access to PCs for training;
- (c) state whether ICT teachers are, due to the absence of pupils or of equipped laboratories, being asked to perform simple administrative tasks, and
- (d) reassure the House about the future of the ICT project and of ICT teachers on a 4-year contract basis since 2 years and say if their competencies are being under utilised and, if so, why.

Mr Obegadoo: Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ Nos. B/433 and B/434, relating to the same subject matter, at the same time.

Prior to September 2000, no mention was ever made of introduction of ITC in primary schools, neither was there any indication of any effort to move in such a direction at the Ministry of Education.

It was in January 2001 that the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications came up with the School Information Technology Project (SITP) the objective of which was to impart ICT skills to pupils at the earliest possible stage. The proposal coincided with my Ministry's own Primary Curriculum Renewal Project, which also advocated the use of ICT to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process.

The SITP, as it has been conceived as from January 2001, is an innovative and ambitious project, which is unprecedented in Africa, the known precedents in the rest of the developing world being few and far between.

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Delays inevitably occur in projects of such magnitude. On the one hand, as explained many a time in this Assembly, the acute shortage of professionals at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure did delay, in initial stages, preparatory work for the provision of ICT Labs in primary schools despite the dedication and commitment of available professions. On the other hand, as regards the procurement of hardware and software, the preparation of tender documents, the release of Request For Proposals (RFP), itself preceded by a Request for Information (RFI) and the evaluation of bids, which involved the World Bank and external experts took considerable time. In the meantime, there has been an escalation of projected costs and in view of budgetary constraints as well as the advisability of trialling the teaching of ICT in schools, Government has now decided to opt for a phased implementation approach targeting the coming into operation of 50 ICT laboratories each year over the next six fiscal years.

As regards the specific issues raised in the two questions, the reply is as follows -

- (a) obviously, no IT laboratory has been built and is fully equipped so far, but 81 spare rooms in primary schools have been earmarked for conversion into IT laboratories;
 - (b) pupils do have access to PCs for first level computer awareness. In fact, all schools have been encouraged to be imaginative and to set up an IT corner with a minimum of 5 PCs, but already all primary schools have, at least, one PC provided by the Ministry for pedagogical use. Further, through the collaborative arrangements, which the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* projects allow, the Mauritius Employers Federation has pledged to donate around 100 PCs out of which 47 are already in use in the ZEP schools. In addition, quite a few Parents/Teachers Associations, in collaboration with local firms, have played an important part in assisting schools with ICT facilities;
 - (c) ICT Teachers are members of the school personnel and during their free period, they may be called upon to replace absent General Purpose Teachers. Further, they are also expected to collaborate with other colleagues, for example, for the preparation of internal assessment question papers and other school based documents;
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- (d) as regards the objectives of the introduction of ICT in primary school as highlighted on my Ministry's website we cannot be blind to the fact that it was premised on the implementation of the SITP, which has been delayed for reasons already enunciated;
- (e) concerning ICT teachers, it is a fact that they have on a few occasions made representations as to the absence of full scale facilities for the teaching of ICT, but briefing sessions with the teachers have been carried out whereat they were made aware of the constraints and ongoing efforts and the teachers, I must say, are doing a wonderful job, considering the limited facilities available;
- (f) concerning the future of the ICT Teachers, the objective was initially to introduce ICT as a subject in itself before integrating it across the curriculum. Consequently the services of ICT Teachers were required and still are required for the teaching of ICT whereas General Purpose Teachers are also being gradually trained in the use of ICT across the curriculum. ICT Teachers, it must be recalled, are free to apply for employment as General Purpose Teachers on the permanent and pensionable establishment of my Ministry;
- (g) an amount of approximately Rs40m have been paid out under the contracts of employment of ICT teachers. When I say so far, I mean up to 30 April 2004. I am accordingly tabling a copy of the conditions of employment of the ICT teachers.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister tell us of the number of primary schools which are currently connected to the internet?

Mr Obeegadoo: If that question is asked as a substantive question, I shall certainly provide the answer, Sir.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, can I remind the Minister that on the 17 April 2001, he mentioned that he would leave no stone unturned with regard to ICT to ensure that the project is realised and now he has spent Rs40m and there is no ICT. Is it not a case that this Government as usual is all talk and no action?

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Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, that is precisely what we have done to leave no stone unturned. It is no matter of coincidence that the two hon. gentlemen who have put the question are relatively newcomers to this House, otherwise they would have known that prior to September 2000, there was no talk at all in this House of school IT project, of ICT teaching.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Obeegadoo: We have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, accumulated a delay of 20 years or more in comparison to countries like Singapore which was much faster to realise and capitalise upon the gains from ICT in the teaching and learning process. Yes, this Government is ambitious, ambitious not only in words and the proof is that we have hundreds of ICT teachers in schools. The Government, as I said in my answer, has already had installed in each primary school, at least, one or two PCs for use and right now, we are forging ahead with a revisited project more realistic, more affordable and safer because, as I said, it will allow for the trialling of ICT in teaching. So, we can correct and improve as we go along. We are forging ahead and I repeat we will leave no stone unturned to ensure that ICTs are used in education.

PRIMARY SECTOR - ICT TEACHING

18 May 04

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(No. B/434) Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, regarding the teaching of ICT subject at primary level since 2001, he will -

- (a) state the extent to which the objectives of its introduction have been met, particularly those highlighted on the website of his Ministry, and
- (b) say if he is aware of representations from ICT teachers on their extremely difficult working conditions due to the quasi unavailability of computers and, if so, will he give full details thereof, and
- (c) state the conditions of service of ICT teachers and the salaries paid up to 30 April 2004.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/433) — (f16)

(18) 25/5/04

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**PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS - MANDARIN
LANGUAGE - TEACHING**

(No. B/456) Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he has received or been made aware of representations regarding the teaching of Mandarin in Government primary and secondary schools and, if so, will he arrange for that language to be adequately taught in those schools.

Mr Obeegadoo: Yes, Sir, some representations were received at my Ministry last year regarding the teaching of Mandarin at the level of primary schools and such representations related essentially to teaching staff.

It is to be kept in mind that until the year 2000, Mandarin was little taught and studied in schools. According to information provided to me, for instance, in the year 2000 at primary level, I am advised that Mandarin was only taught in 11 schools by 10 teachers. As a result of this Government's policy to impart to all oriental languages, including Mandarin, the same status as other languages, there has been a dramatic increase in terms of interest expressed for that language so much so that this year I am advised that Mandarin is being taught in 29 State primary and 21 Roman Catholic Education Authority schools by some 29 teachers.

As regards the staffing situation for the year 2003, I am informed that 25 teachers were required and 10 were employed on the permanent establishment of my Ministry, two Mauritians and 13 Malaysians as contractual teachers. Three of the Malaysian teachers left in the course of the year.

For 2004, I am advised that 33 teachers were required and eight remained on a permanent basis whereas eight locals and 17 Malaysians were contractually employed. The departure of four of the contractual employees since the beginning of the year has admittedly caused certain difficulties which are being addressed through optimal utilisation of available staff and the ongoing recruitment of contractual teachers from the People's Republic

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P.Q. No. B/456 (Cont'd)

of China. The latter should be in post in the coming weeks. It is to be pointed out that in the last few years, the Public Service Commission has been unable to recruit any Mandarin trainee teachers.

At secondary level, having regard to State Secondary Schools, excluding the educational establishments which are attached to the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, I am advised that six Mandarin teachers would ideally be required whereas only two are presently in post. My Ministry has just been informed by the Public Service Commission of the unavailability of locals to be employed contractually. Recourse will accordingly be had to expatriates as and when necessary while contingency arrangements will be made to avoid inconvenience to students as far as possible.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the democratisation of education, as enshrined in the educational reforms programme, has presented my Ministry with many new challenges such as in the case of the teaching of Mandarin. On the basis of information provided to me and despite the inadequacy of human resource planning at my Ministry prior to 2001, I believe that today Mandarin is by and large adequately taught in all State schools and the situation will continue to improve in the future.

(19)
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CA/D25/P09/2

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS - PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

(No. B/613) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the teaching of physical education in primary and secondary schools, he will state if his Ministry has worked out a new programme thereon and, if so, will he table a copy of same.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the document 'Reform in Education – Curriculum Renewal in the Primary Sector' of March 2001 announced that in line with the need to make the child motivated, alert and successful in school, the education system should ensure his physical well-being.

With this in view, new curriculum guidelines have been prepared for Standards I to VI. May I recall that up until the year 2000, Physical Education was taught for Standards IV to VI and Movement Education in Standards I to III. The reforms have brought about a new programme of instructional materials, including both the physical education and the health component.

The Physical Education programme is activity-based and is geared towards development of skills through participation in minor games, whereas the health component comprises themes such as learning about -

- Sources of food
- Safety of parts of the body
- Lifestyles
- The body system
- Growth and development
- Physical changes and puberty
- Measures to avoid accidental poisoning in and around the home
- First-aid measures in cases of choking, bleeding, fainting, blisters etc
- Prevention of non-communicable diseases and transmissible diseases, like HIV-AIDS.

It is to be noted that the MIE also imparts training to the trainee teachers during their Teacher's Primary Course, to enable them to teach the subject.

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CA/D25/P09/3 (No. B/613) (Contd)

At secondary level, since 2001, Physical Education at lower secondary level has been given a new boost. The sports/PE activities have been divided into four major core activities – team activities, individual activities, opposition activities and aquatics.

In order to promote the importance of sports and PE, an evaluation scheme has been devised and is implemented at lower secondary level. The areas assessed are acquisition and improvement of skills, acquisition of knowledge, attitude and performance. Marks obtained in sports/PE are computed within the overall performance assessment of the learner.

Workshops have been carried out with teachers of the lower secondary level to make them familiar with the instructional materials distributed to schools. Teachers have also been inducted into the techniques of evaluation.

The new programme for Health and Physical Education is available in all schools.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state whether all primary schools have a physical education instructor?

Mr Obeegadoo: No, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the budget allocation, which is nearly around Rs300,000 in the specific zones, can the hon. Minister state to the House whether he will be able to enforce the physical education programme in the different zones?

