

Speech of Hon (Mrs) L.D.Dookun-Luchoomun
Minister of Education and Human Resources
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Prize Giving Ceremony: Code Craft Competition 2016
Tuesday 13 September 2016

Good morning to you all.

Any initiative meant to encourage creative approaches in education will always receive my warm accolade. I would therefore like to express my delight at being in your midst today for this Prize Giving Ceremony that recognises the importance of coding in computing for our young learners.

At the very outset, I would like to thank the organisers - the MIE and the Rotary Club of Port Louis - the participants and the teachers who have been working meticulously in order to create and engage with a different learning process altogether.

Stating that technology now plays a distinct role in our lives is probably stating the obvious. Indeed, the message is clear when the average child has more than a working familiarity with the World Wide Web. The message says loud and clear that we are now dealing with a new generation of digital natives.

This is both significant and telling.

Naturally, then, we need to question ourselves: how to keep pace with such rapid developments in technology?

Consider this: only very recently, we had been talking about the emerging role of ICT in the curriculum. Today, however, the rapid

evolution in the field has led some of the most advanced countries of the world to opt for a more ambitious computing curriculum which includes coding for young learners.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear Students,

Can we in Mauritius allow ourselves to watch the technological high speed craft bolt away while we are left stranded on our insular shores?

Our goal is to modernise Mauritius and this starts with the education set-up. Smart cities with smart environments manned by smart people can only see the light of day when we successfully keep up with the latest technological innovations.

This is why I view the Codecraft initiative as ground-breaking. It is a major stepping stone towards re-orienting our practices at school and, ultimately, the practices in our lives.

I also see it as the first step towards the bigger goal. This initiative is a step up to a new era of technology in education. That Mauritian learners like you can code if the proper infrastructure, teaching and support is provided to them has never been in doubt—and you have proved it. You are the first generation of students to have put your skills to the test.

I am also glad that this initiative fits in well with the Nine-Year Schooling reform. This reform makes a strong case for 21st century learning. Thus, problem solving, creativity, communication and collaboration have been the essential features of this competition. Likewise, the development of these soft skills is equally a crucial outcome of the current reform agenda in education.

I have also learnt, with much pride of course, that with this initiative, Mauritius has positioned itself among the few countries that have introduced coding at a very early stage in the curriculum. The UK, South Korea, Estonia, Israel and New Zealand all have Coding as part of their curriculum. What is also important to keep in view is that learning to code can be used across the curriculum to study and master other subjects.

It is this type of ICT integration that my Ministry is striving for in our education reform in order to make learning at once more interesting, more accessible and more meaningful.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This government has made educational reforms a priority and I am convinced that the new curriculum will go a long way towards preparing our young people for the future. The young generation and everyone else must strive to have a better understanding of how technology works so that we not only make effective use of it but also make informed choices. In fact, life choices in the very near future will be mostly mediated by technologies.

Case in point: we are in a phase where we are constantly being encouraged to interact with public services online. I wouldn't be surprised to see aspects of online learning also being part of the Mauritian secondary education landscape soon. It is already present, as you know, at the tertiary level.

Our goal is thus very clear: we want to provide a strong platform for you all belonging to this generation of learners to live a fulfilled life in

the modern set-up. We want schools and schooling to prepare you to live in a connected world.

This is just the beginning. We are working and looking forward to a future that is exciting and engaging. It is also a matter of national pride if our young people can create, innovate and invent. Learning to code could chart the route towards this achievement.

We could then be more than just takers of technology; we could be makers of technology.

On this note, I would like to congratulate all of you, the participants in the competition. Remember that it is the learning process that matters most. There will always be a winner, but in this case, the winners are really the ones who have learnt and engaged themselves most with this new system.

To all of you associated with this endeavour, including the Rotary Club of Port Louis, rest assured you will always have my support in keeping the flag of innovation flying high.

I thank you all for your kind attention.