

Address of Hon (Mrs.) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, G.C.S.K

**Vice Prime Minister
Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Polytechnics Mauritius
Graduation 2024
Wednesday 8th May 2024**

Mrs. Sandrine Valere, Ag. SCE of my Ministry;

Prof. Theesan Bahorun, Chairman, Polytechnics Mauritius;

Mr. Yamal Matabudul, CEO, Polytechnics Mauritius;

**Academic Representatives of HTMi Switzerland, La Trobe University
Australia, and UNIMY Malaysia;**

Distinguished Faculty and staff of Polytechnics Mauritius;

Students, Graduands of Class of 2024, Parents;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning to you all.

It gives me great pleasure to be among you today for this Graduation Ceremony, which I understand is the first of three sessions, given the large number of students graduating. At the very outset, let me congratulate you, each and every one of you 389 students graduating over the next two days, on this outstanding achievement. Congratulations are also in order for your proud parents and special ones. They have worked as hard in getting you here.

Dear Graduands,

You are graduating at a time when we see the world going through a tremendous flux—but let us also comfort ourselves with the fact that mutability is equally making room for plenty of opportunities. You are certainly aware that, the world over, there has been traditionally a premium placed on qualifications secured from Universities—the notion has been so persistent and enduring that even the concept of being educated is defined by university credentials secured.

According to the World Economic Forum, the nature of work is undergoing drastic changes and the future points towards a scenario where the right skills

will be favoured. We can understand why when we keep in view the current context of rapid technological advancements that necessitate specific technical skills not necessarily offered by traditional degree programs.

The OECD, for its part, backs up this pro-skills slant with figures. According to its 2022 report, 80% of jobs have not yet been created, of which 75% will be require IT skills and more than 50% will not necessarily require a university credential but a more skills-based approach. At its Davos meeting in January this year, the World Economic Forum agreed on a global reskilling revolution by 2030 and the need to prepare 1 billion people for tomorrow's economy. That's a seventh of the world population.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are changing times. The World is evolving. Today, the after effects of the global pandemic, conflicts around the world, climate change, technological shifts are some of the forces that are rapidly recalibrating world order. The OECD's Education Policy Outlook 2023 report informs us that 23% of global jobs will change due to industry transformation, including AI and other text, image and voice processing technologies. We are being subjected to new challenges-- from digital transformations to global supply chain imperatives: we have to carve out niche areas for an emerging economy like ours to redefine the role and impact that our island state can have in the region and the world.

Graduands, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This leads me to make a reflection on the future of what we commonly call careers.

For long, the notion of "work" had been understood through types of "occupations" that were undertaken for a significant period of a person's life, with opportunities for improvement and promotion, and potentially framed as "careers".

But, today, more than ever, the idea that individuals train to learn a set of skills or acquire knowledge that prepares them for one stable career is outdated.

This is the ground zero reality. What US Professor Frank Parsons, considered as the Father of Careers Counselling, called “choosing a vocation” in 1909, has now been supplanted by employers who want people who are good at problem-solving and analytical thinking, have digital skills and can demonstrate leadership, initiative and resilience. And leadership does not simply mean reaching a position of power – where one is imbued with authority.

Naturally, this stirs the need for a modern, diversified and innovative approach to education, an education ecosystem that caters to all. Each Child matters.

I will make the parallel with the Banyan tree that grows and spreads its branches and shade to all. We are driven by the conviction that our education system that rests on the pillars of Equity, Quality and Inclusiveness should provide for vocational, technical, and higher education. We want learners throughout this nation to find their place within our system. We also want industry to find adequately trained graduates that are employable and productive right from Day 1 in employment

Dear Graduands, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was this very belief that led us to conceive Polytechnics Mauritius within the national education reform. The idea has always been to put forward a purpose-driven education that paves future careers in emerging sectors of the economy.

It's rather about the importance attached to workplace skills.

Today's ceremony is proving this to be right. I am very glad to hear that more than 95% of you have already secured employment and that Polytechnics Mauritius now counts more than 5000 students in terms of student body.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me also place on record my appreciation for the effective working partnership between education and industry. In an age of micro-credentials, stackable credentials, and skills-based programmes, we need to encourage different approaches to learning and work alongside industry. The intersection of the two is whole-heartedly supported. There is no doubt that this is a winning formula

for shaping a high-skills workforce and is again at the backbone of our educational reform.

I hope that the young learners here present have made full use of the mentoring and coaching that they have received from Industry experts. Such proximity with industry at such an early stage will shape your thinking and give the necessary fillip for an increased awareness of the ground reality.

Dear Students,

Before ending, I have three pieces of advice for you.

Mistakes may happen but, learn from every mistake because every experience, and encounter, are there to allow to grow serve as lessons.

Second, you have to go through life with more than just passion for change; you need a strategy and a goal. I'll repeat that. It's good to be passionate, but you have to have a strategy. We have never had as alert a generation as Gen Z. Whether it is climate change, sustainability, technology, health and many more.

Don't just discuss and debate.

Act !!.

Think not just in terms of job seeking but job creation.

If you have an idea, be bold to pursue it.

And, third, live with integrity. There is never a second chance to make a first impression. Character is more important than cleverness. Build a strong and ethical character.

So, once again, congratulations to all of you, Graduands, as well as the teachers and staff of Polytechnics Mauritius on this achievement.

Godspeed to all of you in your future endeavors.

I thank you for your attention.