

Minister's Statement/Speeches

THE EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL (NO. XXV OF 2011) (25/10/11)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Education (Amendment) Bill (No. XXV of 2011) be read a second time.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is being presented in the context of implementation of innovative educational reforms and transformation which lay emphasis on holistic learner development, enhancement of educational outputs and empowerment of students to become global citizens. It addresses directly the issue of additional tuition which is undermining our education system.

Here, I wish to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have considered appropriate to use the words “additional tuition” in lieu of private tuition which is a term connoting privacy of tutoring and which can be misleading, from a legal perspective.

Additional tuition, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a phenomenon which is deep-rooted in our education system which has been lasting for decades, and is widespread both in the primary and secondary sub-sectors. It has over the years given rise to a situation where it has almost to become an extension of the mainstream schooling.

It breeds social inequality which it perpetrates and places a significant financial burden on parents when education is ostensibly fee-free.

It not only represents a financial burden on parents but also causes undue stress and exerts much pressure both on parents and children alike. Even teachers providing such tuition suffer by having to work long hours and this has a definite bearing upon their health. We must accept that competition promoted by the system is a major factor fuelling additional tuition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we know that, over the years, efforts have been made to fight

against the negative aspects of the competition especially at the CPE level. In fact, the issue, I believe, should be addressed not only from the bottom but more so from the top.

It is common knowledge today that, for example, at the HSC level, the Laureate Scheme is strongly prized.

This has given rise to the fallacious belief...

Mr Speaker: I will have to remind the hon. Minister that he is opening the floodgate. We will have to talk about CPE, competition. This is a Bill which is going to limit additional tuition from Standard I to Standard IV, allowing additional tuition to stand from Standard V to Standard VI. Therefore, there is nothing wrong as such with additional tuition, but I think the hon. Minister can limit himself as to why he is not allowing additional tuition for Standard IV.

Dr. Bunwaree: I understand your position, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: This is an amendment to a Bill; it's not general policy debate.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, but it is a topic of national importance. So, I believe certain information has to be given.

Mr Speaker: Therefore, the hon. Minister is going against my ruling!

Dr. Bunwaree: No, I will try to limit myself within the ruling you gave.

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Bunwaree: I was saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, however, the real picture is that because of the competition at the highest level, all the children are taken from the very early stages because parents believe that they have to go in that direction which is not necessarily true.

Mr Speaker, Sir, children spend an average of 9 hours a day in regular and additional tutoring while adults have a 7-hour standard working day, *en général*. Children hence devote more time daily in their studies than parents at work. In 1989, Mr Speaker, Sir, a study was carried out by the University of Mauritius and confirmed that additional tuition does not leave much time for children's emotional, social and physical development.

It must be pointed out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that additional tuition is a phenomenon

which is rampant internationally and not limited to Mauritius only. As a matter of fact, the former Director of the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) of UNESCO, Mark Bray, has extensively researched on this phenomenon which he refers to as the “shadow education system”. In a report, published in 1999 by Mr Bray, it has been established that supplementary tutoring leads to fatigue and adversely affects children’s lives and negatively impacts on their mental development.

Referring to one particular developed nation (Japan), mention has been made in that report that despite its economic prosperity and apparent educational successes as reflected in international rankings of educational assessments, the society in that country became increasingly concerned about problems of suicide, bullying and acquisition of discrete knowledge relevant to examination rather than to real life.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the report highlights as well that extended hours of study for the very young can adversely impact upon development tasks as the building of sound and socially acceptable attitudes.

According to the same report, there is a likelihood that teachers might slow down their pace of delivery in order to ensure that they have a market for the after-school supplementary classes and this to the detriment of students.

The report also highlights that one of the strategies to reduce demand for additional tuition resides in making classes more interesting, innovative and learnercentred through the adoption of an activity approach supported by ICT-based aids.

I must add that outright ban at all levels is neither a viable and practical option nor an implementable one. This is why we are going, I’ll call, into a phased manner and we are talking only of Standard IV in the Bill.

The 2009 report, Mr Speaker, Sir, by the same author regarding Government policies for private tutoring reinforces the argument that the most abusive and socially inequitable aspects of private tutoring need to be addressed by means of regulations.

The policy orientation and response in regard to the issue of additional tuition has been the subject of discussions over the past twenty years; there have been White Papers, Education plans, policy analyses, but very little in terms of concrete actions to address this scourge. We agree that it is a complex matter and cannot be overhauled overnight.

But a responsible Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, cannot just sit, analyse and not take any action to deal with it.

In fact, we started stressing the need to review our current policy on additional tuition already since 2008 when we were discussing with the stakeholders about the reforms in education and we produced the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan (2008-2020). The plan mentions the need of eliminating it at Standard IV which falls now under the second stage of the primary cycle. The primary cycle which was initially divided in 2 stages of 3 years has now been extended to 3 stages of two years.

Stage I - (Standards I & II) covers programmes such as -

- Bridging the gap,
- Baseline profiling.

Stage II which covers Standard III and IV includes -

- Diagnostic assessment;
- Remedial education;
- Continuous assessment, and
- Enhancement Programme.

Stage III which covers Standards V & VI, in fact, takes into consideration the -

- the Enhancement Programme techniques will be used during normal classes in Standards V and VI, and
- the Special CPE repeaters Programme has been introduced at Standard VI level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we primarily aim at rendering the learning experiences of children more enriching, enjoyable and rewarding. We also aim at gradually developing in children the drive towards empowerment through self-learning and ultimately, in the long term, opening up new vistas for them to function as citizens of the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the objectives underlying the policy reforms in the education sector with regard to the issue of additional tuition are -

- (1) To phase out gradually a system which places an over-reliance on academic performance and create an educational environment which promotes holistic learner development;
- (2) To improve performance and quality standards;
- (3) To cater for the needs of different ability groups, including academically less proficient ones, by providing for innovative pedagogical programmes within mainstream education for remediation purposes;
- (4) To bring more equity in learning opportunities to all pupils by alleviating the financial burden of a majority of parents, and
- (5) To promote ethics, equity and inclusiveness.

We are also determined, Mr Speaker, Sir, to change the focus of assessment that is currently summative to review and adapt the curriculum and stress on essential learning competencies.

