

**Speech of Hon (Mrs) L.D.Dookun-Luchoomun  
Minister of Education & Human Resources,  
Tertiary Education & Scientific Research**

**Cambridge Outstanding Learner Awards  
20 June 2016**

**Good Morning.**

This is the second time I am attending the Cambridge Outstanding Learner Awards Ceremony as Minister for Education, and, take it from me, the sense of pride and satisfaction is as strong as ever. To see young Mauritian students excelling in their studies is indeed a rich source of pride for me. If I ever need further motivation to keep improving the education we offer our children, this is it!

It goes without saying that my first thoughts naturally go to all our prize winners.

Dear Students, on behalf of my Ministry and in my personal name, I congratulate you for your tremendous achievement. No doubt, it wouldn't have been easy to get where you are-- there must certainly have been some bumpy roads on the way, hurdles that must have made you apprehensive.

But you will agree that is what adds to the delight of the task.

And the results are here to show your capacity to face the odds, to overcome them and to indelibly inscribe your names on the honors board. This is your day, the day when you gain recognition both nationally and internationally.

I hardly need to stress that your success at an international level shines on the country as a whole.

**Dear students**, while I say ‘Well done’ to you, to your teachers, to your Rectors and to your parents, I will also remind you to persevere on that track!

You have demonstrated that you are gifted for specific areas of learning. That is what sets you off from others. No doubt, many others are quite bright as well. After all, being bright or gifted or, again, talented is not something circumscribed or defined by geography.

Still, you have demonstrated that it was as important for you to ask the right questions as to have a knowledge of the answers, and that, you were keen on drawing the right inferences.

Nonetheless, in all education systems, whether operational in the developed world or the developing ones, there is space for all. These systems seek to cater to the needs of a diversity of learners. None is excluded—neither the ones with learning difficulties nor the high achievers.

And the reform we have embarked upon in the Education sector in Mauritius keeps this dimension in view.

We are certainly concerned about those who accumulate learning deficits—we must make sure and we are ensuring that they are ‘pulled up’ through a series of intervention strategies.

We are also certainly and deeply concerned about the inclusion process for those with special education needs, those who are challenged, whether physically or otherwise.

But we are equally concerned about the bright and the gifted and the talented. We have to create the ethos for them to demonstrate their capability as well.

Equity in no way means a levelling down, it is in fact a means to ensure that everyone is on board.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to comment on one more dimension of the new Reform Agenda spearheaded by my Ministry.

You may recall that the World Education Forum held in May 2015 at Incheon, in the Republic of Korea, agreed on 5 key themes as central to education : *Right to Education, Equity in Education, Inclusive Education, Quality Education and Lifelong Learning*. These are also aptly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal 4 that the global community has given the nod to.

One of the prime goals behind the Mauritian Education Reform is to transform our learners—all of our learners-- into lifelong learners.

This explains my strong advocacy for every learner entering the system to complete at least secondary schooling as a foundation for lifelong learning.

It cannot be otherwise: the price to be paid for not doing that can be very high. Evidence exists that those who leave education at an early age face a significantly higher risk of unemployment later in life. In fact, this is how poverty and inequality get to be transmitted from one generation to the next, with the consequential impact on social stability.

So this is part of my vision for every Mauritian student – that they all come out of school having fulfilled their potential. The success of all of you present here today in fact provides me with further motivation to keep investing in our students so that even more of them can reach the highest educational standards in their broadest sense.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I must also add that I am deeply appreciative of the support of our different partners in our national efforts to transform the education sector.

At this point, I would like to take today's opportunity to formally recognize CIE as one of our foremost educational partners. Quite apart from providing high quality assessment and qualifications which are recognized worldwide, CIE provides professional development to our educators to upgrade their skills and confidence in the subjects they teach.

The introduction of SC Technical, itself a new pathway for students after completion of Nine Years of Continuous Basic Education, is just one such illustrations.

Let me also inform you that we are currently in the process of signing a General Framework Agreement to formalize the long-standing relationship between CIE and ourselves. This will give the official blessing for an expanding inter-institutional collaboration between CIE and MES as well as with the Quality Assurance Directorate of my Ministry.

Thank you Ms Henry, and do transmit my appreciation of the magnificent work done by your Institution when you travel back home. And thank you, High Commissioner, for being always there when we need you.

Before ending, a word for the parents present today is called for. I know it is no easy task being a parent today, and only you will know how many sacrifices you have made to ensure that your children avail themselves of the best educational opportunities.

I am reminded of Khalil Gibran's poem "On Children", where he compares parents to bows and children to arrows:

*For Even as He loves the arrow that flies*

*So He loves the Bow that is stable*

You have been the bow to your children's arrows – the role models that provide the stability for your children to prosper. Their success is, to a large extent, your success.

Keep it up. We certainly need more parents like you.

Congratulations again to all of you, the young persons who have done us proud.

***I thank you for your kind attention.***