**Entrepreneurship Education for Lower VI**

**Certificate – Awarding Ceremony for Educators**

**Speech of**

**Dr the Hon. Vasant K. Bunwaree, Minister of Education & HR**

**Thursday 29 May 2014, 13h00, MITD House, Phoenix**

**Mr Paul Bunting, Country Manager, Microsoft Indian Ocean Islands**

**Mr Om Varma, Director MIE**

**Prof Lucien Finette, Director MES**

**Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah, Director Curriculum Development and Evaluation**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

Let me express my deep appreciation to all parties involved in bringing this training programme for Educators to a successful conclusion. Thanks to this programme, I believe all Educators exposed to it will have their skills sharpened such that the 15 hour Course module on Entrepreneurship Initiation for Lower VI Students becomes a major milestone in secondary schools.

Let me state very honestly that today’s Ceremony transforms one of my strongest dreams for the student community into a reality.

I must at the outset have a special word of welcome and appreciation to the team from Microsoft who made this training programme a reality. Thank you for being by our side at this crucial moment of change and innovation in the formal curriculum.

We have had the opportunity of following the PowerPoint presentation led by Mrs Ghoorah, Director of Curriculum, on the current status of Entrepreneurship Education in schools, as well as the presentations by the MIE and MES. As importantly, we have been taken through the several steps culminating in its introduction in the Curriculum at the Lower and Upper Secondary levels.

Allow me today to go deeper into the rationale that motivated me to anchor Entrepreneurship Education into our system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have since long operated along the principle that Education is a **basic right**. This is clearly reflected in our advocacy for a policy based on equity, inclusiveness and non-discrimination in opportunity-provision for all.

Free and compulsory schooling and free student transportation, access to quality education, the accelerated digitisation of teaching and learning —these are only a sample of the enabling policies translated into action.

But, in addition to being a human right, education is also **an** **imperative** on two basic fronts.

The first imperative is the **social** one. Unless there is a high degree of social empowerment, national development is likely to be severely constrained. And education is globally reckoned as one of the key drivers—if not the key driver-- of sustained social development.

The second imperative is the **economic** one. Today, as societies operate as part of a global set up, as the realm of knowledge expands beyond national frontiers, we intensely realise the danger of remaining mired in traditional economic thinking. Today, we speak of ‘***New skills for New Jobs’*** since we do not know what tomorrow’s new jobs will be like. What are needed today are individuals capable of having transferable and flexible skills, who are adaptable, trainable and therefore employable.

So, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, if education **is** an imperative on both social and economic fronts, Entrepreneurship Education is the answer to both of these imperatives. The qualities it evinces result in learners engaging themselves intellectually, professionally and socially and thus making a difference to their adult environment, as they grow up.

Inherent to Entrepreneurship Education are the new ways of thinking, collaborative learning, creativity and the ability to evolve from idea to reality.

This is why it is important for ALL of our students to be exposed to it and not merely those studying Economics and Business Studies. The skills developed are, in fact, nothing less than LIFE SKILLS.

Let me stress that giving pride of place to Entrepreneurship Education is a global trend.

Allow me this extensive quote from a November 2012 European Commission document called ‘Rethinking Education: Investing in Skills for better Socio-Economic Outcomes’.

*‘Member States should foster entrepreneurial skills through new and creative ways of teaching and learning from primary school onwards, alongside a focus from secondary to higher education on the opportunity of business creation as a career destination. Real world experience, through problem-based learning and enterprise links, should be embedded across all disciplines and tailored to all levels of education.’*

And the hugely significant sentence that follows is this one*:”* ***All young people should benefit from at least one practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education’.***

Ladies and gentlemen**,**

It goes without saying that, if we want this ‘life skill’ to be successfully embedded in the minds of our school-going youth, our teachers – all of them -- have to be properly trained.

I have time and again highlighted the trust that I systematically place in teachers for the realization of our educational goals. Most teachers today rise up to the challenge—in fact, most always have. Let’s face it, Mauritius would not have earned international kudos and its place in the community of nations if the level of education provided had been below par. So, we need to show our appreciation for the teachers.

Thank you, all of you Educators present today for taking up this new challenge of facilitating the Entrepreneurial skills into your students.

But it is equally true that we want **all** of our teachers to change, as well. In the context of new challenges and new demands, I wish them to be in a position to say “*Before, I was an Educator. Now I am an Educator with a mission*.”

This is why my Ministry ensures there is enough of pedagogical handholding carried out initially by the MIE for all new projects embarked upon, including that of Entrepreneurship Education.

I would even go to the extent of saying that the innovative pedagogical approaches related to Entrepreneurship Education should, in fact, be spread across all teacher-training programmes for the different domains and subject areas.

Indeed, this is already happening in countries like Denmark.

Finally, Ladies and gentlemen, I must say that I am genuinely gratified by the support provided by Microsoft to the several initiatives of my Ministry. We are all conversant with the Partners in Learning Programme and the Education Global Forum in which Mauritian innovativeness is celebrated and rewarded. On the other hand, the PIL pricing of Microsoft licenses has now been extended to all schools registered under the PSSA as well as to fee-paying schools. I am happy to state that a new PIL agreement is currently being fine-tuned in order to extend possibilities of collaboration between both Microsoft and my Ministry.

I know that I can rely upon this powerful partner for the improved digitisation of the educational system in Mauritius.

 I must also congratulate the MIE, MES, NPCC and the HRDC for actively placing their expertise at the service of the Microsoft resource team in the elaboration of this training Programme.

Let me end here by once more congratulating all of you EDUCATORS who have been regular and committed to following the training programme. You are not only part of my pride but more importantly, you are making history in education by being the pioneers of entrepreneurship education in our upper secondary school system. I wish you very very well indeed.

Thank you for your attention.