Since I assumed office as Minister of Education and Human Resources, I have been reflecting on ways and means to come forward with a strategy to address this issue of additional tuition. I had engaged in consultations with a number of stakeholders and institutions with a view to charting the way forward.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is on the basis of the outcome of such consultations and general recommendations of the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan that the Bill has been drafted and the objectives of which are clearly set as follows -

- (i) to extend the current ban on additional tuition to standard IV;
- (ii) to regulate the provision of additional tuition to students in Standards V and VI and for secondary classes; and
- (iii) to provide for the conduct of the Enhancement Programme and any other programmes in schools to enhance innovative teaching and learning experiences and to promote the integral development of pupils.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill incorporates one of the most important amendments to the Education Act in regard to additional tuition since May 1991, when a first amendment was made to Section 37 of the Act to, *inter-alia*, prohibit such tuition up to Standard III. At that material time the amendment was brought to ban tuition up to Standard III. Then, there were no meaningful and sustainable accompanying pedagogical measures which had been introduced.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, this Bill comes at an opportune time when there has been much groundwork done in terms of sensitisation, consultations and introduction of accompanying pedagogical programmes and other administrative measures in support of these new policy initiatives. I had, in this august Assembly, Mr Speaker, Sir, on various occasions, in replies to Parliamentary Questions and during my intervention on the previous Budget Speech made announcements on new policy orientations and objectives on additional tuition.

It is to be noted that in early 2010, my Ministry has successfully implemented the administrative decision for not authorising the use of school premises for additional tuition to pupils of Standard IV. This was done in the context of the introduction of the Enhancement Programme which has been dispensed to pupils with parental consent as well as support of teachers, Head Masters and Inspectors.

Parents were sensitised through the Media and each parent concerned was so informed by way of a '*Lettre aux Parents*' issued in February 2010. I had also recourse to a webcasting session with teachers last year to explain the rationale

behind the introduction of the Enhancement Programme and the new policy direction and reforms.

Press Communiqués were also issued and in December 2010 last, during a Press Conference, I had announced new policy orientations which covered as well the issue of additional tuition. I would wish to stress that Mark Bray himself in his second report makes reference to my policy announcement in 2009 to the effect that private tutoring would be prohibited for pupils up to and including Std IV.

Moreover, a number of innovative and groundbreaking measures have also been introduced for the benefit of the pupils and to ensure the sustainability of educational reforms. I will just mention a few which are -

- Diagnostic Assessment
- Continuous Assessment
- Remedial Education
- Enhancement Programme
- Zone of Inclusive and Integrated Strategy (ZIIS) under ZEP Programme
- CPE Repeaters Programme
- The Sankoré Project, etc.

I wish to point out that the introduction of the Enhancement Programme for core subjects and Asian Languages/Arabic has been instrumental, especially in the context of the strategy to curb the practice of additional tuition. This Programme has been successfully implemented at Standards III and IV and it has gained widespread parental support and acceptance, promoting as it does, personality development of the child, helping in character building and developing leadership qualities.

All these measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, which I have highlighted, constitute a strong foundation upon which my Ministry can build upon to reduce overreliance on additional tuition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now highlight the specific amendments under this Bill -
(i) Currently, under Section 2 of the Act, there is no definition of the words “private tuition”.

The Act refers to private tuition without definition. “Additional tuition” is now being defined in the legislation as “tuition provided to a pupil who is attending a school, in a subject which is being taught at the school”.

(ii) Under Section 3 thereof, the Powers and Duties of the Minister are being extended to include a new subsection (fa), for the conduct of the Enhancement Programme or any other programme in schools to enhance innovative teaching and learning experiences, and to promote the integral development of pupils. This

will give due recognition to this initiative and ensure its continuity. The Enhancement Programme has been introduced at the second stage (Std III/IV) of the Primary cycle and will remain so. The Enhancement Programme Techniques will also be used in Std V and Std VI during normal classes.

Other programmes may be introduced for the secondary sector.

(iii) Section 37A subsection 1(a) as it now stands already provides that private tuition should not be allowed for pupils of Standards I, II and III. This Bill makes provision for the replacement of subsection 1(a) of Section 37A by a new provision to extend the existing ban to pupils in Standard IV. Hence, additional tuition will not be allowed in the school premises - this has already stopped, in fact - and outside premises for school pupils of Stds I to IV.

(iv) Under Section 37A, a new subsection 1(b) is being added for the control of provision of additional tuition to pupils when this tuition is legally permissible in Standards V and VI or students attending a secondary school, by providing for the registration of the teachers wishing to provide such additional tuition. This is meant to regulate the control of additional tuition by defining the parameters, terms and conditions of the provision of such tuition under appropriate regulations. Section 38 of the Education Act, Mr Speaker, Sir, which relates to Regulations is also being amended consequently by incorporating a new paragraph dealing specifically with registration of teachers and conditions governing same. Teachers wishing to provide additional tuition at Std V and VI in primary schools and other classes at secondary level and who qualify for same will have to register themselves.

(v) We are also seizing the opportunity to adjust the nominal fine of Rs2,000 to be imposed for breach of section 37A to Rs 10,000 and an amendment is being accordingly made to subsection 3 of section 37A of the Act. This will undoubtedly serve as a deterrent.

(vi) Section 39 is also being amended to replace the words “private” by “additional”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that I had received a memorandum from stakeholders already in 2010, proposing a number of parameters which need to be taken into consideration in the context of the formulation of the regulations namely, pupil/teacher ratio, registration of teachers, setting up of an enforcement mechanism and physical and other conditions of premises. I wish here to thank them for their constructive proposals which will help in moving the agenda forward. These will be taken on board under the Regulations to be made.

After this Bill is enacted and proclaimed, appropriate regulations will be made with regard to registration of educators wishing to provide additional tuition and the regulations will also cover the following -

(a) qualifications/profile of teachers applying for registration and subjects to be

taught;

(b) the number of students per group – (Pupil/Teacher ratio);

(c) the timing and frequency of the tuition;

(d) the specific periods and time during which additional tuition will not be allowed;

(e) the requirements for physical, health and safety conditions to be in force;

(f) the inspections that may be carried out by an authorised officer and enforcement aspects, and

(g) any other criteria as may be determined by the Minister.

I propose, Mr Speaker, Sir, to engage into further discussions with stakeholders before finalizing the regulations.

The implementation of the new provisions of the legislation will require, Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of an appropriate mechanism for driving this change in policy and will involve -

(i) the conduct of further sensitisation programmes on details of the regulations which will be above all child friendly.

(ii) registration of teachers wishing to provide additional tuition, and

(iii) monitoring, control and enforcement of the new provisions of the Act and regulations to be made.

