

# PRIVATE NOTICE QUESTIONS (PNQ)

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YEAR 2023

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## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS EXTENDED PROGRAMMES – SECONDARY SCHOOLS - COHORT 2018 TO DATE (09.05.2023)

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval)** (*by Private Notice*) asked the VicePrime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Extended Programmes in Secondary schools, she will state the number of pupils who –

- (a) have enrolled therein since 2018 to date;
- (b) are currently enrolled in Grades 7 to 9 and 9 +, and (c)  
in respect of cohort 2018 –
  - (i) had since dropped out and/or declined to sit for the 2022 examinations, and
  - (ii) have been admitted in the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development and the Institute of Technical Education and Technology, respectively.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Extended Programme is an integral part of the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education Policy.

As we know, one of the specific objectives of the NYCBE is and remains to provide learning opportunities for all students such that they can attain levels of achievement in keeping with their abilities and strength. This is in line with SDG 4 on education which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one key element of the NYCBE Policy has been to ensure that all students follow a common curriculum during their basic education cycle. Indeed, it is internationally recognised that learners should have the opportunity to access basic education as a foundation to future learning prior to being exposed to vocational programmes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in recognition of the fact that not all students have the same pace of learning nor the same aptitudes, provision has been made for the learners who would not successfully make it from the PSAC to follow the Extended Programme. However, unlike for learners in the Regular Programme, the Extended Programme is run over a period of four years instead of three years, culminating in the assessment leading to the NCE. Obviously, learners of the Extended Programme benefit from the common curriculum as I stated earlier but the assessment is adapted to their needs.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that 12,273 students have been enrolled in the Extended Programme from 2018 to date.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the number of pupils currently enrolled in Grades 7 to 9 and 9 + stands at 11,172 –

- (i) Grade 7: 2,600;
- (ii) Grade 8: 2,720;      (iii) Grade 9:  
2,837,
- (iv) Grade 9 +: 3,015.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard part (c)(i) of the question, I am informed that for the cohort 2018, 277 students dropped out and 468 students declined to sit for the 2022 NCE examination.

With regard to part (c)(ii) of the question, I am informed that 457 are currently enrolled in the MITD Training Centres and ITET Centres and this accounts for 79% of the total number of students currently pursuing the NC2 Level 2 Programmes, including Rodrigues.

The National Certificate Level 2 was conceived to reinforce and strengthen the numeracy and literacy and digital IQ of the learners as well as to introduce them to the essential skills in various trades for the new emerging economy. The NC2 is also aimed at cushioning their landing into the technical and technological education for Extended Stream learners. We have here, a group of learners that are of mixed intelligences and that may find themselves more at ease in a different setting than that of an academic education. This is the vision of the

Government and the ethos of the national reform to broaden the choice for learners and expand the pathways into further education and the world of work.

Students emerging from the Extended Stream are currently enrolled in a diverse array of programmes at NC2 level including –

- a) Electric Installation;
- b) Aluminium and Wood Works;
- c) Agriculture;
- d) Landscape Maintenance;
- e) Art and Craft;
- f) Food and Service Production;
- g) Pastry,
- h) Housekeeping amongst others.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I do not think the figures given are right but I will not fight on this. 11,000 are presently in the schooling system, 3,000 started in 2018 and finished. So, even with my limited schooling, it does not come to 12,000 but I will not fight about that. Let us leave it like that.

We agree that, according to me, 15,000 people; according to you, 12,000 pupils have joined the Extended Programme since the start. That is already a huge amount of people. 71 pupils passed the NCE exams in October. 71 out of 3,291 cohort. That is hardly 2%. 98% failed or some resat the year as you said previously.

