

Address by Hon Minister
IITE Seminar on ICT in Teacher Professional Development and
Inclusive Education

MITD Lecture Theatre
29 June 2017

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

It is pleasure for me to be with you this morning for this Seminar on the role that ICT can and does play in Teacher Professional Development and Inclusive Education.

A Seminar of this sort allows us all to set an international platform to share views on Information and Communication Technology can improve educational outcomes.

Another positive point is the experience that can be gathered with respect to the use of ICT in the management and administrative processes of the school.

I am given to understand that, in the morning session today, you will be provided with an insight on the use of ICT platforms, tools and technologies from international perspectives. I trust that during the course of the day, you will have an opportunity to share to reflect on how certain projects may be subsequently implemented.

I wish, here, to thank the UNESCO International Institute for Technologies in Education for coming forward with this seminar. This event itself is quite timely, coming as it does at a moment when a

number of initiatives are being adopted at the level of my Ministry to enhance the use of technology in the education sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is therefore important for schools to be proactive vis - a - vis learners' educational needs. It is also pivotal that teachers learn how to adapt this technology to effectively engage with and challenge students in the classroom.

We are currently in the process of securing Tablet PCs for use at lower Primary Level in Grades 1 to 3. This early adoption of technology becomes urgent as we are convinced it will provide an early start in the use of digital learning material relevant to local curricula.

My Ministry has thus been given the financial means to not only expand ICT in Primary Education but also to consolidate Computer Rooms in both the Primary and Secondary sectors. The hands-on practice that this consolidation will allow will be reinforced by the introduction of ICT corners in Secondary schools for Educators to, among other things, search the net for new approaches to teaching and learning.

Obviously, connectivity in schools has to be improved—and that is one of the top priorities for the Ministry of TCI.

Let me also inform all of you present that we are working towards the implementation of a major Student Support Programme for Grade 7 students next year. Two of the institutions working under the aegis of my Ministry, namely the Open University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Institute of Education, are busy on the development and customization of internationally available courses and digital contents. These will be accessed from the web for consultation by students from any technological device. The idea is to support student learning after normal school hours.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need to continue to see Mauritius staying high on the global digital scene. One example of such benchmarks is our position on the Affordability Drivers Index (ADI).

This, is a global index assessing the extent to which countries have implemented a number of factors that can lower the overall cost structure for broadband.

Mauritius stands 8th globally for 2017 in this metric.

Illustratively, Colombia and Turkey are in the top 10 in the ADI Index.

Take Colombia's *Plan Vive Digital*. It seeks to ensure that every Colombian has access to Internet and other technologies for them to participate , as informed citizens allowing a democratic dialogue. Obviously, one of the ways of so doing is to train teachers in the use of ICTs.

As for Turkey's *Fatih* program (a Turkish acronym translated as '*Movement to Increase Opportunities and Technology*'), it spearheads the "1-to-1 computing" feature whereby every student has her own laptop or tablet learning device.

Similarly, it is through such national processes of digitisation in Education, and through the expansion of technological tools to teachers and students, that we will inculcate knowledge and develop problem-solving skills.

We are keen on familiarizing our learners with tomorrow's world which will be increasingly technological in nature.

We are convinced that a wider access to the web in the domain of education will foster creativity and ingenuity right at the heart of the classrooms.

And we are persuaded that the human resource that will emerge from our educational institutions will be the ones who will be more entrepreneurial, build new companies, create new jobs and boost our economy.

However, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, we may have the right policies and the most upscale of technologies—we still need to have the capacities in place. .

And one of the ways of building capacities is to inspire ourselves from the good practices of others in the field.

In this context, I am appreciative to the support provided by the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE), based in Moscow, in showing us the way. This current support complements the Digital Awakening Project for the pre-primary sub-sector that IITE collaborated in under the UNESCO Participation Programme in 2015.

This collaboration with international (and also local) partners is indeed one of the surefire ways to create an enabling innovative environment in our schools, an environment in which learners and educators can thrive and excel.

Let me also show my appreciation for the IITE for not having sidelined one category of learners who are in dire need for greater inclusiveness.

It is absolutely vital that opportunities of access to technology in Education be opened as well to students who are challenged and who have special education needs.

Article 13 of the U.N Convention on the Rights of the Child, applies as much to learners with disabilities as for abled learners. It reads thus,

“The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.”

In Mauritius, we are keen on putting in place measures to ensure that **all** children, inclusive of children with special needs, are placed at the heart of our strategy of provision of access to knowledge. In fact, this is central in the new Strategy Document we are coming up with for the SEN sector.

It cannot be otherwise.

As custodians and stewards of quality in Education, it is our responsibility to come up with projects to facilitate the exposure of all children from all backgrounds to the benefits of ICTs and to develop their skills to participate in the national and global ICT arena with confidence.

I therefore thank the organisers of the Seminar for planning a meeting with the Education stakeholders in Special Needs Education this afternoon.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by reiterating my commitment to promoting student empowerment and achieving greater equity within the ICT sector. I also count on and thank again all local and international partners for their support in showing this new route of innovation in Education.

My Ministry looks forward to continuing this collaboration with the UNESCO IITE so as to build new policies and provide support to the educational transformation agenda for the benefit of all our learners.