A Registration and Enforcement Unit would be set up at the Zonal Directorates level and the PSSA for the purpose.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the review of the policy on additional tuition should not be viewed in isolation but in conjunction with other reforms which are underway or in the pipeline. As the House may be aware, a number of innovative and far-reaching reform measures are being initiated to transform the education sector. Inextricably....

Mr Speaker: No, no.

Dr. Bunwaree: I am finishing....

Mr Speaker: Hon. Obeegadoo will speak after you; he will open the debate.

Dr. Bunwaree: Half open...

Mr Speaker: This is an amendment; we cannot speak of reform generally.

Dr. Bunwaree: I am saying that...

Mr Speaker: I have to apply the rules of the House.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes. I am saying that it should not be viewed in isolation, but in the context of all the other reforms.

We are also proposing, Mr Speaker, Sir, to regulate subsequently under the Education Regulations on a minimum level of attendance – we are coming with that in the near future – for a student to sit for examinations.

Mr Speaker: That is not part of the Bill.

Dr. Bunwaree: Let us not forget, Mr Speaker, Sir, that Quality Assurance and Inspectorate body will be consolidated so as to effectively quality assure the types of curriculum delivery in schools, especially after this Bill is passed and hence lead to performance improvement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in conclusion, it is high time that parents, educators, students and all stakeholders share a common vision to transform our set-up into an education-friendly and enabling system which will promote development of wholesome individuals having not only academic achievement at heart but also other interests such as the need to live their young life fully and becoming well cultured, disciplined and responsible citizens imbued with innovative skills and abilities; in short, a model of national pride.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Bachoo rose and seconded.

BUDGET SPEECH 2012 (08/11/11)

(6.05 p.m)

The Minister of Education and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, *n'en déplaise au Leader de l'opposition*, let me first start by congratulating the hon. vice- Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for this very realistic Budget *dans la conjoncture* which he presented to the nation last Friday and for his excellent, I must say, maiden Budget Speech. *Coup d'essai, coup de maître* compared to what I will call '*le discours raté*' du Leader de l'opposition.

(Interruptions)

Son discours n'est pas décousu, mais trop cousu.

(Interruptions)

The population, Mr Speaker, Sir, in general has widely acclaimed and is still widely acclaiming this Budget because it contains so many new positive measures which will bring definitely a lot of relief to various segments of the population ranging from the old citizens to the youth, the working class, the down trodden, those involved in the SMEs, the women folk, young athletes, the pupils and students population and the parents. Everybody, I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, has got a fair treatment from the exchequer. It seems that it is only the Opposition that is baffled. Indeed, it has received a severe blow from the Budget Speech last Friday. Unfortunately for them, and I was watching all the faces when the hon. vice-Prime Minister was reading his Speech, it has been indeed like a tsunami drowning them in all their misfortunes.

(Interruptions)

I could see on their faces last Friday, but deep inside their heart, si on essaie à épilucher le discours du Leader de l'opposition qui, dans son introduction et dans sa conclusion, a été dur mais dans le fil de sa pensée il y avait beaucoup de choses positives, il le disait lui-même. Il nous donnait des conseils: il faut faire attention à ceci, attention à cela. Très bien, c'est bon. C'est responsable bien sûr et j'apprécie. Mais c'est pour vous dire que deep inside their heart, all of them know that the Budget 2012 is indeed a very good one and is being well received by the whole of the population. Nevertheless, in any democratic society, Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody enjoys the freedom of criticising the Government's actions and, of course, it is the duty on this side of the House to rebut these criticisms.

Let me summarise the criticisms as I have been listening to them just now but also, as we have heard from Members of the Opposition outside. First, it is said that the Budget lacks vision and imagination *que le Leader de l'opposition a dit, face à la crise en Europe et aux Etats-Unis.*

Secondly, it lacks ambition and it is merely – I have heard that on radio from one of the Members of the other side – a rebranding of old measures'. Thirdly, it is a pro-capitalist Budget.

Fourthly, the Budget contains '*des mesures confettis*' – *mais des confettis gros comme des feuilles que je n'ai jamais vus de ma vie.*

(Interruptions)

Five, it is *décousu, désordonné et décevant*. Six, the Leader of the Opposition said that much more could have been done on the social front and judging by the

available *marge de manoeuvres* as they say. Finally, it has not been said here today but, I have heard it outside from them: '*l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres va en grandissant*'. Mr Speaker, Sir, I can outright reaffirm that none of these above criticisms are valid. They are in fact baseless and without justification whatsoever.

M. le président, le *Leader* de l'Opposition a commencé à parler d'enfantillage et parler d'exemple de la Grèce, à qui nous avons fait allusion, pour dire que ce n'était pas la Grèce qu'il fallait prendre en exemple, mais le Singapour, la Chine, l'Indonésie, l'Afrique sub-saharienne et l'Inde.

M. le président, on n'a pas dit que la Grèce est l'exemple à suivre. On a voulu démontrer que la Grèce, c'est l'exemple à ne pas suivre parce qu'effectivement, l'exemple de la Grèce démontre que quand les difficultés et les tsunamis économiques surgissent, quelle est la situation.

Il fallait ouvrir les yeux des mauriciens. Bien entendu, il faut aussi prendre en considération ce que le *Leader* de l'opposition n'a pas dit, il a été Premier ministre, et il a été ministre des finances. L'île Maurice a ses spécificités, *we are a small island economy*, il ne faut pas oublier cela. Nous n'avons pas de pétrole.

Nous n'avons pas de l'or. Nous sommes à la merci des toutes les intempéries; cyclone, sécheresse et tout, la distance qui nous sépare des grands marchés et nous vivons sur l'exportation. Donc, il faut prendre tout cela en considération, pas seulement de nous comparer à d'autres pays, mais il faut comparer ce qui est comparable. Pour venir, nous dire que la croissance aurait dû être mieux, mais ce qu'il ne nous dit pas, c'est que, si nous continuons dans la voie qui a été tracée par l'ex-ministre des finances - qui n'est plus avec nous aujourd'hui - les grands experts qui connaissent l'économie, vous disent que si le vicepremier ministre n'avait pas pris les mesures qui s'imposent aujourd'hui; la croissance aurait été peut-être 1.5% pas plus. Donc, il fallait réagir, il fallait prendre les taureaux par les cornes et il fallait faire quelque chose. Et on vient de nous dire aujourd'hui, qu'il n'a pas mentionné tel chiffre, *current account deficit*, toutes ces choses sont intéressantes et importantes mais s'il commence à tout dire, il ne finirait jamais son discours. Il y a d'autres ministres qui sont là et chacun va défendre son ministère - comme je vais le faire tout à l'heure pour l'éducation et le ressources humaines.