What I will ask the Vice-Prime Minister now is that there have been individual continuous pupil assessments supposedly; there was a World Bank Report in 2020 - an excellent report; there have been reports from School Inspectors published in the Press and finally, there were Mock Exams in September 2022 where more than 90% of the children reportedly failed. What has prevented the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to avoid a disastrous result where 71 children only passed out of an original cohort of 3,291, meaning 3,200 children have been left *sur le pavé*?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the records from the MES state that the percentage pass is around 3.6% for the Extended Programme but at the same time, we have to consider that the past years, we intended to provide these students with additional support and

we have been receiving support from the NSIF as well to ensure that we give them sufficient support but we must not forget that the past two years, with the COVID-19 and the confinement period, have not at all been helpful and we have not been in a position to provide them with all the intended services that we had in mind. And, taking into account that these students are already having learning difficulties during the confinement period, all the support that was provided was not really appropriate for them and they did not really benefit from the additional support that was intended for them.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am extremely disappointed. We are not here to cover here or there. We are here to discuss about the future of 15,000 people and 11,000 currently in the system. So, I would ask the Minister to address the issues that are there; not to hide behind COVID. Now, I will raise from that point onwards, the report of the World Bank of June 2020 which I presume you are very familiar with.

This is one of the most damning reports that I have seen in my whole career, in about 35 years. This is one of the worst reports on any education system or any Government system that I have seen in my career. This report, Mr Speaker, Sir, has a lot of recommendations. Can I take one or two and ask the Minister why she has not implemented them? Firstly, the need to involve the families of these children into the educational system was raised, I do not have the exact point now but it was raised at point 5 of the World Bank Report. Why has nothing been done to involve the families of these children – which is a crucial point – in the education system of the Extended Programme?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to differ. We already have at the level of the Ministry the National Educational Counselling Services for the number of Social Workers and Psychologists who, in fact, do meet the parents and talk to them whenever the need arises and all cases reported to the Ministry where we find that there are certain students having certain specific difficulties, are taken care of.

The involvement of the parents has also been done with the partners from the NSIF. We been working with the parents and we have been even working with NGOs, helping the parents to try to follow what is happening at school with their children. Families and NSIF have been working with the Ministry and there are certain students that are earmarked and identified and this work is being done.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, you see the problem? On one side, we are told that you could not do anything because of COVID, and then, when we say you should have involved

families, you say you have done it. So, it has clearly nothing to do with COVID. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the point that I wanted to raise, that whatever was done, there has been a historical failure ...

**Mr Speaker:** Put your question!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** ...of 71 students only passing.

**Mr Speaker:** Put your question!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I have to explain, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** But do not take too much time.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** There has been, according to my information which I have canvassed, no involvement of any significance of families in the teaching of these children. The other point raised by the World Bank Report, point number 9, said that these children... **Mr Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, bear with me.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I need to explain, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am on my feet, you listen to me. You listen to me! Don't take a question as a pretext for debate. You are conducting a debate. You have supplementary questions, put as many supplementary questions. The population is waiting for the answers.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Yes. And the population is not waiting for your intervention. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister concerning innovative teaching methods. These children have already failed in a normal system. According to the World Bank and according to teachers I have spoken to, why has she not ordered, recommended the use of innovative teaching methods, extra-curricular activities, computer-based learning, etc.? Why has she not recommended these?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I draw the attention of the House that the report that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is talking about is the World Bank report and is a formative mid-term report for evaluation. In fact, we have been introducing innovative methods, but we have also to bear in mind that the students have difficulties and we need to ensure that we give them the support and we move at a their pace. We have been doing all that.

As far as innovative methods of teaching is concerend, teachers in class have been doing special efforts for these students. But we do agree - I am the first one to say - that the results

are not what we wanted, but we must consider and we must bear in mind that these students already have a number of difficulties within the school set up but also outside the school set up. We are trying as far as possible to give them all the support needed, scaffolds for them to rise.

What I stated about COVID-19 is that COVID-19 did not help. It, in fact, exacerbated the situation. But whatever had to be done at the level of the Ministry, at the level of NSIF, we have been doing it. We do understand that these children require additional support. This is why apart from our National Educational Counselling Services, we have also turned to NSIF where we are getting support from NGOs which are going into schools and helping out, trying to give additional support.

