

Speech of Hon. (Mrs) L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun  
Minister of Education and Human Resources,  
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research

Conference on Quality Assurance Framework for the TVET Sector  
Opening Ceremony  
Tuesday May 17, 2016

*Distinguished guests*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

A very Good Morning to you all.

Let me start by congratulating the Organizers of this Forum for helping to fulfill one of my cherished policy drives: giving TVET its *lettres de noblesse* and working towards making it a central pillar for the sustainable economic development of Mauritius.

We all know the crucial role played by education and training in building the capacity of a workforce with the cognitive and technical skills and competencies to enhance such a development. Empirical studies indeed suggest that a national average increase in education by one year increases the national output per capita by an estimated 3 to 6 percent.

This explains why all countries aspiring to a High Income status, which is also the objective of Mauritius, have given to TVET its due importance for the development of a skilled workforce. In many of them indeed, we have a high percentage of adults, in some cases accounting for about 70%, enrolled in TVET programs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The issue of Education and Human Resource Development stands high on the agenda of Government. You will recall that this government in its 2015-2020 program has shown its commitment to provide education and training of international standards to enable young Mauritians to be employable in new and emerging sectors of the economy, to have more fulfilling jobs and also to be competitive on the global market.

Hence, by emphasizing the significance to be attached to TVET, we are satisfying a **national imperative**.

But not just that.

Mauritius is also satisfying an **international imperative** by aligning itself with international commitments taken as a member of the community of nations.

Thus, at the 19<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, we committed ourselves to the development of TVET. The Nassau Declaration of June 2015 that emerged from the 19 CCEM makes for an eye-catching read.

Again, September last at the UN saw the global community taking the engagement to attain Targets 4.3 and 4.4 of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

For recall, Target 4.3 states that by 2030, equal access will be ensured to affordable, quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, while Target 4.4 pledges to substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills,

including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

You will appreciate therefore why I am happy that an important dimension of TVET is now being tackled through this Conference.

In the first place, a Quality Assurance Framework for the TVET sector will be elaborated with the involvement of relevant stakeholders.

Next, the Conference will enable the adoption of some of the best practices in different regions around the world as benchmarks. That should help the Mauritius Qualifications Authority to eventually come up with a Framework that is in line with international norms with the aim of making trans-border qualifications' recognition a reality.

At this junction, I will also place on record my gratitude to our three overseas Resource Persons for helping us in the realization of this objective. Thank you Mrs Katauskas, and Messrs Comyn, and Abidin, for bringing your wealth of experience, know-how and know-how-to to this venture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I must say that the MQA that started its operation in 2002 had developed Quality Assurance Standards that registered training institutions have had to abide by. However, a 14-year existence down the line along with the changing economic landscape calls for these existing Quality Assurance Standards to be revisited.

It has become imperative that that MQA comes up with a new Quality Assurance Framework in line with international norms with a view to better regulate the education and training sector, create the necessary environment for improved quality in training

in the TVET sector and hence face upcoming and future challenges and also lay emphasis on prior learning.

I believe this is also in keeping with the expectations of all parties.

There are indeed benefits that accrue to all parties when quality assurance is guaranteed.

For **students**, it implies an increased capacity of employment; for **employers**, it carries the imprimatur of the quality of the education and training provided and improves confidence in the validity of the professional certificates.

And for the **community** as a whole, it helps to increase the attractiveness of TVET programs and leads to the shedding of “not-for-my-child” prejudices.

Nor should we forget the benefits for the **Training Providers**: apart from increased acknowledgement for the legitimacy of their courses, there is also the potential for them to establish a network for inter-institutional cooperation and exchange of good practices.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Minister for Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, I am all too conscious of the importance of up-skilling and re-skilling in a constantly evolving and unpredictable work environment. The acquisition of new skills for **life long** and **life wide** learning is a sine qua non for the economic sustainability of our country.

And I also realise the work has to be done upstream so as to accompany that being done downstream.

Precisely because TVET has, for too long, been stigmatized as a pathway for school drop-outs and for those who have not succeeded in the academic stream, my Ministry is embarked on a major mission. This mission is to review the system so as to ensure, inter alia, that TVET becomes an alternative pathway valued by the different stakeholders, including talented students.

We have, in this context, embarked on some bold reforms at the primary and secondary education levels. We have to prepare our children to take up what we call jobs of tomorrow, which does not exist today. And for that we have no other choice than having a far sighted approach. The government is coming forward with the creation of new pillars like the Ocean Economy, Smart Cities and Bunkering. To realize these dreams it is essential that we prepare our man power. Hence the TVET sector is expected to work harder as we are moving in the direction of having Polytechnics dotting the educational landscape, in collaboration with reputed international institutions for joint awards.

And this, Ladies and Gentlemen, is where we need a **complementarity between education and training**. We do not want our youth emerging from this new environment at school to just dabble in any kind of amateurish and slapdash training and secure qualifications and competences that generate skepticism and are not recognized and accepted within the labour market

I therefore insist that, if we want to build a solid base for a post- school education and training system, one that will be the lifeblood of the social and economic development of our country , all registered training institutions will have to play their role in contributing towards this endeavour.

A robust quality assurance mechanism to ensure the expected standard of training can thus clearly be seen as being of high importance.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to note that the MQA has embarked on an ambitious agenda to play its role collaboratively with the different stakeholders. Indeed, the MQA plans to draw on the knowledge, ability and experience of stakeholders in all sectors of the Mauritian economy.

It is only through continuity with innovative policies that we can strengthen the system and build a truly integrated system of education and training with high and quality throughput rates.

With these words, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to reiterate my appreciation to the MQA and its Board Members for the laudable initiative to organise this Conference with a strong international benchmarking bias.

I also wish to thank, in particular, the representatives of registered training institutions who will ultimately use the guidelines in the Framework to develop their own quality assurance standards.

I would thank once again the three international Resource Persons for sharing their experience and contributing towards the development of the Quality Assurance Framework.

With this Ladies and Gentlemen, I welcome all participants once again to this Conference and look forward to an increasing collaboration from the stakeholders for

the cross fertilization of ideas that will lead to establishing the relevant Quality Assurance Framework for the TVET sector.

I wish all participants and the Conference facilitators a fruitful discussion and I now have the pleasure to declare this Conference on Quality Assurance Framework for the TVET Sector open.

Thank you for your attention.