Donc, il faut prendre en considération que le ministre des finances ne peut pas tout dire et concernant le *current account deficit* etc. ce sont des chiffres qui apparaissent officiellement, lui-même a mentionné les chiffres de la Banque de Maurice. Ne venez pas faire oublier à la population que nous sommes dans une zone incertaine, aucun ministre des finances - que ce soit à l'île Maurice ou même

dans les autres pays - dans la conjoncture, ne peut venir donner des chiffres exacts ou plus ou moins exacts, des prévisions. Le ministre a bien dit que nous sommes dans une zone incertaine. Voilà ce qui est devant nous, voilà des problèmes et voilà ce qu'il faut faire et comment il faut s'attaquer à ces problèmes pour essayer de ne pas s'engouffrer dans une situation telle comme connaît la Grèce et certains autres pays aujourd'hui.

M. le président, nous avons parlé aussi du problème de FDI que le *Leader* de l'opposition a dit qui n'a pas été mentionné. Le *Leader* de l'opposition a dit que le secteur privé a eu tout ce qu'ils ont demandé, mais il faut savoir, M. le président, que le FDI a bien diminué et je vais vous donner des chiffres. Le *FDI and private investment* a chuté dans le premier cas de 2011, c'est-à-dire, cette année, effectivement ce sont les résultats de quelqu'un autre. Ce sont les résultats de son travail. Le FDI a chuté de 69.6% comparé à l'année 2010 et dans le premier quart de 2011.

Deuxième quart de 2011, *a fall of FDI 45.3% compared to second quarter of 2010*. Si on prend le *private sector investment, excluding residential building as a share of GDP, there also a fall of 12.5% in 2010 compared to 11.1% of GDP in 2011*. La chute a été plus importante. M. le président, on peut continuer comme cela, pour vous dire, qu'il faut être sérieux.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government, since 2005 under the able and strong leadership of our hon. Prime Minister – I am talking about 2005 because *la crise était bien là* – achieved an excellent track record of weathering all the economic storms, be it during the worst financial turmoil in 2008, *jamais vu ça!* The biggest surge in oil prices and the worst food price inflation.

We have weathered and we have a track record. Other countries, Mr Speaker, Sir, reputable international institutions have praised and keep praising our economic management of these difficult times and it is certainly not now that the Opposition can argue that we lack imagination, *ce n'est pas possible! Vision ou l'audace* to handle a crisis situation. Nous avons fait notre preuve et nous continuons à le faire.

We are a strong and ambitious nation and we have the capability, Mr Speaker, Sir, of withstanding any calamity that approaches us. It needs the right vision, as being shown by my colleague, the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. It needs economic competence and it needs also the capability of understanding the aspiration of our people.

The House will recall that the population, Mr Speaker, Sir, has re-elected this Government because, in fact, of the professional manner it has handled the economic crisis in 2007 essentially. We are ready to face this new challenge. It is with this vision and this idea in mind that the hon. Minister of Finance, has in fact,

set up the National Resilience Fund, precisely to react swiftly and firmly to any deterioration of our economy especially on the employment front. In difficult times, Mr Speaker, Sir, flexibility and ability to act fast are the key stands to adapt. In the present precarious international scenario, it is futile to discuss about the rhetoric of pro or anti-capitalism. Government has to adopt bold measures that are required to safeguard the interest of the country and its population.

The fight against the loss of jobs should be our top national priority and it has been so. In this regard, the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has not hesitated to abolish bold measures, to abolish the recently imposed taxes that could harm investment and the savings culture; capital gains tax *essentiellement*. *Vous savez combien de fois dans le passé quand cela n'existait pas encore - parce que cela a été introduit récemment et puis maintenant on est en train de faire disparaître encore - dans le temps et toutes les campagnes de promotion de l'île Maurice abroad.* This is one of the points that will be canvassed and canvassed over and over again. No capital gains tax in Mauritius to attract investors; *venir investir et cela était un argument qui était important et qui faisait bon chemin.*

Le *Leader* de l'opposition a parlé de **DTEA** avec l'Inde. Quand la taxe a été introduite récemment, heureusement enlevée maintenant, mais cela a été un problème. Parce que à chaque fois que ses techniciens de l'Inde et autres techniciens venaient pour discuter avec les techniciens mauriciens de la haute finance, on utilisait cela comme argument, nous n'avons pas de *capital gains tax*, on ne taxe pas cela. Maintenant, on sait quel problème on doit faire face vis-à-vis cet *agreement* avec l'Inde. Le *capital gains tax* est introduit et on vient couper sous nos pieds, un élément solide de la défense qu'on devait donner vis-à-vis de ces techniciens étrangers. Heureusement que le ministre des finances est là et il a pris les taureaux par les cornes.

Je dois dire, M. le président, que nous avons un modèle économique effectivement. Je pense que le ministre des finances l'a dit ailleurs qu'ici, et il va sûrement le répéter encore que nous avons un modèle économique qui a été déformé l'année dernière, et qui a été cassé je dois dire. Nous sommes en train de récolter des fruits négatifs. C'est normal pour le ministre des finances de venir essayer de corriger la trajectoire. Mais, il ne faut pas oublier aussi que le sort le voudrait, aujourd'hui, que nous sommes face à une opposition où il y a deux personnalités qui ont été ministre des finances, qui ont travaillé ensemble pendant quelque temps dans le même gouvernement. Entre 2000 et 2005, un a été même Premier ministre et l'autre est devenu ministre des finances, et c'est à ce moment-là qu'on a eu des résultats économiques les plus catastrophiques de notre histoire.

En moins de cinq ans, 45,000 emplois ont été perdus. Le chômage a dépassé le chiffre de 11%, et aujourd'hui ils viennent demander d'enlever les dix sous de taxe sur les 'sms', alors qu'eux-mêmes avaient introduit en l'espace d'un an, à deux reprises, une augmentation de la TVA de 10 à 12% et de 12 à 15%. Si ce n'est pas de la démagogie, c'est quoi alors !

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker, Sir, has qualified the Budget as containing '*mesures confetti*', but they are really baffled, I am sure. This Budget contains 178 new budgetary measures. These measures will stimulate definitely a paradigm shift, in creating a better future for Mauritius. There are programmes such as matching skills with the requirements of the economy - *Je vais revenir là-dessus à la fin quand je vais parler de la formation* - supporting the SMEs through better access to capital. Ils viennent nous dire aujourd'hui '15 petits millions seulement'. Mais cela, c'est la somme qui a été puisée de ce *Business Growth Fund* qui avait été mis sur pied ; un fonds qui devait être utilisé pour quatre ans.