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the issue of physical education instructors is a very old story, which has been debated here in the House on several occasions. Let me remind the hon. gentleman that the previous Government instituted a training course for teachers to become P.E. instructors. However, there was no planning in advance as to what use would be made of the P.E. instructors. So, we ended up with some 40 or 50 P.E. instructors for 280 primary schools. How would they be posted, what would be their precise role, what would happen in schools without P.E. instructors, was not thought through. P.E. instructors were given the same status as Deputy Head Teachers, which was resented by teachers in general. Our policy now is not to have P.E. instructors per se, inasmuch as all teachers are trained by the MIE to conduct physical education classes as well. That is the policy for the time being and for the foreseeable future. As regards equipment, we are, of course, doing our utmost to ensure that funds available are optimally utilised for all schools to be properly equipped.

24/8/04

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(20)

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DR/D28/P15/02

**SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) - ICT TEACHERS - MANUAL/TEACHERS
GUIDE**

(No. B/731) Mrs F. Labelle (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether in regard to primary school teachers of ICT, he will inform the House if they have been provided with a manual/teachers guide for the teaching of ICT and, if so, when and, if not, whether such guide is under preparation.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, ICT teachers in primary schools have not been provided with a manual/teachers guide for two reasons -

- (i) Firstly, ICT as a subject does not lend itself to the same pedagogical approach as traditional subjects. ICT teachers have in fact been provided with what is termed "a portfolio of activities", in other words, a file of worksheets and suggested activities which the teachers have been trained to supplement as may be called for in particular classes or for particular age groups;
 - (ii) Secondly, ICT is not as yet taught in a practical manner in all primary schools inasmuch as ICT laboratories do not exist in the majority of primary schools. The appropriate pedagogical materials for the teachers and students will be developed in parallel with the expansion of the teaching of ICT in schools.
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(21)

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MAURITIAN KREOL LANGUAGE - STUDY

(No. B/743) Mr J. C. Armance (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether he will state -

- (a) if a study has been undertaken on the use of the Mauritian Kreol language as a medium and a subject for the CPE examinations and, if so,
- (b) (i) which institution is carrying out the study;
(ii) whether the study has been completed or the likely date of its completion.

The Minister of Industry, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs (Mr K. Khushiram): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like, with your permission, to reply to this question. Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research has embarked on several initiatives concerning the eventual use of Mauritian Kreol language as a medium for teaching in schools.

Firstly, the pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Mauritius, Professor V. Hookoomsingh has been entrusted the task of proposing a standardised form of written Kreol which is an essential first step for use of the language in a systematic manner in education. This task is obviously a complex and sensitive one. Nonetheless, I am given to understand that considerable progress has been made and a report should be ready in September

Secondly, Mr Rada Tirvassen of the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), is at the request of the Ministry, working on a pedagogical project for the use of Mauritian Kreol in education considering various possible strategies so as to advise as to the best way forward. There again, I understand a report is to be submitted in the coming weeks.

Accordingly, the issue of Mauritian Kreol as a subject for the CPE examinations is, at this stage, premature as the basic work referred to earlier remains to be undertaken.

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(PQ No. B/743 ctd.....)

Mr Paya: Est-ce que les experts ont eu une session de travail avec les Seychellois où la langue créole est le médium le plus prisé?

Mr Khushiram: Je ne suis pas au courant du travail qui a été fait mais je présume que les experts concernés ont dû prendre en ligne de compte ce qui a été accompli aux Seychelles.

26/10/04
60 (22)

D33P11CO1

CREOLE LANGUAGE - PRIMARY LEVEL - TEACHING

(No. B/784) Mr J.C. Armance (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, following the report on a harmonised writing system for the Mauritian Creole language Grafi Larmoni, he will state whether his Ministry

- (a) envisages to start teaching the Creole language at primary level and,
- (b) intends to start teaching Creole with a view to making it a subject at the primary level.

The Minister of Training, Skills Development, Productivity and External Communications (Mr S. Fowdar): With your permission, Sir, I will reply to this PQ.

I am proud that the Government of which I am a Member will go down in history as the one which has recognised in an official manner the importance of Mauritian Creole by commissioning the preparation of a standardised written form for what is the mother tongue of the vast majority of Mauritians.

Further to the submission of Professor Hookoomsing's Report on Grafi Larmoni, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research is in the process of appointing a Technical Committee, as suggested by the Report itself, to address the remaining problem areas. A copy of the Report has been placed in the Library. The proposed Grafi Larmoni at long last offers the possibility of a systematic and a planned recourse to Mauritian Creole in the schooling process as may be pedagogically required. It is at this stage envisaged to launch pilot projects for the use of Mauritian Creole as teaching medium as from next year, on the basis of ongoing preparation work, part financed by UNESCO.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to repeat the three fundamental principles that guide us -

D33P11CO2
PQ No. B/784 (contd)

- (i) We should not be motivated by ideological or any reasons other than pedagogical in proposing recourse to mother tongue in the education of our children. The pedagogical objective remains the facilitation of the teaching and the learning process.
- (ii) Use of Mauritian Creole should and can never be imposed but all efforts must be made to elicit parental support and teacher adherence, and
- (iii) We are in the process of accomplishing a major and historical step forward. We should continue advancing in a resolute manner while taking the necessary time and exercising the required caution so as to create conditions for wide consensus on this project.

Accordingly, it is felt that experimentation of the use of Mauritian Creole as medium of instruction is a necessary first step before going on to the teaching of the language as a subject in itself in future.

YEAR 2005

CREOLE LANGUAGE - TEACHING MEDIUM - PILOT SCHEME (01/03/05)

(No. B/164) Mr S. Michel (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether, in regard to the 'kreol' language, he will state -

- (a) if a pilot scheme to introduce 'kreol' as a medium of teaching has been initiated at the beginning of this year;
- (b) the content and duration of the scheme, and
- (c) the schools, if any, where the scheme is being implemented.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member will recall that on 26 October 2004 in reply to a Parliamentary Question, I mentioned that it was envisaged to launch a pilot project for the use of Mauritian Creole as teaching medium in the early years of primary school, as from this year sponsored by UNESCO. In this connexion, a project document has been proposed by the Project Manager which defines a road map for the use of Mauritian Creole as a medium in the teaching and learning process at lower primary level. Further, three major activities to implement the pilot project are, I am told, presently being carried out -

- (i) training programmes for primary school teachers and facilitators;
- (ii) an information campaign to sensitise parents and key stakeholders on the pilot project, and
- (iii) the preparation of paedagogical material for teachers concerned.

I am further informed that these activities would be completed by the end of the first term of schooling this year.

Parental agreement and teachers commitment are being sought for the successful implementation of the pilot project. According to information obtained, a series of meetings have been held with all stakeholders, that is, parents, headteachers, teachers, NGO representatives with a view to building a shared understanding of this pilot project and to obtaining their collaboration and support.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the project has three key functions establishing a link between the school and the home environment, "*libérer la parole de l'enfant*", and then reconciling the child with the school environment.

The content of the pedagogical programme addresses the following –

- (i) sensitisation of teachers on the effectiveness of using the

mother tongue in the learning process of children;
(ii) the development of a methodology and activities for oral transmission in Mauritian creole, and
(iii) the use of Mauritian creole as a pedagogical support in the teaching of Mathematics.

The pilot project will last for a period of 11 months.

As regards part (c) of the question, two schools have been identified for the implementation of the pilot scheme, one of which is in Rodrigues. Consultations are presently being held with parents for the successful implementation of the project in those two schools.

SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) – CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (13/09/05)

(No. 1 B/282) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if the subject of Citizenship Education is being taught in primary school and, if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: I am informed that the Curriculum Renewal Project in the primary sector which was effective since March 2001 provided for Citizenship Education to be introduced in an incremental manner in the primary schools over the period 2001–2005. Citizenship Education was thus introduced in the primary schools in the third term of the year 2001, on a trial basis for upper primary classes.

The objectives of Citizenship Education are to inculcate in our children knowledge of the social and natural environment, and learning to live together harmoniously as active members in a multicultural society; and to create a sense of awareness among the children of their rights, duties, safe and healthy living principles, of democracy, peace, co-existence and gender equality.

When it was decided to introduce the subject in schools, a panel prepared the textbook for the teaching of that subject in standards IV, V and VI. However, upon introduction of the subject, it was found that the instructional materials in the textbook were too difficult for the pupils. Subsequently, in 2002, following representations from different quarters, particularly from the teachers and the unions, the materials were reviewed and it was decided to have a combined textbook (for standards IV to VI), as a trial material, for upper primary schools.

Citizenship Education was meant to be taught by general purpose teachers has, in fact, been neglected by schools. Teachers were not imparted the appropriate training that would have enabled them to effectively teach the subject.

Statistics reveal that some 10% of primary schools actually teach the subject. The periods meant for conducting Citizenship Education are rather spent for the teaching of other examinable subjects. The fate of Citizenship Education shows again a disparity between intention and reality.

My Ministry is, therefore, proposing, in the context of curriculum reforms, to adopt a cross curricular approach to the teaching of Citizenship Education. Standards I, II and III are crucial periods for the child to develop cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills, and during those stages they will be exposed to Civic Values. As for standards IV, V and VI, the themes for Citizenship Education will be integrated into the curriculum in language teaching, Environmental Studies and Science.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, would the Minister inform the House of the amount spent on this project?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, this was an important project and money was made available to the tune of some Rs2 m. But when I examined the way the project has been handled, and it has not been implemented successfully, it tantamounts to a waste of public funds.

Mr Dayal: Is the hon. Minister aware that the textbooks proposed were much disputed, controversial and not secular? Does he consider it to be a judicious use of public funds?

Mr Gokhool: As indicated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the material was too difficult for the pupils of Standard IV, V and VI and that is one of the reasons why the project has been abandoned. Only 10% of the schools are teaching Citizenship Education. This is why I say it tantamounts to a wastage of public funds.

