

Speech of Hon L.D.Dookun-Luchoomun
Ministry of Education and Human Resources,
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
World Teachers' Day
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Dear Educators

Good Afternoon to you all.

I am deeply pleased to be with you today as you celebrate the Day dedicated to you by the international community. If Teachers' Day is observed in more than 100 countries, it is certainly because of the global recognition of the irreplaceable and ineffaceable role played by teachers in the development of the children and youth and, therefrom, in the fulfilment of the destiny of nations.

Teachers' Day may have officially been celebrated on 5th October—but, in a broad manner of speaking, every day should be the celebration of teachers. Teachers like you are the gurus who, whatever be the conditions under which they labour, fulfil their commitment to facilitate the learning and development process. You shape the minds and attitudes of those who will shape the world of tomorrow.

Teachers the world over deserve our tribute on any day of the year.

Just for a moment, ladies and gentlemen, try to figure out what the situation is like in different parts of the world. This is an occasion when the figures we come across send shivers down our spine.

Consider this: estimates from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics indicate the need for 69 million new teachers to meet the goal of

universal primary and secondary education for all children over the next 14 years. When broken down, the figure stands at 24.4 million more teachers for primary and 44.4 million for the secondary sub-sector.

And, lest we forget, the world has taken the commitment to make SDG 4 that deals with equitable quality education a reality by 2030!

It becomes therefore all the more important at this time to raise an awareness, understanding and recognition of the noble work of teachers in our society.

Dear Educators,

You will agree with me that, where the teaching profession in Mauritius is concerned, we are lucky: in some parts of the world, teachers are expected to do a host of other non-teaching and administrative tasks that are extraneous to their core responsibility. We are lucky in that our teachers can focus more on their pedagogical instruction duties and the support of students.

But there certainly are a number of other responsibilities that are intrinsically related to the teaching task. I would like to seize the opportunity presented by this platform to highlight some of these that I would call as value adding.

Let me start by stressing that 2017 will prove to be a watershed year. It is the year when Nine Year Schooling will be firmly situated on its implementation track. With a Grade 7-9 Curriculum that is getting ready to be delivered, you will now be the means to bring about the required transformation in our younger generation.

You will be expected to expose our children to new skills, including life skills, as part of their preparation to operate as sound and responsible citizens.

Let me speak my mind here.

In some quarters, some Educators tend to be skeptical and ask themselves what is it that changes for the secondary sub-sector .

Believe me when I say, “A lot”.

In the very first place, you may be directly concerned with the last three years of the NYS reform. But do not ever forget that over the next few years, the children entering Grade 7, your future students, will be qualitatively better. This is bound to happen when we keep in view the upstream quality activities, ‘les activites en amont’ that will be taking place at the primary level.

Nous allons nous débarrasser des déficits d'apprentissage qui s'accumulent à travers une série de mesures.

Nous allons également créer un environnement propice pour le développement holistique de nos enfants dès leur jeune âge.

Aussi, à travers l'introduction du PSAC à partir de l'année prochaine, on se débarrasse de ce syndrome du CPE comme une finalité qu'un enfant ne pouvait atteindre qu'à travers une course effrénée ponctuée de leçons particulières.

So, rest assured that the quality of Grade 7 intake is most definitely called upon to be better and more widespread.

And it is this pool of learners whose access to post-secondary and higher education and training you will encourage.

The secondary sub-sector will soon be engaged in our reform agenda. This reform agenda is comprehensive and covers all the sub-sectors of Education—the Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary, TVET and Tertiary. And you have a nodal role to play here.

On the other hand, who helps children to determine their career choices? As matters stand today, both parents and teachers have a

say in influencing children into opting for subject areas that will have a bearing on their future careers.

Your role as Educators is likely to be more pronounced here.

It is good for you to know that my Ministry is working towards the introduction—or should I say, the ‘re-introduction’-- of Careers Education and Guidance in our schools. Obviously, some persons will be tasked with that responsibility--- but it is common knowledge that all teachers, in one way or another, have always been instrumental in giving the much-sought advice to their learners.

After all, you are the ones who live up to the NYS tagline which is “Inspiring every child”. And who inspires most, if not teachers?

Dear Educators,

There are two other dimensions that I would wish to take up today with you.

One of them is the necessity to establish pathways between yourselves and the different stakeholders. Parents and the community are part of such stakeholders.

There is something termed the “3 S Triangular Interaction” that normally drives a school: it is the interaction that exists among the first S, Students, the second S, the Staff and the third, the Stakeholders. This Interaction is a recipe for success.

In fact, dear Educators, I will go to the extent of stating that I and my ministry rely upon you to make of this interaction channel the means whereby the educational reforms can be consolidated. Parents trust you—Parents have always trusted the community of teachers—otherwise they would never have entrusted their children’s care and guardianship unto you. They know that you give due recognition to the

achievements of their children and you also act as a mentor, a confidante, a role model who encourages them to always aim higher. Be the mouthpiece of the Ministry when they come to you for clarity and doubt-clearing about the reform process.

In turn, numerous parents as well as thought leaders in the community have expertise that you can welcome to school and tap.

The second point I want to raise before I conclude relates to your professional status and development.

We all know that Teacher empowerment is absolutely vital if we want you teachers to be successful agents of educational change in the lives of your students.

I want you all to rest assured that the Ministry will ensure your on-going professional development. It will come up with programmes to improve the knowledge base and skills-set of teachers.

We all know how crucial capacity building is.

In fact, my Ministry proposes to come up with Zonal CPD Centres where peer-to-peer learning and the development of a community of practice can take effect. Again, at a time when ICT is opening new avenues for constant pedagogical renewal, it is only proper that your professional hands have to be delivered.

At the same time, I will turn to the Executive Body of your Union and suggest that fit-for-purpose programmes be mounted by the Union as well.

I mean, look at surgeons, for example: they don't wait for a capacity building program to come their way. Should they wait, they would never be aware of latest developments and technological innovations.

The same applies for you all. Don't wait for CPD to come your way.

It will.

And I will see to it that it does.

But also seek it and retrieve it on your own. Your role as a teacher has already evolved in an age of rapid technological change, an age where students are now easily accessing knowledge outside the classroom.

Professional development has ineluctably to become part of your lifelong learning drive.

So, don't go back to teaching thinking it is a rush job. Do not go at it with the traditional mindset that you have a deadline by which you have to "cover the syllabus".

I would be more than pleased if tomorrow you educators come to me and say, we have 'uncovered' the syllabus for our learners.

For it is only by your uncovering it that you will enable your learners to 'discover' its real essence in the true sense of the term!

On this important occasion therefore, let us all pledge to partner and work together, so as to fulfil our commitment vis-à-vis our children and our nation.

Happy World Teachers' Day to all of you.