

**Speech of Hon. (Mrs) L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun**  
**Minister of Education and Human Resources,**  
**Tertiary Education and Scientific Research**  
**Holistic Teacher Education Programme**  
**in Primary schools**

**Dear Trainees**

I am genuinely pleased to be with you this morning for the launching of a Programme that I have long been expecting to see materialize. I will be very honest in stating that, as a former Teacher, I am all too aware of the need to attend to the psychological, emotional and behavioral needs of our children right from an early age.

Who is unaware of the fact that we constantly blame the education system for causing our children to 'lose their childhood', their 'joie de vivre' in the mad and frantic pursuit of grades? Who amongst you today is immune to the fact that the system has become over-competitive and has resulted in the adoption of a perspective that ignores the whole person?

I am sure you have heard of Herbert Marcuse, the philosopher. When he wrote the '*One-Dimensional Man*' in 1964, he had in mind the prevalence of a context that did away with the capacity for critical thinking, for opposition to established ideas.

In a very broad sense, the same can be said of the existing context on the educational landscape. The one- dimensional and focused concentration on the CPE as a be-all and end- all of the primary schooling system has made academic achievement supersede all other considerations. The CPE has become the proverbial tail

wagging the education dog.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is about time that this mind-set be turned on its head. It is important that we realize a child is more than a head to be filled with ideas and concepts. A child is also a bundle of feelings, of emotions, of potentials of a non-cognitive order.

It is high time that we not simply recognize this but also enable the system to transform it into a reality in schools. Again, to go back to and be inspired by Herbert Marcuse, when he referred to Civil Rights demonstrators, this is what he wrote in *“An Essay on Liberation”*

*“The fact that they start refusing to play the game may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period.”*

**Dear Trainees,**

We want this year to mark the beginning of the end of a period. Of course, I'll be the last one to criticize the commitment to academic excellence that schools and teachers work hard to actualize. But we have to go beyond that if we want to spare the community the consequences of ill-balanced future citizens.

The Nine-year Basic Continuous Education that is part of an education reform package that cuts across all sub-sectors, aims at creating “whole” individuals who are well balanced in their outlook on life and their personal understanding of themselves in relation to the world.

What we want to provide is a holistic education that is deeply concerned with the development of a person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potentials. You are, I believe, all familiar with Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. He rightly posits that numerous school systems teach and test primarily two kinds of intelligence - verbal and logical-

mathematical. Other kinds of intelligence that are equally important are however made to play second fiddle.

These include visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. In non-technical parlance, they provide the foundations for Physical Education, Visual arts, music, dance, and drama—and these have today become an integral part of the new school curriculum.

It cannot be otherwise. These are subjects that will help learners in communication and self-expression, but also become the tools to construct meaning and learn almost any subject effectively.

Lest we forget, children deserve vibrant, contemporary and collaborative approaches to learning instead of the mere routine chalk and talk or white board and markers.

Education, ladies and gentlemen, should have the power to develop the mental, physical and artistic capabilities of a child, and not stifle growth, creativity and imagination. These are the competencies that will help our learners make sense of our increasingly complex world as they grow older.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

To enable our students to grow into responsible, patriotic citizens with a strong civic sense and a loaded system of beliefs, a meaningful change in the very pedagogy of Educators is called for.

This change also requires new structures, new tools and new knowledge. But more than anything, there is a major culture change, a transformation that the education system must go through.

You are the ones who will now become the transformers, the change agents in this venture.

I am deeply appreciative of the Ministry of Labour that has, through the YEP program, provided my Ministry with you, some 259 trainees, who will be responsible for the rolling out of Physical Education and Health and The Arts classes in ALL our primary schools. This project is amongst a set of others--- including the Zippy programme that we have launched this year in Standard II in 8 primary schools on a pilot basis—that will allow our children to develop holistically.

Let me inform you that this is in line with the National Curriculum Framework Grades 1 to 6 published in December 2015 that squarely situates the Arts and Health and PE as part of the six learning areas, the others being Mathematics; Technology; Languages; and Social, Scientific and Environmental Education.

I need hardly expatiate lengthily on the significance of Arts education that is recognized as life-enhancing and as being central to children's development, to the stimulation of creative thinking, and to forming the competences for young people for life in the 21st century.

On the other hand, the role of Physical Education cannot be minimized—movement is the medium that helps attain numerous goals like the development of social, cognitive, and physical skills.

Research also suggests that school-based yoga may improve academic achievement and classroom behavior. In addition, yoga-based physical fitness may result in numerous positive outcomes including improved mood, reduced risk of psychological disorders, and enhanced cognitive performance.

But it is equally true that these learning areas serve to broaden and deepen the educational process by encouraging personal responsibility, promoting a positive attitude to learning and developing social skills. These are all the fundamentals for existence today.

Let me therefore seize the opportunity to thank you all, future Holistic Education Animators. You are the ones who will transmit to and inculcate this new mindset into our learners on a day to day basis. We need you to promote these values, to be genuine and sincere, with a confident view that each child deserves the right to well- balanced curriculum for their whole- person development.

Your role must be an active one involving the preparation of rich, supportive learning environments for effective facilitation of growth through learning.

This is why we need YOU to make this programme a success; your role in the whole programme is more than just teaching. You will be a very important addition to the teaching staff of each school and will be expected to be dynamic and hardworking whilst creating a rich environment where our children can blossom into well rounded citizens.

You will be the enablers for a move towards ensuring that the values we are modeling for our children are those that we want to see in a 21st century world.

I wish you Godspeed in your new endeavours. Rest assured that my Ministry will always be by your side that I will always be following up the great work that you will be doing for the upkeep and the step-up development of our children.

Thank you for being by my side in this sacred mission.

***And Good Luck to you all.***