On a commence à puiser de cela, mais il faut voir combien d'autres mesures sont à la disposition des *SMEs*.

Alors, comparez ce qui est comparable !

Giving a push to emerging sectors, the development of the film industry, the setting up of the housing development trust, and the construction of 175 units for SMEs will definitely also pave the way for greater development over the medium and long term. There are other measures among these 178 measures which will have an immediate effect. One interesting measure announced in the Budget concerns the setting up of a mechanism to determine the accepted range of inflation.

Le leader de l'opposition n'a pas mentionné le chiffre. Rarement cela est mentionné – si on va voir dans les différents budgets. Il y a beaucoup de ministres des finances qui ne veulent pas s'aventurer, mais au moins ce budget fait la part des choses en annonçant that a mechanism to determine the accepted range of inflation will be set up. We all know the effect of inflation on the economy and the cost of living of the population. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, in period of economic crisis, we have to strike the right balance between controlling inflation and maintaining a right level of GDP growth to keep on check the unemployment rate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the budget you will find that the agricultural sector also has not been forgotten, the VAT Refund Scheme proposed for small planters and small breeders on the acquisition of agricultural machinery, equipment and tools is most welcome. A New Freight Rebate Scheme has been proposed to encourage the export of non-sugar agricultural products in the context of the agro diversification programme. In spite of funding all these measures, yet a new forward-looking

approach aiming at achieving current budget balance as from 2012 has been introduced. In addition, the hon. Minister of Finance has come up with a timetable for the implementation. *Cela est nouveau; il faut l'accepter. On met tout le temps un monitoring committee pour monitor l'évolution, les mesures budgétaires.* But, at least, this time, it has come as an official document; a timetable for the implementation of the announced measures, which has been published for the first time. The government has not spared any effort, Mr Speaker, Sir, in alleviating the financial difficulties of the poor and those who are in need.

Je pourrais mentionner un tas de choses, et je vais essayer d'aller vite. Mais le *leader* de l'opposition est venu dire qu'il fallait aller beaucoup plus loin encore. C'est cela l'acrobatie du budget. Il faut savoir équilibrer les choses, et il faut savoir agir de façon réfléchie.

The budget has allocated more substantial resources to finance its social programme and this, in spite - I will repeat it always - of the present world economic problems. New measures have been introduced in different sectors such as social housing, health care services, social and pension benefits, and child protection to offer a better social net to the population.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned rural development - it is a fact - and the setting up of three district councils; new ones.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to improve the quality of life of our citizens, government is coming up with an innovating programme of funding the syndics on NHDC estates. *Le leader de l'opposition a présenté les difficultés qui pourraient surgir. Nous en sommes conscients, et allons prendre tout cela en considération pour ne pas tomber dans les pièges du passé.*

I must also say that, to reduce the number of road accidents, duties on tyres have been removed, 25 new speed cameras will be installed across the country. We know, Mr Speaker, Sir, the anguish and sufferings when a member of the family has been involved in a serious road accident. We cannot, therefore, remain indifferent to such human tragedies, and we have acted.

Je pense qu'on a fait quelque chose d'extraordinaire pour Rodrigues cette année. Cela me rappelle lorsqu'on avait déclenché les mesures pour rendre Rodrigues un *duty free island*, ce qui a créé un *boost* extraordinaire et a permis aux Rodriguais jusqu'à maintenant de continuer à avoir les bons effets de ces mesures ; ce fut dans le temps.

Mais, maintenant, on prend une mesure exceptionnelle, notamment *the Loan Process for Sub Marine Fibre Cable to the Island, and works also at the port and airport.* Essentiellement le câble à fibre optique qui va créer une véritable

révolution non seulement pour les jeunes, mais pour tout le monde, pour les businessmen de Rodrigues, dans le domaine de la facilitation du business. La qualité de la vie des Rodriguais va être transformée quand cela va devenir effectif.

Donc, félicitations au ministre des finances pour ces mesures, en particulier, celles qui touchent les gens les plus faibles économiquement.

Je suis sûr que mon collègue, le ministre de l'Intégration sociale, l'honorable, Suren Dayal, ainsi que d'autres ministres vont venir de l'avant avec une série de mesures. On ne peut pas dire que l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres s'agrandit.

On a pris une série de mesures, en commençant par les taxes qu'on a enlevées sur les items qui touchent le petit peuple, toutes les facilités pour les enfants pour aller à l'école - et je vais revenir là-dessus -, le *VAT refund* pour les petits planteurs, sur les *fishing gears, outboard and inboard engines*, motocyclettes. Qui cela va-t-il toucher ? Les petites gens ! Donc, c'est une façon pour montrer la solidarité du gouvernement avec ces gens qui sont dans la difficulté.

Si on vient au *job training, scholarships*, il y a le recrutement de 800 *additional police officers*. Ce sont les petites gens qui auront ces jobs. Il y a le *recruitment of 300 nurses, recruitment of 20 additional support officers at the National Children's Council*. Le programme du *Trust Fund* pour l'excellence du sport va être étendu à 250 athlètes l'année prochaine.

Le *Sponsored Pre-Job Training Initiative* qui a été mentionné par le *leader* de l'opposition tout à l'heure. On va lui donner toute les indications qu'il faut pour montrer que c'est une mesure révolutionnaire, parce que cette mesure touche essentiellement à la formation dans le domaine où les Mauriciens ne sont pas suffisamment formés, où on est obligé de faire venir des étrangers pour travailler, on est obligé de donner des permis, parce que nous n'avons pas ces *skilled workers*.

On voudrait identifier ce domaine où les *skilled workers* sont manquants et ce sont des formations, entre autres, qui vont être dirigées vers eux, qui auront un double avantage.

Premièrement, de donner du travail aux mauriciens ; deuxièmement, de diminuer le nombre d'étrangers qui viennent travailler à Maurice.

M. le président, je peux continuer dans le *Social Housing* mais je suis sûr que mes collègues vont revenir là-dessus.

Now let me, at this point in time, Mr Speaker, Sir, come *au domaine qui m'intéresse et dont j'ai la responsabilité : l'éducation et les ressources humaines.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government strongly believes that education and training are the pillars for sustainable economic growth. Therefore, investing in our citizens' education and improving the skills and competencies of our workforce are critical.