ICT TEACHERS – NEW SYLLABUS

(No. B/69) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if ICT teachers in primary schools have been provided with a new syllabus and, if so, since when.

Reply: ICT was introduced in January 2003 in primary schools. For the effective implementation of the project, a number of 263 ICT teachers were recruited in four batches as from April to July 2002 on a four-year contract basis. The ICT teachers had to undergo a training course leading to the “Certificate of Proficiency in ICT Education” run by the MIE, before being posted in primary schools in January 2003 for the teaching of ICT.

Since 2003, the ICT teachers have been using the syllabus worked out by the Ministry as teaching materials. However, last year, a new syllabus has been worked out and completed for upper primary, that is, Standards IV, V and VI. The new syllabus has been made available for use by ICT teachers in all schools as from January 2006.

As for lower primary classes, ICT teachers are still having recourse to the syllabus prepared by the Ministry. In the new curriculum renewal, it is proposed to integrate ICT in all the subjects at lower primary level.

YEAR 2006**PRIMARY SUBJECT ROADMAP PLAN – INTRODUCTION (04/04/06)**

(No. B/113) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, he will state if his Ministry has prepared a “Primary Subject Roadmap Plan” and, if so, will he state whether the matter has been discussed with all stakeholders.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, in the context of education reforms and World Class Quality Education, the Ministry of Education & Human Resources has come up with a series of measures for implementation at school levels.

One such measure is the introduction of a “Primary Subject Roadmap (Workplan)” which should be filled in by the teachers with a copy handed over to every pupil.

The objective of the roadmap is to enable the students to know well in advance the topics/chapters that the teachers propose to cover during and in the coming week thus enabling effective teaching and learning.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that before coming up with such a measure, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Education & Human Resources, has, on different occasions and at different instances, kept stakeholders informed of his intention thereon. Moreover, in the quality initiatives for World Class Quality Education 2006 which was launched at the beginning of the School Academic Year and which has been circulated to all stakeholders, it is clearly mentioned that the weekly plan of work of teachers will be formalised and students will be provided with subject roadmap at the beginning of each term. Parents will, therefore, be informed of the weekly plan of work of the teachers and how their children are progressing. The Ministry believes that this is a good practice which is internationally accepted.

So far the Ministry has not received any official complaint on the implementation of the roadmap.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister whether there was a deadline for the filling of that roadmap?

Dr. David: I see from a letter dated 07 March, addressed to Directors of all zones in which it is mentioned that the roadmap should be sent to Head Teachers and Rectors. Anyway, teachers have been informed about it.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister, therefore, how many teachers have, up to now, done so?

Dr. David: I won't be able to know, Mr Speaker, Sir. The main question concerns the preparation of a Primary School roadmap. I don't have the information as to whether the matter has been discussed

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, because this question has not been answered, can I know from the Minister whether there have been discussions with the unions before preparing the roadmap?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not quite sure whether there have been direct discussions with the unions, but from the information I have, it has been aired sufficiently. Information notes to that effect have been widely

circulated. I read from the World Class Quality Education brochure –

“The weekly plan of work of teachers will be formalised and students will be provided with subject roadmaps at the beginning of each term.”

This brochure has been circulated by hundreds, if not by thousands, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: I understand that there have been no direct discussions as the Minister is saying. Therefore, is the Minister aware that the teachers already prepare their daily notes, their scheme of works, their weekly plan of work and their term-wise plan. Therefore, why should there be a duplication?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, weekly notes or termwise notes are in fact prepared. These are submitted to the head teacher. Now the Ministry wants parents to be involved and this is a good thing. Parents should know what their wards will cover during week 1, week 2, week 3 and so on. As I said, there has been no official contest submitted at the Ministry's level.

Mr Guinness: Since there has been no direct discussion, can I ask whether the substantive Minister will be prepared to meet the unions to discuss the matter?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the Ministry has received no official contest from the unions; no letter, nothing has been submitted by the union.

HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES – AWARENESS BY STUDENTS (04/04/06)

(No. B/129) Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if the school curricula will be amended with a view to increasing the awareness of human rights principles by students.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, citizenship education was supposed to become an integral part of the primary school curriculum as from 2001, and for that purpose a sum of more than Rs3 m. has been spent to produce a textbook, which was subsequently found to be inadequate and inappropriate for use at primary level. While on the one hand the textbook was overloaded with technical details, basic issues

like national festivals were mishandled and some national festivals were omitted in the textbook, thereby causing serious prejudice to national harmony in the country. As a matter of fact, the textbook, which was badly conceived, was rejected by the teachers, and as a consequence, citizenship education is not being taught in our schools.

As regards the secondary sector, the teaching of citizenship education and human rights is done in an informal manner, cutting across subjects.

As a remedial step, consideration will be given to the possibility of integrating citizenship education and human rights education into the main domains of learning as a cross cutting theme. Pedagogical activities aiming at raising awareness of children will also be organised.

Further, the Ministry has already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Committee of the Red Cross in November 2005 for the training of our teachers on humanitarian law. The Ministry will integrate the teaching of humanitarian law into the secondary curriculum.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether it is envisaged that human rights becomes an examinable subject?

Dr. David: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, it may not become an examinable subject, but it will form part basically in most of the subjects taught at school. For example, in an English or French class, human rights could be taught from appropriate passages. This may be the case for other subjects where it is possible to have it as a component.

Dr. Mungur: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two ways of including the human rights education in the curriculum. First, we can institute a separate subject dedicated to human rights education and second, we can integrate human rights in all the subjects like geography, history and biology. Can the Minister state, at this point in time, what are the future options of his Ministry regarding increasing the awareness of human rights principles by students?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has just mentioned two possibilities. I believe that they are not mutually exclusive. Both can be included in the school curriculum. I consider human rights to be a very important component at school level. This is the place where students may learn about their rights and responsibilities. Every opportunity, apart from the classroom where this can be inculcated, would certainly do good to

democracy.

SCHOOLS - SEXUAL EDUCATION, HIV/AIDS, ETC (04/04/06)

(No. B/137) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether it is proposed to introduce a structured and comprehensive school based curriculum having a culturally sensitive, age-appropriate, accurate and a non-judgmental education about sexuality as well as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Reply: I wish to thank the hon. Member for his question and to inform him that in Mauritius curriculum development is undertaken on a national basis and therefore the concept of a school based curriculum which allows each school to elaborate its own teaching and learning experiences does not yet exist.

That being said, there is certainly need to revisit the whole question of exposure of our young students to sex education as well as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases which are, understandably, sensitive issues but have remained for too long so controversial that they have been conveniently ignored. The existing primary and lower secondary curricula do provide for the limited coverage of some specific topics related to elementary sex education. For example at the primary level, pupils are exposed to the body system, growth and development, puberty and basic HIV/AIDS issues through the subject of Health and Physical Education as from standard V. At the secondary level, students are exposed, through Integrated Science, to changes occurring at puberty, family planning, birth control and sexually transmitted diseases.

In addition organisations like the Mauritius Family Planning Association and *Action Familiale* carry out periodically briefing sessions in the secondary schools for the benefit of both teacher and student while the Health and Anti Drug Unit of the Ministry organises talk, activities and other co-curricular activities in collaboration with the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life and Non –Governmental Organisations. A case in point is the recent talk held on 16 March 2006 by this Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life.

Admittedly this is not enough and the next step will be for my Ministry in the weeks to come to identify collaborators having experience in exposure of students to sex education and to develop a strategy and a structured approach to sex education in our schools.

**PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SEX EDUCATION -
INTRODUCTION (18/04/06)**

(No. B/298) Mr V. Mardemootoo (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will consider the advisability of introducing sex education in both primary and secondary schools.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, sex education is a very sensitive and controversial issue, and there is no standard approach to the teaching of the subject worldwide. Each country should develop its own standards to address its own cultural specificities.

The existing primary and lower secondary curricula do provide for limited coverage of some specific topics related to elementary sex education. For instance, at the primary level, pupils are exposed to the body system and lifestyle, growth, development, puberty and other basic issues through the subject of the Health & Physical Education as from Standard V. At the secondary level, students are exposed to basic sex education in the Integrated Science. In addition, organisations like the Mauritius Family Planning Association and *Action Familiale* carry out periodic briefing sessions in secondary schools for both the benefit of teachers and pupils, while the Health & Anti Drug Unit of my Ministry, the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life and other NGOs do organise talks and other co-curricular activities in this respect.

/...

I strongly believe that sex education must become a life skill that empowers the child not only to know about the functions of his or her body at different stages of evolution, sexual reproduction and diseases but should also include and be surrounded by a whole set of healthy attitude and moral values. Sex education should help the learner to become responsible for his or her body and enabled him/her to take wise action and wise responsible choices. In fact, UNESCO treats sex education as a life skill and in countries where it has been introduced in school curriculum; it is being given the same treatment.

As part of its Quality Initiatives for 2006, my Ministry has already introduced the School Health Project at secondary schools. This project will initiate secondary schools students in becoming responsible for their health and in reinforcing positive behaviours. In this connection school health clubs are being set up with the objectives of motivating students to value good health, encouraging positive peer to peer influence, strengthen

collaboration among students, develop life skills and promotion of health and prevention of addictive behaviours. In this context, on Monday 17 July, a residential training project has been launched for school health clubs of 70 colleges.

My Ministry will continue in this process and will develop an integrated consensual value based strategy for health education and sex education will be dealt with as part of the curricula at both primary and secondary levels. Finally, I would like to refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ No. B/137.

Mr Mardemootoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I get the impression that the Minister is beating about the bush. My question is whether he will consider to introduce sexual education, especially with the fast evolution of our youngsters...

(Interruptions)

...because I believe that the introduction of this education ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Mardemootoo: ...will send a preventive and positive signal. I just want to know whether the answer is yes or no.

Mr Gokhool: The issue is quite complex as I said.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, we should not deal with it in an isolated manner. As per the UNESCO guidelines, it will be integrated. The answer is yes, it will be integrated in the Health Education Programme.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the Minister whether he has taken cognizance of proposals for sexual education submitted to his Ministry by a group called EVA, *Eveil à la Vie*, as a whole, not piecemeal?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated this matter is being looked into by my Ministry and a proper proposal with regard to health education which will integrate sex education will be put forward by the Ministry.

