

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

(SODNAC SSS)

10 March 2017

PROTOCOL

(Rector and Staff

**President and Members of the Executive Committee of PTA
Parents and students)**

It has been a privilege for me to read the message of the Hon Prime Minister to all of you on this auspicious occasion. Thank you for having invited me to be in your midst today.

Well, the Message has said it all—and said it in a manner that bears no contention. Hard work, conscientiousness and commitment are key attributes that you, students, should be reflecting as you move along your educational path.

But above all, you should never wear blinkers or become set in your ways. Openness to new ideas and having the willingness to experiment with them should characterize your education journey.

I will allow myself a minute or two to highlight that Mauritius has today successfully opened itself up to the rest of the world. Hence, although we are living on an island, we do not need to be insular in our approach to things or in our thinking. Especially

for you, dear students, these are exciting times. A panoply of careers is opening up for you. Many of these are in areas that we never realised would gain in importance. Also, there are new careers opening up in international institutions and multinational corporations.

On the other hand, you should also remember that many of the jobs of the future have not yet been created. It has indeed been articulated that many of the existing jobs are very likely to disappear and the new ones that will arise will be heavily technology-dependent.

You who are digital natives won't be surprised by this.

But what may surprise you is that the process has already started. Driverless cars are a reality; robotics is transforming social institutions and challenging earlier well-established assumptions. Such is the power of technological transformations that, today, we are referring to the phenomenon of "*The 4th Industrial Revolution*". Japan is already constructing its "*Society 5.0*" while South Korea is making landmark technological shifts in its economy and social life.

So this is the type of tomorrow that you will be called to operate in.

The question then is, "Are you ready for that?"

And the more important question is "Are you equipped for that?"

It is in this changing configuration that the role of Education gains increasing importance.

This also explains the philosophy behind the reforms I have initiated in the education system.

I sincerely believe that, if we want to prepare you to face the emerging challenges as well as to be on the cusp of change, we have to place a heavy reliance on inculcating what we often call the 21st Century skills .

The new world in which you will be called upon to operate will expect you to have problem-solving skills, creativity, critical thinking and communication skills as well as the ability to work collaboratively in teams. These are universally agreed as some of the fundamental tools to prepare students for the future.

This is the crux of my Ministry's reform, a reform that is systemic and cuts across all sub-sectors of education and training.

Ladies and gentlemen, Staff and Parents,

To enable a successful implementation of this vast reform agenda, it is important for all partners to chip in and contribute their fair share.

On the occasion of the 49th anniversary of our Independence and our 25th anniversary as a Republic, I believe it is a patriotic gesture for schools to evaluate themselves and think about the new roles they are being called upon to play.

Yes, schools are centers for learning. And they will remain centers of learning

But the different change agents in schools are also called upon to assume new roles.

Thus, you, the Educators are expected to bring in a lot of pedagogical innovations. Concepts like the “flip classroom” and IT-based classroom and facilitation of “ collaborative learning” among students have to become the new norm. You also need to

establish a sound community of practice within your institution and, especially for the Senior teachers, you need to fulfil your role as mentors for inexperienced teachers and advise them as and when the need arises.

As for Rectors and their Senior Management Team, they are expected to be catalysts of change as well as having a strong commitment to continual improvement. Thus, they have to see to it that Schools create space that encourages rational and critical inquiry and that all partners work together so as to come up with school-based solutions.

Of course, there will always be cases where exogenous, external support will be vital—the Zone Directorate, the Ministry HQs have to step in sometimes. But, at the end of the day, the school becomes the best place to find solutions. And if the school can situate itself at the heart of the community in which it exists, then the battle is already half won.

And this is where Parents come in to complete the “Triple Helix” for schools.

Dear students,

On this auspicious occasion, it is important to realise how significant it is for you to adopt the right kind of *savoir faire* and *savoir etre*. It is also the time to pledge to commit yourselves wholehearted to fulfilling and preserving the ideals and the values of the nation.

Pledge to commit yourselves to making your schools the breeding ground for democratic values and meaningful social engagement. Remember that true patriotism is demonstrated in the way we live and in the way we behave.

On its side, rest assured that my Ministry will deliver on its responsibility to provide a relevant quality education to all learners.

Quality as well as equity. We will continue to see to it that personal or socio-economic circumstances do not act as a hurdle to students in achieving their learning and development potential. Mauritius, ladies and gentlemen, is a great place to live in. Let us sustain that—if anything, we should only strive to make it an even better place to cohabit in.

Thank you all for working towards the preservation of our biggest asset —our “togetherness”, our “social connectedness”.

Happy Independence and Republic Day to all of you!