We have been evaluating the progress of the students in the Extended Programme and we have noted that some of them are capable of improving very fast, while others require more efforts. This is what we have been doing. The mid-term report has, in fact, given us certain clues and we have been working according to the recommendations, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Talking about innovative practices, we have been doing a lot, and I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is aware that we have been doing after-school activities with all these students. We have the outdoor educational programmes which have been included. We also have so many collaborations with the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation where we are trying to provide to these students all the required scaffolds for them to rise and to build up on their self-esteem.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the real drama...

**An hon. Member:** *Nanye pa kone!*

**Mr X. L. Duval:** You have a loan supporter somewhere.

The real drama is that according to teachers of this programme, this year's exams will be the same, if not worse in terms of results than last year, unless, of course, we play again with the pass marks.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wanted to ask the hon. Minister - and here we cannot play around - according to the World Bank, 60% of the teachers said that the curriculum was not practical enough, was not adapted to the needs of these children who are far less literacy minded and more practical minded. Following that report of 2-3 years ago, she has not changed that

curriculum at all. What would be expected are programmes like metalwork, woodwork, agriculture, electrical and mechanical studies, etc., rather than what she is offering.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is where the hon. Leader of the Opposition seems not to be aware at all of what is happening in schools. What we have tried to do, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to engage these students. We know that they have had difficulties earlier, we need to see how to get them engaged and we want the system to be more inclusive. This is what we are trying to do.

As far as getting them to woodwork or metalwork right now, it is internationally proved that we need not to push children at a very young age into the vocational stream, but instead we should provide them with the necessary tools for them to be able to move on to the vocational training. This is what the NCE Level 2 is doing. We are trying to get them to build up on their knowledge and also to acquire the necessary skills to be able to move on to the next step.

Talking about what is being done and about the assessment, I have in this very House, Mr Speaker, Sir, stated in a reply to a PQ addressed by hon. Dr. Gungapersad that there are two committees at the level of the Ministry working on the NCE and on the Extended Programme, and we are trying to see how best to support them.

In fact, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition had taken the pain to look at the Annual Programme that is gazetted, he would have noted that even the assessment has been reviewed. And for passing the NCE for the Extended Programme, we have tried to help them more so that now they have to pass in three core subjects and any three other core subjects. So, this is important, we have not been turning a deaf ear to whatever recommendations that have been made.

As far as the teachers are concerned, we know that they are having a lot of difficulties and I do understand that they are putting in a lot of efforts. Now, we need to see how best we can support these children. We must not forget that these are the children that require the most of our support and attention, and this is what the Ministry is doing. We are not rushing into things, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are carefully evaluating, following up and trying to provide all support needed to these students. It is not enough to come and say that something is not working.

Earlier, we have had other courses like the prevocational, has there been any evaluation done of that programme? None, never! But we are actually doing an evaluation and we are following these students. We are working with the teachers. We are trying to support the teachers because I do agree - I am the first one to agree - that it is not easy to work with a group of students with mixed abilities and all, but the teachers are doing an excellent work. We have come up with lots of support.

It is true that the results that we have had are not to our expectations, but as I have said earlier, we must understand that COVID-19 has impacted on all children, but mostly those that are weakest. This is why it is important for us to tackle the issue with care and concern and not to try to take any form of, let us say, gains from that situation. We are here to help these children. I am the first one to tell you that the results were not good and we are taking measures at the level of the Ministry to ensure that we help them better.