YOUNGSTERS – CIVIC EDUCATION (16/05/06)

(No. B/537) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if Government has any project in regard to the civic education of youngsters.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply which my colleague, the Minister of Local Government gave in his capacity as Minister of Education and Human Resources to PQ B/129 at the sitting of the National Assembly on 04 April 2006.

Citizenship Education is supposed to have been introduced by the previous Government in the primary schools but although the subject was on the timetable, it was not actually taught in class. Textbooks which have been written at heavy costs have remained unused, because they were found to be inappropriate for the pupils.

The curriculum reforms which I have set in motion will take into consideration the teaching of Civic Education to our youngsters both at primary and secondary levels and appropriate time-tabling arrangements will be made.

My Ministry is also envisaging the introduction of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights into the secondary curriculum. This will give a broader view of our responsibilities as citizens in a global context. In this connection, appropriate training programmes will be put in place by my Ministry.

SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) - ICT TEACHERS – EMPLOYMENT (23/05/06)

(No. B/600) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry is considering offering permanent employment to the information and Communication Technologies (ICT) teachers who are presently working as such in the primary schools of Mauritius and the Island of Rodrigues.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, ICT was introduced in primary schools in January 2003. The original project had planned for the setting up

of fully equipped IT laboratories in fifty primary schools per year. However, to this date, only fifty (50) IT laboratories have been set up. At this rate, the setting up of IT laboratories in all the 275 primary schools would have to wait for five years.

My Ministry has, therefore, evolved a new strategy to accelerate the process of the establishment of IT laboratories in primary schools. Under the new strategy, each school will be provided with five (5) computers and one printer. The procurement of equipment is under way.

In view of the fact that the General Purpose teachers were not appropriately trained in ICT, 329 ICT teachers were recruited in four batches as from April-June 2002 on a four-year contract basis to allow implementation of the ICT project. The ICT teachers were required to follow a full time training course at the MIE as from April 2002 to May 2003, leading to the "Certificate of Proficiency in ICT Education" before being posted in primary schools in January 2003 for the teaching of ICT.

There are presently 243 ICT teachers and they have recently been informed that their contract of employment has been renewed for a further period of two years, upon the same terms and conditions of their initial contract of employment.

The Ministry is in the process of setting up a Joint Committee comprising the MIE and the CIB, (Central Informatics Bureau) among others, to map out the future IT strategy for primary schools, including the future staffing requirements. The decisions of this Ministry will be governed by the recommendations of the Joint Committee.

MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY SUBJECTS TEACHING IN SCHOOLS (30/05/06)

(No. B/652) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member of Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry has any plan to encourage and promote the teaching of Mathematics, Science and Technology in our schools and, if so, where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

PRIMARY SCHOOLS - MANDARIN LANGUAGE (13/06/06)

(No. B/762) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he is aware that there have been requests for teachers to teach the mandarin language in primary schools and, if so, will he state -
(a) the number of schools which have made such requests, and
(b) if they were acceded to, indicating the number thereof and, if not, the reasons therefor.

Reply: As regards part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the hon. Member that in the year 2006, my Ministry has received three requests for the teaching of mandarin from the following three schools -
(i) Notre Dame de la Visitation RCA, Vocoas
(ii) St. Joseph RCA (ex-Montagne Blanche RCA), Montagne Blanche, and
(iii) Emilienne Rochecouste G. S, Quatre Bornes
Concerning part (b), the requests from the Notre Dame de la Visitation RCA, Vacoas, and from the St. Joseph RCA, which were received in early January/February 2006, have been acceded to by the Ministry.

As regards part (c), the Emilienne Rochecouste G. S, Quatre Bornes, the Head Teacher of the school had made a request for the services of a Mandarin teacher on 28 April 2006. In view of the fact that the request was received at the beginning of the Second Term of this year, and further to discussions held by the Mandarin Supervisor with the Head Teacher of the school, it was agreed that the teaching of Mandarin could start next year.

Accordingly, a Mandarin teacher will be posted at the school at the beginning of the next academic year in 2007.

MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – TEACHING (13/06/06)

(No. B/712) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry has any plan to encourage and promote the teaching of Mathematics, Science and Technology in schools and, if so, where matters stand.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government fully recognises the vital role of Mathematics, Science and Technology within our vision of a world class quality education accessible to all, especially in view of our commitment to develop our human resources which will respond to the

emerging needs of a global economy increasingly being driven by science and technology.

It is precisely against this backdrop that emphasis is laid in the Government Programme 2005/1010 on the need to give a major boost to teaching of Mathematics, Science and Technology, which are lagging behind.

It is a matter of regret that between 2000/2005, the focus of the previous Government was on access and on construction of schools only to the detriment of curriculum, content and pedagogy. For example, it is unimaginable that primary and secondary curricula have remained static for decades.

As a first step towards the objectives set out in the Government Programme 2005-2010, a national debate on curriculum was launched in December 2005 for the renewal of the primary and secondary curricula. Once the renewal document is finalised and approved by Government in the weeks to come, the next step will be to write the new curricula for the different subjects and to concurrently prepare the new textbooks on the lines of the new curricula. The new textbooks will be designed in such a way as to encourage and promote all subjects, but with particular emphasis on Mathematics, Science and Technology.

In addition to the new textbooks, consideration is also being given to the following measures –

- (i) the possibility of including in the core compulsory subjects at School Certificate level, English, French and Maths one Science subject, so that students who opt for Arts and Economic Side have at least some competencies in Science up to Form V level;
- (ii) the organisation in August 2006 of a workshop with UNESCO for the benefit of policy makers, the educationists and *teachers* of how to strengthen the quality and relevance of Science and Technology educational policies and programmes, and
- (iii) the introduction of Internet and Computing Core Certification Programme (IC3), as recently approved by Government. This programme will be integrated in the curriculum of ICT at the level of Forms I to III.

Further, the MIE has been required in February this year to review its training programme for Science teachers to make the learning of Science more learner-friendly so as to create greater interest in Science and technology amongst students.

With the help of Mauritius Research Council, primary schools are being encouraged to set up semi-mobile science labs and creativity corners in order to increase the interest of our students at an early age for science literacy. All these measures are intended to encourage and promote the teaching of Mathematics, Science and Technology in our schools.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask a very precise question. Will the hon. Minister state to the House how he is going to increase the low participation of 30% of students taking Science subjects as he, himself, has stated in this very House?

Mr Gokhool: As I indicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, first, we have to review the curriculum - which is being done. This is a process that takes some time. The new textbooks have to be written, training has to be provided. All these have been started and it would take some time. I cannot give a precise date as to when this is going to happen.

Mr Dayal: Is the hon. Minister aware that a Centre for Science, Mathematics and Technology as a NEPAD flagship, was recently launched in Nairobi, Kenya, with a view to creating scientists, mathematicians and engineers, which are vital for productivity and prosperity?

Mr Gokhool: This may very well be, but I indicated that the MRC is looking at the Science and Technology Policy and we are working in close collaboration to improve the status of Science and Technology in our school system.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Will the hon. Minister then confirm that Science will not be compulsory in the near future? It is something that will come much later on.

Mr Gokhool: As I indicated, the Curriculum Renewal Report is going to be submitted to Government. Once it is approved, the proposal contained is that we have at least one Science subject, which is taught up to Form V. A decision will have to be taken in the light of the report, which will be submitted.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, will the hon. Minister state to the House whether any delegate from Mauritius has ever attended any training programme in the country that I mentioned and, if yes, whether the officer has made any recommendation from his report?

Mr Gokhool: I am not aware of this kind of participation, but if the hon. Member indicates to me which institution it is, I'll look into it and see whether any report has been submitted or any recommendation has been made.

It could very well be the Mauritius Institute of Education, but I'll have to check.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, it relates to the same question. I am making the hon. Minister aware that such a training programme took place between 11 November and 07 December 2004. Will the hon. Minister state to the House whether Government will reconsider the century old policy of granting State scholarships by increasing the number of scholarships to study Science, Technology and Mathematics?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a point I note and which I'll refer to the Ministry, and we will look into the implications. But, as I said, we are determined to promote Science and Technology. And this is a proposal, which can well be looked into.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that the Curriculum Reform Programme is already on and it is presently being done. My question would be whether there is a time frame for the completion of the curriculum review and when do we intend to implement it?

Mr Gokhool: The time frame is to focus on the primary school sector first as a priority and, subsequently, to move on to the secondary schools. I think we should start the implementation of this programme by 2008.

Mr Speaker: A last question!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Maybe I have to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the effect that in the primary sector, Science is already being taught and it is compulsory. Everyone takes Science already in the primary sector right now.

Mr Gokhool: Yes, as I indicated, the interest in Science literacy is very low and you can see the repercussion in secondary schools, where only about 30% of students take Science subjects; and this is what we are going to rectify.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said last question! Sorry! Hon. Dayal, put your question please.

SCHOOLS (PRIMARY) – COMPUTERS (11/07/06)

(No. B/953) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to primary schools, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof presently equipped with a computer room or library cum computer room, and
- (b) the number of computers sent by his Ministry thereto during the period 2001 to 2005.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the hon. Member that, presently, there are 232 primary schools in Mauritius and 13 in Rodrigues equipped with a computer room or library cum computer room. The details are as follows –

No. of schools having computer room -	52
No. of schools having library cum computer room-	193
No. of schools where classrooms are being equipped for ICT facilities -	<u>28</u>
TOTAL	273

With regard to part (b) of the question, the number of PCs supplied to schools from 2001 to 2005 is as follows -

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of PCS</u>
2001(May-June)	400
2002	-
2003	-
2004	-
2005	-

As from 2006, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has adopted a new and accelerated approach with regard to the implementation and operationalisation of the project and the number of computers which have been distributed to the schools is 1,375 PCs in 275 schools.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I got the Minister right, he

mentioned that no computers were sent to schools in 2002, 2003 and 2004. So, may I ask the hon. Minister whether computers were sent to, for example, Barkly Government School and Reunion Government School - I have got two examples - in 2002 or 2003?