Without an in-built resilience in our human resources, there can be no resilience in the economy.

This budget has clearly recognized the key role played by education as a lever of change and innovation and its contribution to the economic growth of the country.

It indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, provides the necessary resources to translate Government's commitment to bring about far-reaching transformation and fundamental reforms in line with our vision of providing a quality education for all and developing a Human Resource base to transform Mauritius into a knowledge hub.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am thankful to my colleague, the Minister of Finance, that, despite the very difficult economic circumstances, the budget for education and training has increased from Rs9.8 billion in 2011 to Rs10.7 billion in 2012, representing an increase of some 10 per cent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already, at the level of education, embarked on long-awaited and much needed reforms in the education sector since the last three years.

We are now at an important turning point, which is the implementation phase. I know that the proposed reforms have had widespread acceptance, and stakeholders have recognized that need for change.

It will now take a concerted effort from all involved in education and specially a changed mindset to ensure that the proposed reforms meet the set objectives in line with the vision we have for the future direction of the education sector.

M. le président, je ne vais pas pouvoir entrer dans tous les détails de l'éducation. Je vais déposer un petit document pour montrer un peu le reste de ce qu'on fait pour ne pas avoir à tout expliquer. C'est un document qui pourrait aider les membres de la Chambre pour mieux comprendre les développements qui se font dans le domaine de l'éducation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that the 2012 Budget brings the necessary financial support required to sustain our reforms.

It would be difficult here, as I said, to enumerate all that has been accomplished but we are going to continue our mission to improve performance at all levels of education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to pre-primary education. It is believed - and we all agree - that the foundations of human development are laid during the child's early years.

Learning begins at birth - *peut être que les gens ne savent pas trop, mais comme un spécialiste aussi en génétique, je pense que learning commence même avant la naissance*. It begins, at least, at birth and it continues throughout life. Therefore, investing in pre-primary education means investing in our country's future.

We all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the early years of life are critical to the development of the child. It has been scientifically proven that well-designed preschool programmes improve school readiness, raise the academic achievement level of the child in the early grades of primary schooling, reduce school dropout and risky behaviour. This has been proved.

I would like to refer the House to the latest findings of the SACMEQ, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2011. SACMEQ is the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring of Education Quality. So, SACMEQ has confirmed, in its findings, that pupils who attend preschools tend to perform better. *Cela a été prouvé dans cette étude*.

With a view to bringing more equity into the system and democratizing access to education, this Government is committed to ensuring that all children, aged 3 to 5 years in the Republic of Mauritius, benefit from quality pre-school education as per the Government Programme 2010-2015.

This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, makes provision to extend the existing grant scheme which covered 4 year-old children, to include 3 year-old, that is, the *per capita* grant of Rs200 will be extended to this age group of 3-year as from January 2012.

C'est une mesure encore révolutionnaire. C'est en 1997, je pense, que feu l'honorable David, ministre à cette époque-là, qui est venu avec cette mesure pour les R 200. Mais, étant donné les contraintes budgétaires de l'époque, on avait limité à ceux qui avaient déjà quatre ans.

Mais il fallait, bien sûr, continuer cela pour trois ans parce que c'était la seule phase de la vie de l'enfant - trois ans et quatre ans - où l'État ne contribuait pas directement pour l'éducation.

Donc, pourrions-nous dire à cette époque-là que l'éducation était vraiment gratuite? Peut-être, oui, à partir de cinq ans *onwards*, mais pas à partir de trois ou quatre ans. En 1997, on est venu avec la mesure pour les enfants de quatre ans.

L'année dernière, j'ai essayé d'avoir pour les trois ans mais, malheureusement, avec les contraintes budgétaires on ne l'a pas eu. Cette année, on a été voir le ministre et, peut-être, que suite à son passage au ministère de l'intégration sociale, cela a fait bouger les choses et cette mesure devient aujourd'hui une réalité. C'est une mesure révolutionnaire pour les gens, surtout pour ceux qui sont en difficulté.

L'école devient pratiquement gratuite dès la rentrée à l'école, c'est-à-dire, à l'âge de trois ans, ce qui n'était pas le cas depuis de nombreuses années.
Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure this measure will help us to improve, what we call, the enrolment rate.

Je vais vous dire une chose, M. le président. *Enrolment rate for this age group - trois et quatre ans, disons trois ans - was, in 2007, à 85%. Ce qui veut dire que 15% des enfants, qui avaient atteint l'âge de trois ans pour aller à l'école pré-primaire, restaient à la maison. Donc, aucune éducation pour eux et à l'âge de cinq ans, les enfants étaient obligatoirement emmenés à l'école. Donc, ils se retrouvaient dans une classe où 85% de ces enfants ont été eux à l'école pré-primaire. Il avait deux ans de retard à rattraper, ce qui était impossible. Alors, en 1985, 15% des enfants n'allaient pas à l'école. Maintenant, il n'y a que 5% mais, bien sûr, on n'est pas content avec ces 5% non plus et je dois dire que pour rattraper les derniers pourcentages, cela devient de plus en plus difficile. Mais dans un laps de trois ans, on a eu un résultat spectaculaire et ceci *thanks, I must say, to targeted intervention programmes which were put in place during the last three years.**

Now with the coming into practice of the Rs200 allowance for three plus kids, les parents qui sont en difficulté seront obligés d'emmener leurs enfants à l'école dès l'âge de trois ans en pré-primaire. Donc, un résultat spectaculaire and I am pleased to announce that this year, 950 of these children have been successfully enrolled in both private and public schools. Donc, en un an : 950. Alors, si on continue à ce rythme on va rattraper ces 5% très, très rapidement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must also say, to ensure that children coming from deprived and vulnerable conditions do attend school, the ECCEA is working in close collaboration with the National Empowerment Foundation to sustain appropriate

social, financial and educational interventions that will best mitigate the risks and vulnerabilities confronted by these children and their families. Un travail exemplaire est en train d'être réalisé. Cela avait déjà été commencé par mon collègue, aujourd'hui ministre des finances, qui avait la responsabilité de NEF l'année dernière.

An additional provision of Rs40 m. has been allocated to Early Child Care and Education Authority to enable us to implement all these measures announced for the Early Childhood Sector.

Another revolutionary project, Child Minding Services. Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that poverty has been one of the reasons for some parents not to send their children to school. In our quest, Mr Speaker, Sir, to combat poverty and encourage women to take up employment, we are making provision for schools to offer child minding services before and after normal school hours and during school holidays.

