

Address of Hon (Mrs) L.D.Dookun-Luchoomun

Vice Prime Minister

**Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science
and Technology**

MIE Graduation Ceremony

July 24, 2023

***Mr S. Samlall, Senior Chief Executive
Ministry of Education, Tertiary
Education, Science and Technology,***

***Dr (Mrs) Jayantee Naugah, PDSM,
Chairperson MIE Council and Board
members***

***Dr Hemant Bessoondyal, Director,
Mauritius Institute of Education***

Council Members

Mr O Saraye, Registrar, MIE

***Head of Schools & Departments,
Academic & Non-Academic Staff of
the Institute***

Graduands and parents

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to you all.

Today is indeed very special. I am here with you and your family members to celebrate your success as learners and professionals. Having been an Educator myself, I am very much aware of the efforts you have invested and the sacrifices you have made to reach your goal.

In fact, what has typically characterised this country and its population is the premium we have traditionally attached to hard work and unrelenting effort. Our history clearly bears testimony to that—so much so that it has become an inalienable part of our national DNA.

I convey to you all my sincere congratulations and I know that your hard work will serve as an example to inspire many others.

Ladies and gentlemen,

All of us here present are indissociably linked to the world of Education—you, Graduands, as practicing Educators, the Faculty of the MIE, the Board members and even the family members who have always been unwavering and insistent stakeholders.

I would like to situate today's Graduation Ceremony within broader perspectives.

One of the first things that would strike a school visitor is the changing configuration of the classroom today.

Obviously, I am not merely taking here of the physical, infrastructural one.

The rigidity of the traditional 3 R's has given way to a panoply of learning areas that go beyond the core subjects. We are today catering for the social-emotional development of learners, fostering the growth of empathy, stressing the whole-person development through a number of initiatives that were thought-of as non-formal education at one time. The 'Natation Scolaire' or the 'After-school Sports', among others, are not merely imparting technical skills but also the soft, relational ones.

Talking of Relational skills brings to my mind a blog post that appeared in

November 2021 by a Chief Academic Officer of Janison, an Australian company providing online learning solutions. The author highlights how, in a post-pandemic context, the classical 3 Rs – Reading, Writing and Arithmetic—have, ‘morphed’ into the new 3 Rs, namely, Responsiveness, **Resilience** and **Relationships**.

This is seen as well in our schools that are now prepared to strategically **respond** to new crises, where teachers have developed the **resilience** to chin up and face adversities, and where there is an ‘*eagerness*’, an alacrity for learners to balance the pandemic-driven reliance upon tablet and laptop with the

re-establishment of an empathetic **relationship** with teachers.

So, I was saying, the traditional core standards of schooling have changed.

So have the structures set up to assist the class teachers in schools.

Thus, today, the educational reform is applying a brake to the accumulation of learning deficits at source. We are ensuring that children who require additional support have access to, Support and Holistic Teachers to address their learning difficulties and bring about their holistic development. Teachers now work as a team. In fact, we have taken a synchronised approach looking at how the curriculum can be adapted, how

technology can be factored in, how teaching and learning can be enhanced and how assessment needs can be reviewed

Nor should the contribution of EdTech or Technology-enabled Learning (TEL) be minimised. It is no secret for any of us that students can often be very resourceful and inventive in generating information and knowledge that sometimes even the adults may not have. Technology contributes to that in a most effective manner.

I guess we are all fully cognizant of the on-going debate on Technology.

Yes, technology has its downsides.

Yes, technology can pose a threat to old ways of life.

Yes, it can impact on creativity and authenticity.

But it can also be harnessed to empower us in ways that were not imaginable before. It is up to you Educators to master it, to shape it to serve your purpose. As I stated in my intervention in a UNESCO Forum on AI.

“AI is here to stay. It should be embedded into systems so it enhances but not supplant education systems and the human thought processes.”

Thus, ChatGPT may well be decried as a threat to critical thinking and as instrumental in playing havoc with

assessment practices. But, ladies and gentlemen, it has a number of uses as well.

We should not be throwing the baby out with the bathwater!!

My Ministry has already set up the policy, infrastructure and the structures to leverage the power of technology throughout the system.

Dear Graduands,

It has been said that the capacity to adapt to changes, even more so to anticipate changes is like rowing a boat upstream, in counterflow. Should you stop for one second, you will be carried downstream. It's no easy task. But the effort must be constant.

That is precisely the way to enhance the professionalisation of teachers.

You dear Educators, as custodians of the future of our learners, must respond and adapt to these changes in an innovative and thoughtful way. More importantly, you may even be the creators and initiators of change. These capacities can certainly be developed through taking advantage of formal professional learning opportunities.

But you have to be vigilant here. Of course, acquiring professional credentials to secure employment, maintain one's position and status or to progress in one's chosen career are legitimate reasons for professional learning.

Educators, must go for continuous professional development and this will ensure the transformation of our system. This is the most important factor in policy implementation and success.

I hope that you realise that your professional award today ideally positions you to become the best agents of change.

But this only if you choose to do so!

And I am convinced that you will walk the many extra miles to use your newly acquired knowledge for the benefit of your learners?

Would you be willing to foster the impetus for self-motivation, buttress the willingness to be a change agent, have the humility to share the best and next

practices? These are aspects of the commitment you must actively demonstrate now that you have completed your award.

In this context, I would impress upon you the necessity for you to remain lifelong learners, to constantly reskill and upskill yourselves.

Remember that if we want your learners to be future ready, we must first future proof ourselves, our skills and competencies.

My Ministry will be there to support you. The Academy for Educational Professionals based at my Ministry has already started stepping up the establishment of communities of practice

through an open sharing of know-how and know-how-to among educators and Heads of schools.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We live in a world of complexity and nuances. No change is ever entirely good or bad. We must learn to shift our perspective and see opportunities to create the best outcomes for our students. They are and should indeed remain the focus and locus of all our efforts. Government has spared no effort to ensure that education is free across all levels, from pre-primary through to tertiary. It is the only government in our history to have adopted such a bold

social justice stance. Both our intentions and actions are synchronized to provide equal opportunities for every Mauritian child to find his or her place in the sun.

Our vision for education has not changed. It is still steadfastly guided by principles of equity, fairness, inclusiveness: no child should be overlooked because of adverse life circumstances or accumulated deficits; every child must find in education a pathway to succeed in life.

And we will never skimp or compromise on quality.

We owe it to the next generation.

Obviously, there is always more to be done—education is too dynamic and one signpost ineluctably leads to another.

With your help, though, a lot can be achieved.

Your certificate is certainly an add on to your credentials.

Give life and meaning to it by espousing and commitment innovation and infusing integrity in your professional path.

Congratulations once again to you and your family members. Your task ahead may be a demanding one but it is also an extremely gratifying one.

I wish you all a joyful and rewarding career in the education sector.

Thank you.