

**Address of Hon (Mrs.) L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun Minister of
Education & Human Resources Tertiary Education and
Scientific Research**

**Launch of National Diploma in Nursing
Polytechnics Mauritius (Pamplemousses campus)
Friday 24th November 2017**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good afternoon to you

It gives me great pleasure to participate today in the launching of the National Diploma in Nursing at Polytechnics Mauritius, Pamplemousses Campus.

This is the first of a series of programmes that will be on offer to persons who would wish to opt for domains of specialisation demanding a different skills -set altogether.

As you are aware, Skills Development is the new mantra on the international scene. It has also always been a priority for this Government to invest in Skills Development.

We strongly believe that skills development and relevant training are in themselves a major form of investment in people.

Let me also add that Polytechnics will, as from now, be indissociably part of the educational landscape of Mauritius. They are called upon to be the flagship institutions for skills development programmes at the higher end of the spectrum. In fact, Polytechnics have come about with the aim to better connect the world of learning to the world of work, especially keeping in view the priority sectors of the economy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Mauritian population is already aware of this novelty we have introduced into the world of Training through the Polytechnics set up here itself as well as those at Réduit and Montagne Blanche.

Let me reinforce that Polytechnic education to be dispensed in the three Polytechnics is called upon to play a highly significant role in human resource development. Enhanced industrial productivity through skilled manpower will become a reality thanks to the panoply of courses and programmes, collaboratively worked out, that these institutions will offer.

Obviously, all these courses and programmes will be phased in as the demand increases.

Let us never depart from one major fact.

Rebranding Technical Education and Training lies in Polytechnics becoming among the first choice institutions sought by students so as to enhance their chances of securing quasi-immediate employment after graduation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Around the world, governments and businesses face a twin crisis – a shortage of jobs and a shortage of skills. In 2013, McKinsey, the global management consulting firm, in its seminal publication titled, *Education to Employment: Designing a System that Works*, revealed that, often times, employers, education providers and learners live in parallel universes, that is, they have fundamentally different understandings of the same situation.

Let me surprise you with the findings of that study.

Fewer than half of **employers** believed that new graduates are adequately prepared for entry-level positions. There is nothing surprising here in that this is typically what **we** also hear in Mauritius.

On the other hand, **education providers** –72 percent of them! -- deemed their graduates ready for the world of work!!

Against this backdrop, the study aims to answer the quintessential question: how can a country successfully move its young people from education to employment?

I believe that all of you here present will join me in asserting that part of the solution lies in generating deep and entrenched partnerships—I am here talking of partnerships among stakeholders to deliver win-win scenarios for one and all.

In this context, you will all be pleased to know that Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd has already embarked on the process of building bridges with internationally renowned institutions. Of special consideration is programme delivery in areas like Tourism and Hospitality and ICT.

I need hardly stress that these programmes are going to have a strong industry focus—and this focus will run, right from the outset, in curriculum development through to internships and placements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is today a central, inescapable fact that has become almost a cliché. The fact is that, to compete in the economy of the future, workers need strong basic skills and foundations for adaptability, creativity and lifelong learning.

Now, to be adaptable, creative and engage in lifelong learning, it is of cardinal importance to consolidate the very foundations of education. The early years of learning are absolutely significant in that they make it possible to construct the entire edifice of future learning.

The sad fact is that, as UNESCO pointed out recently, many countries in the world are going through what this multilateral organisation calls the “Learning Crisis”.

This unfortunate state of affairs was also highlighted just last month when the World Bank published its flagship report entitled *Learning: To Realise Education’s Promise*.

This publication makes the clear distinction between schooling and learning: Just being in it does not mean that learning is effectively taking place.

Schooling is **not** equal to learning!

Now, what does this narrative tell us in Mauritius? It tells us that we should be mindful of this subtle but important difference. It also tells us that, too often, we get to be so engrossed in the outputs that we fail to really take stock of the outcomes.

Finally, it tells us that learning, in all its forms, should be prioritised.

Let me share with you that this finding brings a lot of grist to my Ministry's mill.

This finding indeed bodes well for the national education reforms that my Ministry is implementing with a focus on holistic education. Let me also seize this opportunity to encourage employers here present to work with education providers, especially in the secondary sector, so that students are exposed from a relatively young age to the types of skills—especially soft skills—that they need to succeed later at work.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, as we proceed to launch the National Diploma in Nursing, I deem it both timely and topical to remind you that, as early as of August 2015, in our Economic Mission Statement, *Vision 2030*, this Government articulated the potential of Mauritius as a regional hub for healthcare and medical services as well as a medical education centre of excellence for Africa.

Already, as a knowledge hub in the making, Mauritius offers great promise for the movement of students and scholars from across Africa and the region. This is already evidenced by the presence of an ever-increasing cohort of African students on our shores.

We intend to strengthen and sustain this drive.

Very shortly now, my Ministry will be presenting a Higher Education Bill that will consolidate our Higher Education landscape as a high quality and resilient destination.

In this context, Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd will be uniquely poised to address the middle-level manpower management needs of the country and also the region along with facilitating technology

transfer and skills development to enhance the socio- economic development of the country.

I wouldn't be surprised that the three Polytechnics in Mauritius will come to have a magnetic appeal for students in the region. Already, a number of my Colleague Ministers from different states of Africa have been expressing the wish to keep a tab on developments spearheaded by our Polytechnics.

This is why I am filled with a sense of pride, satisfaction and enthusiasm when I stand here today at the Launch of the programme in Nursing.

Obviously enough, I am also extremely pleased to witness a concrete manifestation of the collaboration between the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, my Ministry and Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd to train the next cohort of nurses for the country.

As for those students who will follow the Nursing Programme as from Monday next, they would also be proud and delighted that they are the pioneering students of Polytechnics Mauritius. As you know, Ladies and gentlemen, a full force of some 80 students has been recruited as a first batch.

Monday morning will mark one of the most important transitions of their lives. On Monday morning, they will walk down the corridors for the start of class. This will become a fertile ground for them to meet new persons, to make new friends and to establish new networks.

Despite the fact that they are not here today, I will seize the opportunity to wish them all the very best in their studies—the domain of health will only be enriched by the great humane and professional contribution they will bring to it.

Finally, let me end by thanking everyone who has collaborated towards the Launch of this National Diploma in Nursing at Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd.

This is only the start and the road is long.

I wish Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd good luck for the hard, demanding but certainly thrilling work ahead.

I now have the immense pleasure of formally launching the National Diploma in Nursing!

Thank you for your kind attention.