New regulations under the ECCEA Act have already been made to allow preschools to offer this service. *Donc, c'est déjà une réalité. Mon ami, le ministre des finances peut déjà mettre un tick à cette mesure déjà accomplie. Maintenant, il faut quand même le faire accélérer.*

This will allow young mothers to secure full time employment thus increasing their family income while their children are in a safe, secure and inclusive environment, conducive to their overall development.

My Ministry will ensure that those schools offering these services abide by the proper norms and standards for the care and custody of these children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since January 2011 some 177 parental empowerment programmes have been organised for parents with a view to sensitising them to issues like health, nutrition, protection, education and development of the young child.

While much attention, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been laid on broadening access and equity in the pre-primary subsector, our focus remains on the improvement of quality. For this, norms and standards governing the provision of quality education are being reviewed and I must say that we have already published a National Curriculum Framework for the pre-primary. In fact, it is for all sectors: pre-primary, primary and secondary. The pre-primary came in 2010. We have been publishing and working along these curriculums. *Ce qui veut dire que dans n'importe quell endroit du pays où il y a une école maternelle, il y une forme de standardisation dans le curriculum.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, let's come to primary education, where we know that our biggest challenge is to tackle the rate of failure at CPE. Many of my predecessors, Mr Speaker, Sir, have, over the years, been toying with the idea of reforms and remedial action that need to be taken to address this problem but they met with very little success.

With the necessary support of this Government, we decided to take the bull by the horn and introduce the necessary reforms that would give a new orientation to the whole primary sector for provision of quality education to every child, not only in terms of learner academic achievement, but also to give a new impetus to his holistic development, integral development of the child, as we say.

Now, our overriding concern is how to provide the best educational environment for every child to obtain maximum benefit from his six years of primary education to be able to ensure his readiness for secondary education - *parce qu'il s'agit de cela surtout, il faut voir le CPE dans ce contexte là, pour que les enfants arrivés au niveau du CPE et le niveau requis pour pouvoir continuer et être prêts à faire face à l'éducation secondaire*, and allow him, at the same time, Mr Speaker, Sir, to successfully proceed along his learning path with confidence. This is our mission for primary education.

Fundamental changes have accordingly been brought to the primary sector such as the restructuring of the six years of primary schooling into now three stages instead of two. We have Stage I, Stage II and Stage III. Stage I: Standards I and II; Stage II: Standards III and IV; Stage III: Standards V and VI and the provision of an updated national curriculum design, here also, supported by innovative child friendly teaching and learning materials.

In recent years, Mr Speaker, Sir, several innovative measures have been successfully implemented and are now proving to be, what I can say *en Français* - 'incontournable'.

Mr Speaker Sir, I'll mention just one or two. An education system needs to have in-built evaluation mechanism at crucial points in the system in order to address weaknesses identified at the right time so as to prevent the accumulation of learning deficits. Several of these innovative practices are now fully ingrained in the primary sector. These include -

(i) Diagnostic assessment, at the beginning of Standard III à *l'école primaire, troisième comme on dit, en début de l'année*. It aims at identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses and charting their progress in English and Mathematics essentially. It thus helps educators with an early identification of learning difficulties for the adoption of a timely and structured remedial work plan. *Cela nous donne le temps parce qu'on passe à ce moment là en deuxième stage, Standards III and IV. Au début de Standard III, il y a ce diagnostic*

assessment. *On voit, surtout les faiblesses de l'enfant qu'il faut corriger. Nous avons le temps de le faire rapidement.*

(ii) Then, we have introduced also the continuous assessment, which is currently in place in Standards III and IV, et petit à petit cela va aller dans toutes les classes de Standard I à Standard VI. For the time being, it is already in Standard III and IV. Continuous assessment improves teaching and learning and helps to prevent the accumulation of learning deficits. There also, continuous assessment, le professeur évalue ses enfants en fonction de son programme, Ce n'est pas un test qu'on fait après six semaines ou un test qu'on fait à la fin du terme. C'est une évaluation des enfants de la classe, programme après programme et c'est une façon pour le professeur de se juger, lui-même, est-ce qu'il a réussi à faire comprendre à ses élèves tout ce qu'il voulait leur faire comprendre. S'il y a un problème, il peut faire marche arrière, corriger avant de passer au chapitre suivant.

This has already started, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and timely remedial support is provided at Standards III and IV to bridge learning gaps and improve performance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these practices were introduced quite recently, as I said. Diagnostic assessment, *il y a trois ans de cela* et continuous assessment, *cette année*. So, this is to say that we will only be able to gauge the effectiveness of these measures when these pupils – who are now in Standards III and IV - take part in the CPE examinations, that is, in the years 2013/2014.

C'est normal. Je voudrais attirer l'attention de la Chambre à cela. Il y a beaucoup de mesures qui sont déjà enclenchées, mais il faut attendre pour voir les résultats et un moment où on peut voir les résultats, ce serait pour les examens du CPE. Mais quand la mesure a démarré, par exemple, on a amélioré l'accès au pré-primaire, beaucoup plus d'enfants vont venir au préprimaire maintenant. Donc, le retard va être rattrapé entre ces enfants qui perdaient avant et ceux qui allaient en pré-primaire. Mais il faut attendre les six années arriver pour voir quel a été le résultat de cette mesure en faisant les enfants de pré-primaire rejoindre la classe à l'âge de trois ans. Donc, il faut attendre; il faut avoir de la patience.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as you are aware, my Ministry has already also shown its determination to eliminate the scourge of private tuition at Standard IV, at least.

The necessary amendments are being made to the Education Act accordingly. We are all convinced that private tuition stunts the holistic development of the child.

In this regard, the Enhancement Programme has been introduced in Standards III and IV, en 2011, Standard III et 2010, Standard IV. Donc *Standard IV a maintenant une expérience de deux ans*. And this programme focuses on a new

learning mode whereby differentiated pedagogical techniques are applied to attend to the varied learning needs and personality development of children.

The use of a diversity of strategies to suit the learning needs of pupils aged 7 and 8, *troisième et quatrième*, with different ability levels, has made learning a pleasant and lively activity.

Annual competitions are held in Enhancement Programme and they have revealed the creative potential of our children and that potential was only waiting to be unleashed.

This confirms, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are on the right track and we have enriched the learning experiences of the child through the Enhancement Programme which has also integrated in the course of this year- about four or five months ago - Asian languages and Arabic and it will certainly integrate the Creole language when it will become a reality in schools.