For the years to come, the Committee working on Extended Programme is also trying to see how best we can adapt the assessment system to these students.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we want to see the results, not just talk. It is not how hard you work, but what you get done which is important. I would like to ask the hon. Minister, you were talking about evaluation, and you mentioned last time that you were talking to the World Bank concerning the Extended Programme. Yet, I note from the *Aide Memoire*, which is a public document from the World Bank, that no agreement has been reached on another evaluation by the World Bank because they did an extremely good job on the Extended Programme. Why is that? Why have you not re-hired them for this job?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House that even a first evaluation was done by us with the help of the World Bank and there were certain points raised in the Mid-Term Review. Now, we are still working with them. I have just said a few minutes earlier that we are not rushing to things. We are still discussing; we are still working on the system. Now, how do you want us to just say, come and evaluate a system that has not been completed yet. We are working on it and we cannot rush into it. It is important because we are talking about our children, those that need our attention the most. So, no rushing in, Mr Speaker, Sir! We are working steadily and we want to ensure that whatever system we put up is in the best interest of our children.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we are into the sixth year of the Extended Programme. Thousands of children have lost their *avenir*, their future because of this



malfunctioning system and badly designed system. Now, I want to ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister another question now which is maybe going to be more difficult to evade. Everyone says, the teachers say and the World Bank says that there is no provision to assess the health issues relating to children. Some children may not be studying so much, etc... but some students are not well. They may have epilepsy, they may have dyslexia. These children are included and if you don't believe me, go and check! In fact, go and do your work! In fact, these children are included in the normal Extended Programme of the schools as we speak today.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we have at the level of the Ministry, the Health and Wellness Directorate where we have two Physicians, Medical Practitioners and we have a whole team of officers following our children. Now, it may happen that some of the students do have certain ailments, certain health issues but we have a system and we are working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, which normally sends officers to follow our students and we have come up with the Health Card - it has started - and we are working with the schools to ensure that we follow them.

Furthermore, in our curriculum, we have introduced the healthy lifestyle and we are following the students even in that line. Now, I wish to draw the attention of the House that we have come up with a Special Education Needs Authority and the Special Education Needs Authority has been monitoring what is happening in Special Education Needs Schools and after a proper assessment by Medical Practitioners, these students are then integrated in our normal system and we keep on following them. Now, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying that there are certain students who are not well, now, we have a system and we normally refer our cases of students having problems with their health to the Ministry of Health. We do not have the capacity at the level of the Ministry to follow up; we just identify, we give immediate help and support and then we refer cases to the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** As a layman, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot see how children with these sorts of health problems should be in the normal schooling. I would like to ask the hon. VicePrime Minister, since she is following up everyday on these children who are not well, whether she will circulate the list in each school of how many children are on her health watch list? If she could do that, that would be a very important thing. Mr Speaker, Sir...

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir...

**Mr X. L. Duval:** She can say 'yes' or 'no' in a moment.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, let the Minister answer!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Yes or no?

**Mr Speaker:** You put a question!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** She can!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I do understand that there may be students having epilepsy and all but I would also draw the attention of the House and I will talk *sous la correction des membres qui sont des médecins*, a person having epilepsy needs to be followed and needs to have proper medication but this does not debar such a person to have a normal life and to be in school and to get care whenever required, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister - it has been two and a half years into the implementation of the Programme, that is, when the World Bank made its Report. It noted significant management failings in the operation of the system which has, in fact, largely I presume, cause all these issues, only 71 persons passing. One of the things the World Bank said is that - believe it or not, Mr Speaker, Sir, - after two and a half years there were no written guidelines issued to the teachers. No written guidelines! And this is also what it said, Mr Speaker, Sir, on page 9 –

“Teachers and School Managers have been insufficiently prepared for their roles in the EP.”

Now, this was before COVID-19, I just remind you in case you tell me that it was COVID-19 and you might not been able to do it because of COVID-19. So, this was in 2019, two and a half years after the set-up and these poor children were studying supposedly.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the reason why we have a Mid-Term Review and this is the reason why we had this evaluation. I stated earlier that this was an evaluation and it was there to guide us. Now, let me inform the hon. Leader of the Opposition that since then we had a number of guidelines provided to all the practitioners, all the stakeholders. And if he is still referring to a report of 2019, I would suggest that he goes and sees what is being done right now at the level of our schools instead of getting stuck to that Mid-Term Review of 2019, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** My point, Mr Speaker, Sir, was that two and a half years afterward, all these right people in the Ministry of Education had not come up with one simple guideline and have not been able to form the very teachers that were supposed to train these poor children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask....

