

**Speech of Hon (Mrs) L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun
Minister of Education & Human Resources,
Tertiary Education & Scientific Research
Quality Assurance Workshop in Tertiary Education
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**Senior Chief Executive, Ministry of Education & Human
Resources, Tertiary Education & Scientific Research**

Chairman of the Tertiary Education Commission

Executive Director of the Tertiary Education Commission

Dr David Woodhouse

Associate Professor Arun Patil

Directors and Staff of TE Sector,

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to you all. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be associated with the launch of this Workshop on Quality Assurance in Higher Education. I believe the Tertiary Education Commission needs to be commended for this laudable initiative.

We all expect the emergence of a highly qualified intellectual capital from our Higher Education institutions. Such an emergence is directly proportional to and commensurate with the quality of the mechanisms and processes that are in place in these institutions. Indeed, if institutions want to deliver on their mission and achieve sustainable success, state of the art infrastructure must go hand in hand with the inculcation of the right skills and competencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, on your behalf, to extend a warm welcome to our two Experts, Dr David Woodhouse and Associate Professor Arun Patil and express our appreciation to them for facilitating the two Workshops

These workshops will undoubtedly provide you, participants, with the opportunity to enhance your knowledge and skills and adopt innovative ideas and best practices. Such empowerment is all the more crucial at a time when the issue of quality is high on our agenda.

Quality is, in fact, a key parameter for benchmarking the performance and success of tertiary education institutions.

Accordingly, there is a need for our tertiary education institutions to put in place robust internal quality assurance systems. In parallel, TEIs are expected to have the required expertise to ensure that, at every step within the chain of activities-- from the design and delivery of courses to assessment and evaluation of the output-- there are strict guidelines and mechanisms to be followed to ensure that quality prevails.

Of course, we all agreed that a Quality Culture has already taken root in the world of Higher education—and different illustrations attest to that.

Thus, the regulatory framework implemented by the Tertiary Education Commission since 2005 provides guidelines for, amongst others, the accreditation of programmes.

A Clinical Training Framework for Medical, Dental and Nursing Education also exists since 2009.

The Tertiary Education Commission, for its part, I am told, has made more than 1500 Quality Assurance interventions. Its involvements comprise registration and accreditation visits, investigations and quality assurance visits. And many of the quality assurance audits have involved international experts from Australia, Malaysia, South Africa, India and the UK.

Nonetheless, there is considerable scope for TEIs to aim even higher. This is especially important given our aspiration of becoming a Regional Knowledge Hub and a Centre of Higher Learning in this part of the world.

But merely aspiring is not the end of the road—we need to translate that into practical and visible reality.

We need to give a strong and clear signal to the outside world that we do not and will not compromise on the quality of higher education provided locally. It has to continue to be of international standards and norms.

And this caveat applies as much to private providers of higher education as the public ones.

Ladies and Gentlemen, This concern for positioning quality at center stage has dictated a series of new policy thrust.

Thus, we are coming up shortly with a **Higher Education Bill** to revisit the whole set-up governing higher education locally.

This is of cardinal importance in view of the challenges generated by the massification and expansion of tertiary education witnessed in Mauritius. Equally, our ambitioning to internationalize our higher education system necessitates a review of the existing legislative framework for a better control and regulation of the sector.

Another thrust is output-oriented. So as to improve the quality of the graduates coming into the labour market, my Ministry has decided on implementing consistency in the **qualification requirements for entry to higher education**. While up till now, the baseline for recruiting students for tertiary education was only 2 A-Levels, henceforth, to be able to pursue higher education, a prospective student should have either a full Cambridge HSC Certificate, that is, 3 A-levels and 1 subsidiary or 2 A-levels or 2 subsidiary or 3 A-level at London GCE.

Let me now come to the other dimension that practically all countries are having to come to grips with—the **skills mismatch** issue.

We do not doubt the capacity of our graduates, certainly. Yet, we cannot deny that considerable mismatch exists in the labour market and that the relatively high unemployment rate amongst graduates is partly attributed to a lack employability skills on their part.

Such a situation should be a cause for concern for all those involved in one way or the other with the business of tertiary education.

At the level of my Ministry, we are currently working, in collaboration with TEIs, to develop a framework for our public universities to clearly define, monitor and articulate what are referred to as 'graduate attributes' in their curricula.

Of course, I am here in the company of cognoscenti, of experts in the domain – and you are well aware of the usefulness demonstrated by such attributes that are an amalgam of skills, knowledge, and attitudes built up through a student's time at university. These are effectively the pre-requisites that students are expected to articulate and demonstrate when seeking employment and when working.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have at heart the welfare of our students. Our people are our greatest assets—and that is not a cliché. They have been and will continue to be the instigators of our country's economic success. In the decade to come, we expect our highly qualified human resources to play an increasingly prominent role, as we move towards a knowledge- driven and service-oriented economy.

As a responsible government, we have the obligation to ensure that our tertiary education sector produces graduates of the right calibre. In this context, quality assumes increasing significance.

This is a pre-condition if we want to attract new and emerging sectors and high-value added FDI to Mauritius.

It is also a pre-requisite if we want to ensure our local companies scale up their operations regionally and globally.

These two workshops today go in the right direction. They will provide a platform for the sharing of ideas and experience on the subject of quality assurance and enhancement in higher education. I have absolutely no doubt innovative ideas will mushroom to increase the effectiveness and efficiency with which quality improvement measures are implemented in the sector.

In fact, as a firm supporter of training and development and of continuous professional development, I would like to see such activities taking place on a more regular basis, for the benefit of the staff in the sector.

On this note Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to thank you for your participation at these important sessions and wish you successful and fruitful deliberations.

I now have the distinct pleasure and honour of declaring this workshop on Quality Assurance in Higher Education open.

Thank you