Mr Gokhool: I have given the information I have, Mr Speaker, Sir. But it is also a fact that in certain schools, PTAs and other stakeholders have donated computers. But, as per the information I have, the last time when computers were sent to schools was in May/June 2001, and that the number was 400.

Mrs Labelle: May I, Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, ask the hon. Minister to check his information and see how many computers were sent to these schools because I am aware that the Ministry sent, at least, two and in certain cases three computers to certain schools? So, may I request the Minister to look into this information?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will check the information, but the material fact is that, at that point in time, there were no computer rooms in the schools.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the Minister whether the 52 computer rooms and the 193 that he has mentioned were constructed during the past year only?

Mr Gokhool: With regard to the schools having computer rooms, I think these were conversion of classrooms which are available and these have just now been completed.

Dr. Mungur: According to the current proposal, can I ask the Minister what is the computer/pupil ratio now?

Mr Gokhool: We have distributed 1,375 computers. One printer in each school. The total number of schools is 275 and the number of pupils in the schools is around 125,000. So, we can work out the ratio.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM - HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME (25/07/06)

(No. B/1118) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he will consider the advisability of introducing a health

education programme in the school curriculum.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, health and physical education is already on the time table of primary schools. The health component, in the Teachers' Guide of Standard VI, has lessons on first aid in cases of choking, bleeding, fainting and blisters, on basic facts about high blood pressure. Children are taught about good food habits, safety measures and action to be taken in cases of different injuries.

However, it should be noted that though the health and physical education appears on the time table, very few schools have, in actual fact, taught this discipline. As from January 2007, in line with curricula reforms, we shall be working on new Standard I textbooks. Health and physical education will be on the time table and care will be taken to ensure that it is taught in all schools.

As far as the secondary curriculum is concerned, an arm of my Ministry called Health and Anti-Drug Unit, carries out activities in secondary schools to sensitise teachers, pupils and administrative staff about important health issues. Workshops have been run in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life on HIV/AIDS in 158 Private and Secondary State Schools and some 30 more schools are left to be covered.

Sensitization workshops on HIV/AIDS will be carried out during the third term in these thirty schools as an exceptional measure. About 8500 teachers and administrative staff have been trained so far.

When we talk of curriculum, we also mean co-curricular activities. Heads of schools have been asked to revitalize the health clubs. In April, a week's workshop was held at Mahebourg Creativity Centre to induct health club leaders into the tasks constituting the health sensitization programme.

In fact, this is a way to empower our youth to assume their responsibility. Another similar workshop for Zone 3 has just ended at France Boyer de la Giroday SSS. My Ministry has already initiated action for the setting up of a Regional Health and Education Council which will provide a holistic approach to health in schools.

Quite apart from the above, there are a series of initiatives which are taken at the level of the zones to promote health education in schools, like the early screening of pupils, talks on non communicable diseases in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the proposed issue of a pamphlet on HIV/AIDS.

I wish to assure the hon. Member and the House that, in the context of Quality Education, my Ministry is evolving a coherent policy on Health and Physical Education.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister has referred to health education in secondary schools, may I ask the hon. Minister whether these activities are a regular feature and, if so, what are the sequences?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given the details of activities that have been carried out and also the proposal to set up a regional Health and Education Council. It is in that respect that a holistic coherent policy is being developed. As a result of that, we can lay out a time-table which did not exist in the past. This is an innovative measure which my Ministry is taking.

GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS - STDS I TO V PUPILS - ASSESSMENT (07/11/06)

(No. B/1325) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry has given instructions to schools not to insert the A+ grade in the results of pupils of Standard I to V and, if so, will he give the reasons therefor.

Reply: The assessment for Standard I to Standard V in Government primary schools has always been based on a grading system which ranges from A to E and U. Assessment at these levels are internal to the school. My Ministry does not think that there is the need to change the internal assessment system, given that examinations at these levels are viewed as a formative exercise geared towards the improvement of pupils' performance.

The scripts at lower primary level, i.e. from Standard I to III, are marked by the class teacher and may contain an element of subjectivity.

For Standard IV and V, the scripts are marked by a group of teachers from the school, itself, without any consultation with other panels from other schools. However, there is no external moderation or quality control on the marking of scripts with the result that the grading obtained is particular to the school and there is no consistency between one school and another.

Already in previous years (2000 to 2005), some schools used a grading similar to A+ and in view of the change in the mode of assessment at

the CPE, some schools have started using the A+ grade for these internal assessments. To avoid confusion, instructions were given to all Government primary schools to stick to the usual assessment mode for this year for these classes.

Finally, I wish to point out that the A+ formula is meant to achieve the two fold objectives of

- (i) selecting students for admission on to schools on a national basis, and
- (ii) ensuring that the students are equipped with both the essential and desirable learning competencies.

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PRIMARY SCHOOLS – EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

(No. B/1440) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the introduction of continuous assessment at primary school level as from January 2007, he will state the method of evaluation that will be used.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the last session of the Assembly, in the statement which I made, I pointed out that, as part of the new orientations for evaluation and assessment, in the context of the Reforms of the Curriculum, continuous assessment would be adopted to provide adequate feedback to diagnose weaknesses for remedial actions. The objective is to encourage the overall development of the learner, which is not the case presently.

The present methods of assessment emphasise summative assessments which are inadequate and do not help towards monitoring, in a systematic manner, the progress of learners. It takes the form of end-of-term or end-of-year examination and serves the purpose of grading for the selection of/or promotion to a higher class or certification.

Formative assessment takes the form of observations, tests, or practicals during teaching with a view to diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of the learner on themes and topics in the curriculum either to reinforce what has been learnt or to take remedial measures.

Continuous assessment, on the other hand, is the process of obtaining more and better information about the pupil, and to monitor his or her progress throughout the curriculum.

Continuous assessment provides information on the learner after formative assessment has been carried out to confirm whether remedial actions taken have been successful and to know where the learner stands in his or her learning path. Continuous assessment, therefore, is an integral part of the formative assessment process.

The continuous assessment can be used to revalorise the work done throughout the year and can form part of the summative assessment rating

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thus ensuring the overall development of the learner in both scholastic and non-scholastic activities. The assessment is therefore continuous because it occurs at different times as a part of instruction. It may occur at the end of a lesson, a topic or a theme.

Various methods are used such as oral and practical assessment, observation of the pupils' performance, written tests, portfolio, profile and project work to collect evidence on the pupils' learning and progress. A comprehensive repertoire of methods is being worked out for each of the three stages of the primary level.

A technical team under the National Curriculum Steering Committee has been set up to work out an assessment framework for the new curriculum as part of the overall assessment practiced in schools. A basic assessment task is being introduced in Standard I textbooks at the end of each unit as from Year 2007. All teacher training programs contain a component of continuous assessment. However, more training will be given to teachers to empower them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is important to start with the basic principle of trust in our teaching workforce. We must create a culture of trust and not degrade this noble profession by vitiating it with suspicion. In the area of evaluation, a whole battery of measures needs to be taken to ensure fairness and justice. Moderation is one of the tools used to establish the validity of the assessment.

I wish to refer the hon. Member to Section 4 of the Reforms of the Curriculum document for complementary information.

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Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I reassure the hon. Minister that it was not my aim to be suspicious, but I just wanted some clarifications. I just wanted to get some insight of the mechanism being put in place. I do agree that formative assessment should be the order of the day, but is the Minister stating that there will be no form of summative assessment. In other words, I am asking the Minister to confirm whether the mechanism being put in place will include both summative and formative assessments or evaluation?

Mr Gokhool: I would like to reassure the hon. Member that my comment was not addressed to her or to Members of the Opposition. But there are people in the public who do express certain doubts as regards the importance of continuous assessment. Having said that, I would like to reassure the hon. Member that continuous assessment, that is, part of the formative assessment together with summative assessment, will be used in the evaluation process.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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On resuming at 2.30 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement.

Question B/1479 is being withdrawn.

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PRIMARY SCHOOLS – COMPUTERS - PURCHASE

(No. B/1452) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the teaching of Information Technology in primary school, he will state, for each of the years 2000 to date –

- (a) the amount of money spent on the purchase of personal computers and other peripherals, and
- (b) the number of persons trained.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), in the year 2000, the Skills and Information Technology Development Fund approved the purchase of 400 PCs and 280 printers for the primary schools. The main aim in those days was to create IT awareness in the primary school sector. However, these personal computers and printers were procured only in 2001 at the cost of Rs12,563,300 m. Payment was effected by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications and computers were distributed in 278 primary schools, including 13 in Rodrigues. The equipment was also utilised for administrative purposes.

In the year 2006, in line with Government policy to promote an IT literate student population and to integrate ICT in teaching and learning 1375 personal computers and 275 printers were procured for a total value of Rs33,482,762.18 m. which was met by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications. In fact, each of the 275 primary schools was supplied with five PCs and one printer.

As regards part (b), on the assumption that the hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka is referring to the number of ICT Teachers trained during the same period, I wish to state that 329 ICT Teachers recruited in 2002 had their training before posting them in the primary school in 2003.

Out of the 329 ICT teachers, 279 are still in post. Needful is being done for the recruitment and training of 50 teachers.

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No. B/1452 (contd.)

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister how were the 400 PCs distributed to the schools?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned, in 2001, 400 PCs were purchased. It was decided at that time that it would be 1 PC per school. For schools having student population from 01 to 500: 1 PC; 501 to 1000: 2 PCs; 1001 and over: 3 PCs, which was largely insufficient and that's why Government has revived and reinforced the school IT project..

Mr Gunness: Sir, a contract was awarded for a batch of computer labs in 2005. Can we know where matters stand with the construction of these labs?

Mr Gokhool: As the hon. Member must be aware, there was a programme of constructing computer labs in a phased manner and the first batch of 50 was to be constructed. It took over three years to construct those 50 computer labs which have been completed, but the implications are that other schools did not have computer labs and this has been remedied now. Proper arrangements have been made for the computers and printers to be provided to these schools.

