

**Speech by Honourable (Mrs) L. D. DOOKUN-LUCHOOMUN,
Minister of Education and Human Resources,
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Launching of the Training in Food and Beverage Service for
the Unemployed
MITD- Ecole Hoteliere Sir Gaetan Duval
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Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to be among you this morning for the Official Launching ceremony of the Waiter Training project. This Project has as objective to train 1000 unemployed persons to become waiters with the right knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can then join the labour market.

I am informed that this Project will be run over a one and a half year period and that it has been mounted as a result of constant demand for trained waiters from hotels, restaurants, cafés, cruise companies and even from fast food and other catering outlets.

Obviously, when we talk about the labour market here, we all have in mind the necessity to have fit-for-purpose courses so tailored as to meet genuine and immediate needs.

You all know that the Tourism industry is “ l’un des fleurons de notre economie”, a major jewel in the economy’s crown. This

industry is, in fact, growing at a fast pace and, for all we know, could become the first pillar of our economy in a near future.

Indeed, that industry has experienced a 10.9 % growth in tourist arrivals in 2015 and, for the first quarter of 2016, the rate of growth has remained above 10 %. It is expected that this high growth will continue to spike and tourist arrivals will exceed 1, 240,000 this year.

This is not only due to increasing arrivals from our traditional markets: there are also new markets we are reaching out for, while policies are on for an increase in air traffic and cruise activities. These are very likely to give the additional boost we want the industry to have.

The positive part of this new scenario for our students present here today as well as the future ones is that the projected increase in tourists will generate more employment in this sector.

And employment opportunities will necessarily result in an increase in demand for trained labour.

Moreover, cruise lines are also increasingly tapping on local labour market for trained labour in hospitality sector, including waiters/waitresses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today there are more than 28 000 direct employment in the sector and if you take into consideration the number of indirect and induced employment, the figure exceeds 100 000.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

This situation inevitably has an impact upon the world of education and training.

Let us face it. We are still operating in an environment where technical, but especially vocational education, is considered as having a blue-collar stigma. For a long time our education system has reflected an ingrained academic bias. We tend to ignore that learners are naturally gifted and have preferences for activities that are more meaningful to them.

Besides, many of the skills that are needed for successful competition in the global market of today are skills that fall squarely into the technical/vocational area

So there is every reason for us to encourage our young persons to follow their aptitude for technical and vocational fields.

I'll just take one case in point: in a country like Finland that is internationally reckoned as having a highly successful educational system, we are told that some 45% of the students choose a technical track rather than an academic track, once their basic education is completed.

And this is today an international trend.

Accordingly, in the reform my Ministry has embarked upon, we intend to make of technical education an attractive educational option.

We want it to be a viable pathway for the acquisition of skills and competencies.

The Nine Year Continuous Basic Education will thus provide the foundation on which future learning will be based—and that learning will have different routes—the academic as well as the technical/ vocational ones.

I must also highlight that the training landscape is soon to change its configuration with the addition of three Polytechnics at Reduit, Montagne Blanche and Pamplémousses respectively.

This changed configuration will also lead to a revisiting of the role and the image of TVET.

Obviously, also, in this changing context, the MITD is called upon to review its training programmes. It will equally have to be in a position to attract quality trainees as well as quality trainers and embark on a programme to upgrade and expand its training facilities and infrastructure.

Rest assured that we will also be engaged in the international benchmarking of our TVET system.

Dear students,

As you embark on this training program, remember that you should look for those skills that will help enhance your professionalism. That, in turn, will help improve the overall standards of the Hospitality Industry in Mauritius.

I am certain that your trainers will refer to Bruce Buschel, who had been writing a series of posts in The New York Times. One of them is entitled “100 Things Restaurant Staffers Should Never Do”. I’ll just take three of the pieces of solid and professional advice he gave to waiters:

- (i) Never patronize a guest who has a complaint or suggestion; listen, take it seriously, address it.
- (ii) Know before approaching a table who has ordered what. Do not ask, “Who’s having the shrimp?”
- (iii) Never hover long enough to make people feel they are being watched or hurried, especially when they are figuring out the tip or signing for the check

Well, there are so many skills that you will have to acquire, so many professional approaches to be taken on board: being a waiter does not mean simply taking orders and serving customers. This Course will certainly make you see things from a different perspective.

Consequently, take the maximum from the training programme; ask questions and participate fully in the hands-on training. Remember that it will be your ultimate task to ensure that the customers' dining experience is a satisfying and pleasant one. Even if it turns out that there are shortcomings, learn from the experience.

I wish you success in your training and have the pleasure of officially launching this **Training Programme in Food and Beverage Service.**

I thank you all for your kind attention.