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to reply on this.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** No, let me ask the question and then you answer.

**Mr Speaker:** No! Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I would like to reply on what has just been said.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister wants to answer, let her!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I would like to state that at the level of the Ministry, with the academy for the professionals in education, we have been constantly having training for the teachers of EP and we have not only stopped at that, we have also put up a platform for exchange and we have a community of best practices established and we do meet. These teachers meet regularly and there is a lot that is being done that has escaped the vision of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I am referring to the World Bank Report. It's not my own...

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The World Bank Report is of 2019.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** No, 2020! Two and a half years after, June 2020. Do not mislead the House on this issue! It is June 2020!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir...

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. ...

**Mr Speaker:** Wait! Wait a minute! The Minister wants to reply to this!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we are in 2023. We have been doing lots of work at the level of the Ministry that the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not seem to be aware about. Now, we have been working with all these teachers; we have established platforms for them to exchange their practices, to learn from each other, to know what has to be done, and to avoid doing certain things that did not work well. So, coming to tell me that in 2020, in 2019, things were said...

**Mr X. L. Duval:** 2020!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** 2020, fine! We are in 2023 and between 2020 and 2023, there are lots of work that have been carried out at the level of the Ministry which the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not seem to be aware of.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** We are talking about June 2020!

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously all these should be in the Extended Programme, all these people clapping!

**Mr Toussaint:** *Nu pena problem!*

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, because obviously they have not understood anything...

**Mr Toussaint:** *To tro intelligent twa!*

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask a question...

**Mr Toussaint:** *Nu, nu kuyon.*

**Mr X. L. Duval:** *Le poulailler continue!* Anyway, Mr Speaker, Sir...

*(Interrupti*

*ons) Mr Speaker:* Order!

**Mr Toussaint:** *La honte!*

*(Interrupti*

*ons) Mr Speaker:* Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr Toussaint:** *Nous en extended! La honte lor twa!*

*(Interruptions*

*) Mr Speaker:* Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

*(Interrupti*

*ons) Order!*

**An hon. Member:** *Raciste!*

*(Interrupti*

*ons) Mr Speaker:* Order!

*(Interrupti*

*ons) Order!*

**Mr Toussaint:** *Mo esperer bann zenfan la pe*

*ekoute.* **Mr Speaker:** Hon. Toussaint! Last time,  
order!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Leader of the Opposition! I am on my feet! You listen! You said, I heard well, that those Members on the other side have to be admitted to the Extended Programme. Remove that!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I remove it!

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you very much!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Toussaint should have cared about the 3,200 children who failed! Who failed! Who failed! 3,200 children! And there are 3,000 this year!

**Hon. Members:** *La honte! La honte!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Hon. Members:** *La honte! La honte!*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Order! Order in the House! Hon. Minister you may reply.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I rarely lose my temper, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions*

*)* **Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister you may reply.

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Leader of the Opposition! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you listen. I am on my feet. You put a question, she is replying.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** No, I did not put a question yet.

**Mr Speaker:** So what did you do?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I was talking to Toussaint.

**Mr Speaker:** You were shouting. What you should do?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over! Time is  
over!

**An hon. Member:** *Bien bon!*

**Mr Speaker:** You have no question, you were shouting! Time is over!

You had no question, you were shouting for nothing.

Prime Minister's Question Time!

*(Interrupti*

*ons)* Order!

*(Interruptions)* Order! Order!

**An hon. Member:** *Bérenger kine fer twa redi koumsa!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

The Table has been advised that PQ B/398 has been withdrawn.

MP Lobine!