

**SPEECH OF HON. (MRS) L.D. DOOKUN-LUCHOOMUN,
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Convocation Ceremony

Open University of Mauritius

Thursday 20 April 2017

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to you all.

Let me, at the very outset, express my heartiest congratulations to all of you present here— in one way or another, directly or indirectly, you have been a major contributor to today's Ceremony. Obviously, those who are at the centre of our attention are our Graduands as well as their supportive family members.

It goes without saying that a Convocation is meant to be at once a solemn and a festive occasion. Solemn, because securing a degree testifies to the hard work, perseverance and self-abnegation put in by the graduands themselves but also by their close family members and friends.

However, it is also a festive occasion—this is the day we celebrate success; we recognize intellectual diligence and doggedness; we applaud achievement.

You all deserve it. You all deserve a round of applause! Ladies and gentlemen, let's put our hands together for the graduands.

Dear Graduands,

Many of you are undoubtedly already in employment and probably some will now be entering the world of work. But I am certain that one of your central concerns relates to the evolution that we are currently witnessing in professions, careers and jobs. There is a constant mutation. Possessing a qualification is no more the 'be-all' and the 'end-all' of our professional lives. Lifelong learning has been for quite some time the new name of the game.

That's because the challenges of the future are very likely to be huge. As you already know, many of the jobs of the future have not been created as yet. This is as much due to the speed of globalization as it is to the technological transformations crisscrossing most countries. The impact on these is enormous. The success of all development agenda and the fulfilment of the vision encapsulated in the SDGs or Global Goals 2030 depends on the ability of education and training systems to ensure the future employability of all people.

The success also depends upon facilitating the creativity and innovative drive of every citizen.

Ladies and gentlemen,

That explains why the current reforms in education lay emphasis on the holistic development of all children of the Republic of Mauritius. Our country cannot afford to waste away its precious human resource. Our schools cannot afford pushing some of our children out of the system.

Mauritius is already doing well as shown by the various international indices. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. Rather, we need to maintain these advantages in future by making education and

training central to the whole process.

The reforms introduced by my Ministry are profound and fundamental. The days of tinkering around at the edges are behind us. The reform agenda is thus holistic in more ways than one: it emphasizes the whole person development and it also cuts across the whole system

Illustratively, you will have noted that most of the education conversation is focussed on the Nine Year Schooling Programme.

However, we should not forget that, apart from schooling, the reform also focuses on TVET and Higher Education.

It cannot be otherwise.

Education must be seen as fulfilling hopes and aspirations. It must impart skills and develop competence, not share just information and knowledge: you can always 'google' information but not skills! That is why, beyond relevance and convenience, Higher Education must be lifelong as well.

The Mauritian context lends itself beautifully to demonstrate that.

Thus, to realize Vision 2030, we need skilled people. We need persons who can carry out complex IT functions; we need those who can harness the wealth of the oceans surrounding our islands; and we have to make sure that all of them can adapt to and adopt new technologies. This is instrumental if we want to complete the process of the transformation of Mauritius into a Knowledge Hub, into a Knowledge-driven economy.

Inevitably, all higher education institutions must focus on providing

high quality education so that all their graduands feel comfortable and competent working in a competitive and digitally-enabled environment.

And this is eminently do-able.

It is you, **Graduands**, who are some of the main actors, the protagonists who will make that happen.

In fact, our relatively brief history has demonstrated that one of our key strengths as a society is that we have always been able to mobilise our citizens whenever it has been necessary to re-skill our workforce or adapt to change. This has allowed Mauritius to move from an Agricultural Economy to a Service one. To sustain that, we are relying on new modes of teaching and learning like Open and Distance Learning. E-learning is now becoming commonplace as are MOOCs and OERs. They are the means to bring education closer to everyone.

This explains why the Open University of Mauritius today is being called upon to strengthen its activities together with reliable partners.

Graduands,

As I proceed towards the end of this Convocation speech, I would want all of you here today to remember that you are now at the starting line of a momentous process: that of ensuring a significant transformation and reshaping of our society. This is how we progress; this is how a nation comes of age --and the education you have

received so far and the Awards that you will be receiving in the next few minutes are your accompanying tools.

Of course, things may not always run smooth—there are bound to be hurdles and impediments. They are likely to crop up when you least expect them. But these should not deter you-- quite the contrary. Going forward, be armed with sheer grit and determination to face and overcome them.

Remember always the words of the Greek tragedian, Aeschylus :

'When one is willing and eager, the Gods join in'.

I wish you all the best in your careers and warm congratulations once again for your wonderful and deserved success.

I would also like to congratulate the Open University of Mauritius, its Board, Senior Management and Staff for celebrating the fifth successful year of its existence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for your attention.