Mr Gunness: Can I know from the Minister whether this phased construction of computer labs will carry on with the next phase?

Mr Gokhool: Not in the manner it was planned, because if you were to construct 50 labs per year, it will be staggered over five to six years, and we cannot afford not to provide the services to all the schools. We have provided computers to all the schools and the IT teaching is being done now in all the schools.

Mr Gunness: Can I ask the Minister as at now where are these computers placed in the schools? Is it in the office of the headteacher?

Mr Gokhool: This used to happen in the past. We have corrected this because many of the computers which were distributed were used for administrative purposes and many of them were lying in the headteacher's

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office and we have remedied the situation. As far as the computer labs are concerned, many of the computers cannot be used as they are broken down.

(Interruptions)

This is a fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The 400 computers which were purchased were distributed, but many of them broke down and many were left unutilised in the headteacher's room unutilised.

(Interruptions)

This is the reality. In fact, what we are doing is we have revised the School IT Project. For four years, the children of this country were deprived of IT teaching,

(Interruptions)

The 50 primary schools have one classroom which has been converted into an ICT lab. In the remaining schools...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish.

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gokhool: In the remaining schools, 10 power points have been provided and a room identified for eventual conversion into an ICT lab.

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EDUCATION SECTOR - STRATEGY FOR REFORM

(No. B/1457) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the implementation of the Strategy for Reform in the education sector, he will state if it is proposed to maintain the national colleges.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House was informed in the statement I made on 14 November 2006, one of the overall objectives of the document "Towards a Quality Curriculum Strategy for Reform" is to do away with the CPE, in its present form, as both a certification and a selection tool. Instead, a National examination will be held at Form III and will lead to the award of the National Certificate of Lower Secondary Education.

The CPE Examinations will be progressively phased out as soon as an alternative mode to the present summative assessment is put into place. This alternative mode of assessment will determine the mode of access to both the colleges, whether admission is made on a national basis or on a regional basis.

The principle of access on a national basis to State colleges will be maintained. My Ministry is presently working on the modalities of admission on a national basis as well as the orientations of the colleges admitting students on a national basis, in line with the emerging and future needs of our country.

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Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister if he is convinced that an elite cannot be selected at the age of 11, why is he insisting on having a selection made at the level of CPE for national colleges?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to make it quite clear in this House that when we introduced the Refined Grading System, it was part of a policy of Government to reinstate the Form I to VI colleges. This was a major policy decision of Government to bring back the Form I to VI colleges. Now that we have moved to a situation where we want to reform the curriculum, we have, in line with the new curriculum, to develop the new evaluation and assessment system. All this cannot be changed overnight. I explained in my statement that in other countries the established practice is that the reform of the curriculum takes a cycle of 7 years, but we are going to work on a cycle of 3 to 4 years so that during the 3 to 4 years there will be a process of phasing out of the CPE and by the third and fourth year, hopefully, the CPE will be phased out. And there will be another mode of admission to colleges on a regional and a national basis.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, considering that there will be an alternative, that at Form III level, students will have the possibility of being admitted to national colleges, I fail to understand why the Ministry is insisting on maintaining a system which the Minister, himself, has said that he doesn't agree with.

Mr Gokhool: I have never that. I want to make it clear. We are in a situation where we are managing an existing system with all its constraints and difficulties. So, we have introduced the refined grading in line with the policy of Government to maintain Form I to VI colleges and 9 of which will admit students on a national basis. This policy is not being changed. We are maintaining the policy of admission to colleges on a national basis and the 9 colleges will be maintained. As regards the Form III examinations, it has not been determined that the Form III examinations will allow admission on a national basis to the State colleges. This has to be determined by the committee which is working on it.

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Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Then, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am afraid that selection of an elite at CPE level will still be maintained since students will be canalised into national schools at this level and there will be no possibility at Form III level for students to pass international colleges. Then, we will come back to square one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Gokhool: I don't think this is the situation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. What we said is that the CPE will be phased out as a selection and certification tool. There will be other modes of assessment for students who reach the standard VI and this will not have a selection basis. The mode of admission will have to be determined in line with the principle of admission to regional colleges and also the principle of admission to State colleges on a national basis.

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PRIMARY SCHOOLS – DBM - SOFT LOAN SCHEME (Computers)

(No. B/1477) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd, information as to whether it is proposed to introduce a soft loan scheme to primary schools for the purchase of personal computers.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that any person who is eligible to borrow can raise a loan of up to Rs35,000 at an interest rate of 3% per annum from the Development Bank of Mauritius for the purchase of a personal computer.

Furthermore, any primary school which is legally entitled to borrow and create a charge qualifies for a computer loan at the normal interest rate.

However, I wish to inform the House that in respect of ICT equipment in primary schools the Ministry of Education has, since June 06 distributed to each of the 275 primary schools, including the 53 aided schools, five computers and a printer. In total, Government has made available 1,375 computers and 275 printers for use by primary school students. This covers the schools in Rodrigues and Agalega as well.

SCHOOL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (28/11/06)

(No. B/1530) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the School Information Technology project, he will state, for the period July 2005 to June 2006 –

- (a) the amount of money spent thereon, and
- (b) if tenders were launched and, if so, the dates on which -
 - (i) they were launched and finalised, and
 - (ii) the contracts were awarded.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the hon. Member that the School Information Technology project, as originally conceived, comprised the following components –

- (i) conversion of existing classrooms into computer laboratories;
- (ii) recruitment of ICT teachers, and
- (iii) purchase of ICT equipment.

For the information of the House, when I took office, tenders for the setting up of 50 computer laboratories had already been floated, works had already started and total amount disbursed during the period July 2005 to June 2006 was Rs23,652,847.

However, in a spirit of equity, it was decided that, instead of equipping only 50 schools with computer laboratories as previously planned, the IT equipment would be distributed equally so that each school would get five PCs and one printer. This decision necessitated the provision of infrastructural facilities in all primary schools with the collaboration of the Energy Services Division of the Ministry of Public Utilities. Scope of works for the provision of ten power-points in each primary school was worked out and tenders floated and awards made. Total payment of Rs3,915,037 was made during the period July 2005 and June 2006 in respect of the works.

During the referred period, there were 223 ICT teachers. A total amount of Rs28,075,675.52 has been paid to them in terms of salaries, gratuity, annual leave and travelling.

Regarding the purchase of equipment, I am informed by the Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunications that expenditure incurred during the period under reference was Rs33,482,672.18.

With regard part (b), parts (i) and (ii) of the question, tenders for the conversion of existing classrooms into computer laboratories were launched

by the CTB in February and May 2005, and awards were made to the five different bidders in April and June 2005.

As far as electrical works are concerned, tenders were launched during period March-May 2006 and awards were made to the different bidders during period April-May 2006.

With regard to the purchase of the ICT equipment, tenders were launched by the CTB on 23 February 2006, and the bids were evaluated and finalised on 24 April 2006 by the Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunications. The contracts were awarded to three different bidders on 05 and 19 May 2006.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister talked about IT equipment, and I presume that they are computers and printers.

May I know the number of computers and printers that have been purchased?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to PQ B/1452, where I gave the information. But, for the benefit of the hon. Member, I will just give the figures. For 2006, there are 1,375 computers and 275 printers.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether it is in order to have tenders launched and finalised in such short time?

Mr Gokhool: I will not be able to answer this question. But if a question is asked about the duration, I will find out.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister the number of schools to which these equipment have been allotted and whether these schools were equipped with IT labs to receive these equipment?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, 50 labs were being constructed. Other schools didn't have labs and so we have made these facilities available to all schools. I have just mentioned the number of computers, that is, five computers and one printer per school at this stage. We are going to increase this.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether these schools which did not have the IT labs have been using these computers and printers meanwhile? Because they did not have IT labs.

Mr Gokhool: At this point in time, the facilities have been provided to all schools and they are using the computers and the printers.

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KREOL MORISIEN – RESEARCH STRATEGY (17/04/07)

(No. B/157) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry has received a request for a joint collaboration programme to develop and facilitate an action research strategy on *Kreol Morisien* and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/155)

‘TOWARDS A QUALITY CURRICULUM STRATEGY FOR REFORM’ DOCUMENT (24/04/07)

(No. B/226) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the document “Towards a Quality Curriculum Strategy for Reform” he will state when and by whom it was produced.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made at our sitting of 14 November 2006 on the issue of curriculum reforms and I fully explained the rationale behind the quality curriculum. However, once again, I wish to take the opportunity of this Parliamentary Question to inform the House that the curriculum reform is at the heart of Government programme....

Mr Speaker: I will ask the hon. Minister that if he has got a long answer to the question, he should circulate it. He can only reply to the question asked i.e state when and by whom it was produced and then circulate the remainder of his answer, especially when he has himself stated that he has already made a comprehensive statement to the House on the policy of Government.

Mr Gokhool: I will just give some background to come to the answer

I want to make. The curriculum document was produced in September 2006 and after that there were two committees which had been set up, namely the National Curriculum Advisory Committee and the National Curriculum Steering Committee.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House of the composition of the National Curriculum Advisory Committee and the National Curriculum Steering Committee?

Mr Gokhool: I will table the information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether these two committees have actually made any recommendations to date?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Curriculum Framework Committee has worked out the curriculum framework for the primary sector and it is now working on the secondary system. As far as the National Curriculum Advisory Committee is concerned, it has been constituted and once the curriculum framework document for the primary school sectors is finalised, then it will start having its meeting.

Mr Varma: Could the hon. Minister inform the House when precisely these two committees were set up?

Mr Gokhool: I don't have the precise date, but the National Curriculum Framework Committee is already operational whereas the National Curriculum Advisory Committee has been set up and will start its operations shortly.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, inform the House about the time-frame for the National Achievement Certificate?

