

**Speech of Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun,
Minister of Education and Human Resources,
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research**

**Workshop on
“School Clerks contribution in the New Reform in Education”**

**Wednesday 23 March 2016 at 09 00 hrs at
Unity House, Beau Bassin**

Good morning to all of you.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Managing Committee of the School Clerks Branch of the Government Services Employees Association for giving me this opportunity to address you on the occasion of this one-day workshop on **“School Clerks’ Contribution in the New Reform in Education”**.

Ever since I assumed responsibility for the Education and Training portfolio, I have made it a point to encourage my Ministry to foster and consolidate the excellent

working relationship that have characterized our partnership with all trade unions/employees’ associations.

You are indeed the invaluable partners of the Education Sector. In this respect, it becomes my responsibility as well as that of my Ministry to leave no stone unturned so as to see to it that your interests and rights are respected.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no gainsaying the fact that it is only sound and harmonious relationships between management and staff that can effectively ensure an enabling environment whereby all stakeholders can give the best of themselves.

This is all the more so for the education sector. We are operating in a domain where learning facilitation is the motivational force guiding and driving our endeavours. Our learners --who are all our children-- have to be invested with the vital values and skills to further their personal growth and to enhance their critical and experiential thinking. We are duty bound to encourage them to innovate and adapt to changes in an ever- changing and increasingly globalized environment.

In this context, our school staff, right from the School Leader down to the rank and file of supporting staff, have their fair share of valuable contribution to make to facilitate the task of my Ministry to deliver on its promise to provide an education that will be the mainstay of our children's future.

Friends,

It is now commonplace to state that my Ministry has embarked on a comprehensive reform of its system in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education that the Global Community has agreed upon. This Goal, as we well know, purports to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

But even before the global community agreed on the SDGs, my Ministry had actually already started the thinking and the drafting of the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBC) Reform.

I believe you are all familiar with the broad contours of the Reform Project. Still, allow me to reiterate its main objectives that are, inter-alia, geared towards

- The promotion of the holistic development of all students
- The inculcation in all students of a sense of moral responsibility, a set of values and a strong sense of identification with the country
- The achievement of a smooth transition to and completion of secondary education
- The attribution of a greater recognition to the value of TVET in building human capital and ensuring sustainable development.

This is a revolution that is on the way, a new road altogether that we are embarking upon. And we have , you and I , to travel together on that road.

My Ministry is fully aware of the laudable contribution of School Clerks to the effective and efficient administration of both primary and secondary schools. In conformity with the implementation of the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education, the role of school clerks as a major stakeholder in school administration will necessarily be called upon to

be revisited, and this, in order to support the teaching and learning environment at school.

One of the fundamentals close to my heart is capacity building. My Ministry is definitely taking on board the continuous professional development of school clerks through training and enhancement programmes in school administration, communication and ICT skills.

It cannot be otherwise: we cannot think of enhancing the capacities of only Educators and School Leaders. It is a whole-school approach that is being propounded—and administrative staff support is crucial for effective school management and service delivery.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am given to understand that the School Clerks Branch has made different representations to my ministry on various occasions during official meetings.

The main bone of contention is that the School Clerks have no promotion prospects as the next two higher levels which are Assistant School Superintendent (formerly Senior School Clerks) and School Superintendent are filled by way of a selection exercise. I know that School Clerks were formerly considered for promotion to the grade of Senior School Clerk.

However, as we know, following the recommendations of the PRB Report 2008, the post was restyled Assistant School Superintendent and

appointment thereto is to be made by selection from among School Clerks as from 01 July 2008.

I am also informed that my Ministry has supported the proposals made by the School Clerks Branch to the PRB. It is proposed to:-

- (i) upgrade the salary scale of School Clerk which is at par with that of the grade of Clerical Officer/Higher Clerical Officer which exists on a pensionable basis. Officers of the latter post were required to opt to join the grade of officer and subsequently restyled Management Support Officer, a post which bears a higher salary scale, although both the grades of School Clerk and Management Support Officer have the same entry requirement.
- (ii) review the mode of appointment of Assistant School Superintendents to make it by selection from only among School Clerks reckoning four years' service in a substantive capacity in the grade. For recall, the post of Senior School Clerk, promotional from the grade of School Clerk has been restyled Assistant School Superintendent in PRB Report 2008 and appointment thereto is made by selection from School Clerks and candidates possessing a School Certificate, Higher School Certificate and Certificate in ICT. Hence there is need to create a career path for School Clerks by restricting appointment to the grade of Assistant School Superintendent from only among School Clerks.

(iii) make provision in the 2016/2017 Budget for the remaining 34 unfunded posts to be funded with a view to post one School Clerk in each of the 62 secondary and 213 primary schools as well as 2 Hindu Aided Schools.

I am told that, as at date, there is a total of 66 vacancies in the grade of School Clerks.

Let me go into some of the reasons that are quite varied.

There are currently 34 unfunded posts.

Out of the 14 officers who were in the grade of School Clerk, 11 have been offered appointment as Temporary Assistant School Superintendent, 1 as Trainee Educator (KM), 1 as Temporary Labour Officer and 1 as Temporary Compliance Officer. These are expected to be appointed in a substantive capacity.

Thereafter the vacancies will become permanent.

On the other hand, 5 new recruits have requested for a delay to assume duty; and 12 vacancies have now arisen due to officers who have just retired and those who have declined the offer made to them. The same is now being reported to PSC. We certainly hope to have PSC submitting the names of suitable candidates from its last selection exercise following advertisement issued on 04 September 2015.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Rest assured that training and Enhancement Programmes are high on the agenda of the Ministry. In fact my Ministry is sparing no efforts to give appropriate training to members of its staff to enable them to deliver the goods in the best possible conditions. In this context, allow me to remind you that my Ministry organized a one-day induction course for School Clerks on 14 January, 28 January and 9 March 2016, dates on which new batches of School Clerks have been appointed. This has been a first since, previously, such training courses were dispensed well after their appointment.

I rest confident I can rely upon you all, ladies and gentlemen, in making our education reforms a successful venture. Remember, our collective efforts at the level of schools and Management are not driven for our personal benefits. Education is such a treasure that , the more we give, the richer we become.

And we can all be richer when we realise that we owe it to our children to improve their life- chances and their socio-emotional and cognitive capabilities.

On their behalf, I thank you for your generosity in giving the best that you are capable of.

With these words, I now have the distinct pleasure of declaring the Workshop open and wish that you make the most of it.

Thank you for your kind attention.