Mr Gokhool: I think I indicated in the information I gave to the House that there is a time-frame of three to four years for the implementation of the recommendations of the two committees. Work has started. We have already produced the Standard I textbook and the subject panels are now working for Standard II and other classes. As far as the assessment is concerned, this will be integrated in the new materials which are being prepared. But the time-frame which has been given is three to four years.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a proposal to include continuous assessment at the CPE level, would the hon. Minister also consider the

possibility of including Standard V in that assessment?

Mr Gokhool: In fact, the whole concept of continuous assessment is being integrated as from Standard I. It is a graduated process and it will be part of the assessment as it is being developed in Standard I.

Mr Guinness: The Minister said the Standard I textbook is ready, can I know from the Minister whether it has been put on a pilot basis?

Mr Gokhool: Yes. The textbooks have been designed by a panel of technicians and specialists in curriculum design and it has been pre-tested before being sent to the schools.

Mr Guinness: Can we know whether any school has been selected to be used as a pilot school for that?

Mr Gokhool: In fact, from what I recall, there are some ten schools where the materials were tested before they were released to the schools.

RELIGIONS AND SPIRITUALITY – SCHOOLS CURRICULUM (24/04/07)

(No. B/242) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the key concepts of all religions and of spirituality, he will state if it is proposed to design a basic schools curriculum as obtained in the other subjects and, if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, at present, religious education does not exist as a subject *per se* neither at primary nor at secondary levels and it is not proposed to consider introducing same.

In fact, in the context of the ongoing curriculum reforms, particularly, at the stage of the national debate held in December 2005, the issue of introducing religious education as a subject did not come up.

However, one has to make a distinction between the formal curriculum and the informal curriculum. The formal curriculum at primary and at secondary does not provide for religious education. However, there is an informal curriculum which provides for life skills and, *inter alia*, for openness towards religion and major religious practices in Mauritius.

Students are exposed to those topics through the wider issue of Mauritian culture in an integrated manner cutting across other subjects like English,

French, and Oriental Languages.

My Ministry's policy will be to ensure that students continue to informally benefit from exposure to religions and religious practices by focusing on values and moral precepts in an integrated manner both at primary and secondary levels.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM – CLIMATE CHANGE (10/07/07)

(No. B/740) Dr. K. Babajee (Third Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will consider the advisability of introducing climate change as a subject in the school curriculum.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, climate change has assumed considerable importance for the past years and is at present a very lively and topical issue at the global level. It is the result of unbridled consumption which does not comply with the norms of sustainable development and, as such, is a matter of serious concern for many countries including Mauritius.

We are living in a world which is interconnected, so much so that the abuse of CFC in big countries impinges on small countries. However, it is our duty to empower our citizens with the knowledge of global warming and its effect on the rise of sea level and the resulting proliferation of diseases and climatic disasters that impend upon the different parts of the world.

It is against this backdrop that my Ministry considers climate change to be an important element for sustainable development. In this context, we have taken care to ensure that the new curriculum reflects the circumambient reality in which the child is living today. The notion of climate change and awareness of its concomitant effects are being integrated into the new textbooks at primary level. This notion will not only be a crosscutting theme across the curriculum, but it will also find a special place in the study of the environment within the context of basic science and geography.

My Ministry is currently working with other Ministries, including the Ministry of Environment and NDU to obtain inputs relevant to climate change that will be disseminated to schools, and is also involved in sensitisation and awareness programs.

The Ministry of Environment and NDU has launched a programme of sensitising our youth on environmental topics through a series of fact-sheets, including one on climate change and global warming.

At secondary level, the National Curriculum Framework which is being finalised by the MIE will contain elements of information on climate change.

It is not proposed to introduce climate change as a subject in itself for the moment. However, subjects like science, history and geography at primary level and geography and environmental science at secondary level will definitely address the issue of climate change in an integrated manner.

CONSTITUTION - CREOLE LANGUAGE (01/04/08)

(No. B/76) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Créole language, he will state if he will consider amending the Constitution to declare it as official language.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Constitution does not *per se* contain any provision indicating what should be the official language of Mauritius. However, section 49 of the Constitution provides that the official language of the National Assembly shall be English and that any Member may address the Chair in French.

The question, therefore, of amending the Constitution to declare Creole as an official language does not arise at this point.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, we know, whenever there are electoral campaigns, not only in public meetings but on television, we all speak Creole. And now, there is a consensus that Creole needs to be used with young kids for them to better learn, but we cannot use Creole here. Is the hon. Prime Minister prepared to review that?

The Prime Minister: I can look at it, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, the danger I think is, if we start using Creole here, everybody is going to swear at each other because it is easier to swear in Creole than in English or French. And I think there is a danger that the level – already we see what the level is sometimes - might get even worse.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, we all agree that Creole is spoken and understood by, let us say, 100% of our population and, therefore, is considered as our national language. And a national language may be officially, if given legal recognition by Government ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: First of all, may I remind hon. Members that they have no right to read their supplementary questions. Supplementary questions, according to our Standing Order, arise out of the answer which the hon. Minister has given. I will ask the hon. Member not to be long and not to make a statement but to put the question.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister consider having a Creole Language Act which will allow the use of Creole in institutions such as in Parliament or legal sittings and others?

The Prime Minister: I have just answered that question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Perrier: *Est-ce que le Premier ministre veut dire que le Créole est une langue vulgaire et roturière?*

The Prime Minister: We all speak Creole; and I am sure the hon. Member also speaks Creole. We might speak it with a different accent, but we all speak it. What I am saying is that it is easier, because we know a lot swear in Creole. We have seen even here, Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

Just like the hon. Member! The hon. Member is no different! He has also told me about him, what language he used! It is no different.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he does not think that letting the Creole enter the Parliament will help the Creole language reach the status that it largely deserves?

The Prime Minister: That is a good point. But, as I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are other factors that we have to look into. I will look into it.

Mr Ganoo: Perhaps, we should consider going gradually. Does not the hon. Prime Minister think, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, that we should envisage, perhaps, using it in schools as a medium of teaching in early classes; we should start there first?

The Prime Minister: That is something that I understand is actually being done and we are doing it. I must say I have been convinced of this by their friend and my friend, an ex-Member of Parliament, Mr Virahsawmy who feels very strongly about this.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS – LINGUISTIC & CULTURAL RIGHTS
(21/04/09)

(No. B/309) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the primary and secondary schools students, he will state if Government is contemplating implementing measures to ensure that equal opportunities be provided to all of them, on the basis of linguistic and cultural rights.

(Withdrawn)

SCHOOLS - "HEY-MATHS" WEBSITE

6/5/08
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(No. B/385) Ms K. R. Deerpasing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he is aware that the "Hey-Maths", web-based Mathematics learning tool, is currently being use in the curriculae in many countries to encourage the teaching and the learning of Mathematics and, if so, will he state if he proposes to introduce the use thereof in our schools.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am going to reply to this Parliamentary Question.

I thank the hon. Member for bringing this pedagogical tool to the attention of the Ministry. I am informed that "Hey-Maths" is one of the many interactive websites that provide interactive Mathematics lessons for primary and secondary school students. Access to this website has to be purchased after a trial period together with the license. At first glance, it would appear that to implement this system would require investment, the order of which is not yet known. It seems we would need to upgrade our school IT infrastructure, while students would need to have internet facilities at home.

I wish to inform the House that teachers involved in the NEPAD e-school demonstration project have been trained to incorporate interactive learning strategies and materials, where appropriate in their lessons through accessing a variety of freely available websites. They have also been trained in rationalizing and contextualizing these lessons. The next stage would be to expose all teachers to these strategies. As a matter of fact, teachers are encouraged to access and use any free website of an educational nature. The advisability of accessing the "Hey-Maths" website will be examined by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources with due regard to the question of affordability and relevance and if it materializes, consideration will be given to the possibility of customizing it, taking into consideration the specificities of Mauritian schools and their environment.

Ms Deerpasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in his answer, the hon. Minister mentioned the NEPAD project where teachers are already using interactive learning tools. In fact, I visited the Belle Rose SSS where I think they are using this NEPAD interactive tool for only Physics, Chemistry and English. In the context of the NEPAD project, could the Ministry implement that in these schools where they are using the NEPAD interactive tool on a pilot experimental basis?

Dr. David: I'll pass on the suggestion to the Minister concerned.

**PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM
– HUMAN VALUES/CIVIC EDUCATION (13/05/08)**

(No. B/460) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the primary school curriculum, he will state if the subject "Human Values" or "Civic Education" has been included therein and if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: Sir, I refer the hon. Member to Parliamentary Question No. B/537 on the same subject. I wish to add that “Human Values” or “Civic Education” is an essential and integral part of the school curriculum. Its purpose is to inculcate and promote among our student population values of good citizenship, positive attitudes, character building, interpersonal relations, healthy habits, respect for the environment, amongst others.

The values are cross cutting and can be exposed and explained to students through different subjects/disciplines. Also, as students are exposed to values in schools, at home and in the community, it is easier for them to see the interconnections and their applications in different contexts rather than learning them as a mere subject.

As such, Human Values are not taught as a separate subject. Instead, they have been integrated across the curriculum as a transversal theme. This approach has been recommended in chapter 8, page 98 of the National Curriculum Framework (Primary).

I am tabling a copy of the relevant extracts of the National Curriculum Framework (Primary) with regard to Learning Areas, Aims and the Stages, that is, the Standards at which they are handled.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if Human Values are being taught in a cross-curricular fashion, then why is it that on the timetable of primary schools we still find citizenship education as a subject and as a separate period?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reform of the curriculum is ongoing.

We are progressively changing textbooks and also in terms of teaching and learning.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I take it from the hon. Minister then that we are still teaching Human Values as a separate subject in primary schools?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the process of curriculum reform is spread over time. We have just produced the new textbooks for standards I and II and we are in the process of preparing the textbooks for standards III and IV and thereafter for Standards V and VI.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he would confirm that, unlike what he has just mentioned in the Assembly, Human Values is not being taught in a cross-curricular manner as at to date in primary schools?

Mr Gokhool: We are in a transitional phase, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and therefore, as we are progressively changing the textbooks the subject is being integrated in the new textbooks whereas, for example, in Standards III and IV we are still using the old textbooks. And as we change the textbooks, the subject will be integrated in the other subjects. And it will be taught in a transversal manner.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he still considers the teaching of Human Values and Citizenship Education, as separate subjects, as being a wastage of public funds, as he mentioned in the reply to PQ B/282?

Mr Gokhool: I think the hon. lady is right to refer to the answer that was given with respect to this Parliamentary Question. In fact, the point that was made is that, at that time, that is, in 2001, if I am not mistaken, a textbook was prepared on Civic Education, Human Values. But there were many technical errors and mistakes in it.

About Rs3 m. have been spent and the project had to be abandoned. Pedagogically, this is the trend worldwide that we cannot teach Human Values as a separate subject. And the trend pedagogically is to integrate it because the concepts and the ideas can be treated in other subjects and it would be more meaningful for the students to learn those subjects by going through the transversal approach.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by reminding the hon. Minister that this answer was given in 2005, we are today in 2008 and we are still using the same curriculum for primary school students, as mentioned by the hon. Minister right now?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I remind the hon. lady that the reform of the curriculum started with a debate that was held in 2006 and thereafter, the Mauritius Institute of Education had to work on the national curriculum framework which is being implemented as from 2006. The reform of the curriculum is a long process; we cannot do it overnight. I have been giving information to the House about how the process is progressing. We are now with Standards III and IV textbooks and we intend, at my Ministry, to complete the cycle by 2010.

SCHOOLS – SEX EDUCATION

20/7/08

(No. B/525) **Mr M. Mardemootoo (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of sex education at schools, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue of sex education has been raised on several occasions and I refer the hon. Member to Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/137, B/298 and B/609. I have provided the following views to the House –

- (1) There is need for exposing our children and youth to sex education, but there is no single standard approach to the teaching of the subject worldwide.
- (2) In fact, UNESCO treats sex education as a life skill and in countries where it has been introduced in school curriculum, it is being given the same treatment.
- (3) The issue is presently being handled within the existing curricula of primary and secondary schools as mentioned in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/298.
- (4) The issue is also being handled through the Youth Empowerment Programme...

Mr Speaker: The question is straightforward. It says: “where matters stand now.” The hon. Minister has replied three Parliamentary Questions in the past. There is no need for him to repeat the answers he has given, because that is already in the Hansard. The question is: “where matters stand now”, whether there has been any development.

Mr Gokhool: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am not repeating the answer, because there are three Parliamentary Questions where I have given extensive answers. I am just recapping the main points. I am just informing the House that this is being taken care of. Presently, in the curricula it is being taken care of as well as in the preparation of the new text books.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – KREOL LANGUAGE (29/07/08)

(No. B/991) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to the introduction of the Kreol language in the primary schools, he will state if his Ministry has set up a committee to look into the matter and if so, when and if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the setting up of a committee

regarding the introduction of Mauritian Creole in primary schools is presently being considered by my Ministry.

In fact, in the course of a meeting I had with the *Bureau d'Education Catholique* (BEC) on 25 February 2008, the suggestion to have a team comprising of representatives of my Ministry, the BEC, the Mauritius Institute of Education and the University of Mauritius was retained. It was also agreed in the course of the same meeting that, as a first step, BEC would carry out a large scale socio-linguistic study to determine the modalities of introducing Mauritian Creole as a subject in some primary schools on a pilot basis as a first step.

My Ministry is still awaiting the outcome of the study by BEC. In the meantime, my Ministry has received from BEC, the proposed terms of reference of the committee which focuses only on Mauritian Creole. On 11 June 2008, a committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry examined the proposed terms of reference submitted by BEC. However, in view of the fact that I have also received representations of a similar nature regarding Bhojpuri, the terms of reference of the committee would have to be enlarged to include Bhojpuri as well, as both Mauritian Creole and Bhojpuri are heritage languages.

Year 2009

**STANDARD III ENGLISH AND FRENCH TEXTBOOKS –
REPRESENTATIONS (14/04/09)**

(No. B/231) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the new Standard III English and French textbooks, he will state if he is aware of any complaint in relation thereto and, if so -

- (a) the nature thereof, and
- (b) the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. I am indeed aware of representations made regarding the new English and French textbooks of Standard III including comments from some trade unionists in the press. The bottom line of these representations is that the new textbooks are generally overloaded and the Standard III English and French textbooks in particular are complicated and are of too high a level for the pupils.

Be it as it may, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that the new textbooks are premised on the National Curriculum Framework (Primary) which was elaborated after a National

Debate on Curriculum Reform in December 2005 in which all stakeholders and all trade unions took part. There was synergy and consensus on the broad curricular issues.

Further, the new textbooks have been written by experienced educators who form part of the subject panels. Before these textbooks were finalised and issued to students, they have been tested on a pilot basis and there was no negative feedback received then.

Consequently, there is no clear indication at this stage that the textbooks are in fact really overloaded or complicated. However, it is admitted that –

- (i) these textbooks follow a new approach whereby life skills and a number of concepts like values or environmental consciousness have been integrated therein, and
- (ii) students with learning difficulties particularly in the ZEP schools may have some difficulty to grasp the new concepts thus requiring additional efforts from the Teacher.

As a result thereof, there could have been a perception that the textbooks are complicated when, in fact, such may not be really the case.

Nevertheless, the MIE has been requested to carry out a fresh evaluation of the two textbooks and submit a report.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House when is the report expected to be ready?

Dr. Bunwaree: Well, I want this to go as quickly as possible. In fact, this is also a question of days. But, the Ministry is very closely monitoring, Mr Speaker, Sir, the situation of the third and fourth standards with respect to these books and inspectors may be called upon to provide necessary support to the teachers in case of necessity.

21/4/09

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS – LINGUISTIC & CULTURAL RIGHTS

(No. B/309) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the primary and secondary schools students, he will state if Government is contemplating implementing measures to ensure that equal opportunities be provided to all of them, on the basis of linguistic and cultural rights.

(Withdrawn)

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS – LINGUISTIC & CULTURAL RIGHTS - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES (23/06/09)

(No. B/597) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the primary and secondary school students, he will state if Government is contemplating implementing measures to ensure that equal opportunities be provided to all of them, on the basis of linguistic and cultural rights.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, primary and secondary schools are already equal opportunities settings, and all pupils/students attending these schools are afforded the same opportunities, inasmuch as they follow the same curriculum, use the same textbooks and are taught by educators having the same level of relevant qualifications and training.

However, we have to reckon with the fact that all pupils/students do not have the same facilities and aptitudes, with the result that many of them have learning and other difficulties. It is for this reason that Government has introduced measures of positive discrimination, like the “ZEP Project” in the primary sector, and the “Books for Needy Students” in the secondary sector.

On the linguistic side, English and French are core compulsory subjects, both at primary and secondary levels, whereas the Asian Languages are optional but are extended to pupils/students of non-Asian descent too. Creole language is also used as a support language to facilitate learning at lower primary level.

As regards culture, there is no such subject in its own right either at primary or at secondary. However, cultural issues are integrated in the curriculum and cut across the subjects, more particularly History and Geography at primary level and Social Science as well as History at secondary level. It is to be noted that ad-hoc cultural activities such as Drama, Theatre, Music are also carried out in schools. Such activities have been initiated this year during the activity period, which has been introduced in secondary schools in January last. They will be fully operational in all schools in 2010, both at primary and secondary levels.

We are making, Mr Speaker, Sir, every effort to ensure that there is, therefore, no linguistic or cultural discrimination of any kind in primary and secondary schools.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister will agree that, if we give the same thing to children with different needs, it is not ensuring equal opportunities. In this respect, particularly when low performing students or schools are concerned, studies have shown that when the culture is not being valued, there is high risk for low academic performance. Will the hon. Minister contemplate to initiate actions, so that we can have proper studies to see such impact in our education sector? This is my first question.

Secondly, the Minister has said that the Creole language is being used as support in lower primary, but we are all aware that Creole language is being used at all levels, even at University.

But, as a language itself, is the Minister contemplating introducing this in our curriculum sector?

Dr. Bunwaree: In fact, we are seriously working on this possibility, Mr Speaker, Sir, to see in what way the language can be used as a medium of instruction. It is allowed in Standard I, II & III officially for the time being. But, of course, we are working on it, and we have to devise ways and means of agreeing on the language itself, which is not yet done, as a written language for the time being. I agree that whenever teachers feel the need of using Creole in any class, this is done, but not at the risk of penalising the English language in any case.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has taken cognizance of what has been done in PreVoc/BEC and whether he has taken cognizance of the evaluation already effected after more than four years of such training?

Dr. Bunwaree: I am constantly in touch with that, because it is of interest to me personally, I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir. But they have not evaluated completely, and there is much work still to be done. In fact, this morning, I had a phone conversation with the Director of BEC, and they are expecting, by the month of August, to come forward with a work paper, and from then on we will see.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister say whether he is contemplating initiating discussions. I know there had been a lot of discussions which have started under different Governments, but this time with a view to make at least a step forward in putting the Creole language at par with the other languages which are taught in schools.

Dr. Bunwaree: I think I have already partially replied to that. At this stage, we cannot put it at par, but we are moving into that direction. But I must say it is a slow process, and we have to be very careful because all experts seem to agree for the time being, that, if we do it too quickly, it could be to the detriment of English, which would not give the good results that we are expecting.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, the hon. Minister has stated that Creole language is being used as a support language at the lower primary level. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has identified problems related to the use of the Creole as a support language at other levels of education?

Dr. Bunwaree: Well, not exactly, but I can say that, on the other side, there is no empirical evidence that the use of Creole as a medium of instruction - and as it is in use – has allowed students to learn better or improve. We do not have empirical evidence.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have heard the hon. Minister mention that experts have stated that introducing the Creole may be to the detriment of English. But an empirical study has been carried out during the past four years for Prevoc BEC, where the results have shown that the English performance of these kids has been increasing at a considerable and impressive way.

Is the Minister aware of this? Because this is empirical.

Dr. Bunwaree: I have looked into that, Mr Speaker, Sir, but there is no document to confirm what the hon. Member is saying.