In due course, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is expected that the Enhancement Programme will eliminate the reliance of parents on private tuition and, at least, in Standard IV for the time being.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry fully realises the importance of an evaluation of the programme and two years have passed, but I must say that two years of implementation is too short a period and maybe an impact evaluation would be more appropriate. An evaluation is projected soon for the Enhancement Programme to gauge its effectiveness, bearing in mind that better results are bound to be forthcoming with its reinforcement. Furthermore, certain expected long term benefits are intangible and non measurable in quantitative terms, but will be of positive contribution to the whole society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it cannot be denied that all the above measures will eventually impact positively on performance at the end of the primary cycle.

This year, my Ministry has given also a special attention to those pupils who are repeating standard VI. A special programme for, what we call, the CPE repeaters, the 'CPE Repeater Project', has been prepared to ensure that a minimum level of achievement in core competencies is attained by these students, thus improving significantly their chances of success.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worth noting that my Ministry has embarked on a review of the CPE examinations which currently focuses on certification and selection. I have already announced that in December this year, that is, next month, my Ministry will organise a brainstorming session with all the

stakeholders. At least, a first forum will be organised and, based on the findings of that forum, we will define the way forward.

The Government has also made history, Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, by giving due recognition to *Kreol Morisien* and Bhojpuri.

My Ministry is now ready to introduce *Kreol Morisien* as an optional subject in primary schools in Standard I as from January next year and with regard to Bhojpuri it will be taught as an oral component in schools also as from January next year.

The Budget has made necessary provision for the recruitment of some 80 new trainee Educators for the *Kreol Morisien* for 2012 and beyond. Furthermore, I must inform the House that the *Akademi Kreol Morisien* which was set up administratively will now be established statutorily under an appropriate legislation to foster the development of this language.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another innovative measure, the Summer School Programme ...

(Interruptions)

For hon. Bhagwan, it is very interesting!

(Interruptions)

My Ministry is leaving no stone unturned to ensure that no child is left behind. We are introducing as from next year, the Summer School Programme in schools, as has been announced in the Budget Speech, with less than 50% CPE pass rate. The programme will, in fact, start on a pilot basis in 12 schools this year itself. Here also, I am going to please my colleague the hon. Minister of Finance. We are going to start on a pilot project in 12 schools this year itself during November/December holidays from mid November to mid December 2011 on three days a week from 9.00 to 15.00 hours.

Pupils of Standards III and IV will be able to attend a school in their vicinity on three days a week and will also benefit, as has been mentioned in the Budget Speech, from a hot meal each time they come. This programme will be activity based to give slow learners the opportunity to improve in literacy and numeracy

It is expected, Mr Speaker, Sir, that such a measure will encourage a greater participation in the education process and impact positively on successful transition from primary to secondary and will further consolidate the achievement

made through a number of pedagogical programmes including the ZEP schools project.

I would like, here, to thank the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having so well understood the need for an extra support to young schoolchildren to help them overcome their learning difficulties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to achieve our goal in laying the foundation for the new citizen of tomorrow, other important projects and supporting measures have been initiated to make education more effective.

The digitisation of classrooms, which seemed a distant dream a few years ago, has now already become a reality thanks to the support of the hon. Prime Minister and my colleague, the vice- Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

The Sankoré project which has equipped classrooms with interactive boards, projectors and laptops and provided for e-learning materials has become a reality.

I wish to inform the House that this project has successfully been initiated in 2011 with Standard IV classes of all primary schools of Mauritius now being equipped with one interactive board, a projector and a laptop. These will also be provided to schools in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already completed a first cycle of training of Head Masters, Primary Educators and ICT teachers in the use of the equipment. *C'est quelque chose de nouveau. Il a fallu former et c'est terminé.* I must congratulate those responsible people at the MIE. They have done a marvelous job. I thought I would take three or four years to do what they have already achieved in a space of six months. A key aspect of the project, Mr Speaker, Sir, has also been the creation, thanks to MIE, of a learning factory at the Mauritius Institute of Education which ensures that we now have the capacity to produce our own digital educational materials in line with the provisions of the primary curriculum. In this regard, e-materials for standard IV have already been produced by the MIE and they have started for standard III for next year.

Je voudrais qu'on comprenne ce que je suis en train de dire, M. le président, parce que avec cette nouvelle technique pédagogique, on utilise un *interactive board*, un projecteur et un laptop qui permettent de voir en image souvent dynamique où le professeur peut interagir avec ses élèves, faire venir ses élèves au tableau au lieu d'utiliser la craie, mais le stylet pour faire la classe. Cela demande quand même une transformation extraordinaire de notre *learning factory*. Il faut que tout ce qui est dans les bouquins des enfants de Standard I et Standard II de

chaque classe, soit transformé en matériels digital. Donc, tous nos livres doivent être transformés pour que ça puisse apparaître à travers ce système et la MIE a déjà réalisé cela pour toutes les classes de quatrième du début de l'année jusqu'à la fin de l'année. Et l'année prochaine, ce sera pour la troisième. On va continuer comme cela et j'espère que, dans l'espace de quatre ou cinq ans, on va couvrir l'ensemble du pays. Véritable révolution !

To further support the digitisation process, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are currently completing the elaboration of an e-Education plan which will chart out the processes required for improvement of educational programmes through the use of ICT with, in particular, the promotion of administrative and managerial excellence in the education sector, enhancing teaching and learning through the use of latest technologies, and promoting community interaction with the setting up of an ICT platform, bringing together all stakeholders in education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am thankful to the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having provided necessary funding to regularise the situation of some 172 ICT Support Teachers.

Il y a quelque temps de cela, ils étaient anxieux sur leur sort. So, this situation will now be regularised and funds have been earmarked for that. The teachers had been working on a contract basis for some nine to ten years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Open School Program which will allow the use of school premises by the community will further democratise and optimise access to school infrastructure and school facilities. The community will be provided with opportunities for the pursuit of learning, social, cultural and sports activities. In the same vein, a Club des Parents will be set up in all schools. Parents are one of the most important stakeholders of the education system. Parental empowerment has accordingly to be facilitated such that they are more fully involved in the *parcours scolaire* of their children as well as in their out-of-school behaviour. School infrastructure will be used, Mr Speaker, Sir, to create a platform for their self-learning and also meaningful interaction with the school.

My Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, is also committed to ensure the overall well-being of the student whilst, at the same time, creating conditions for schools to become nurseries for future sports professionals. *Nous aurions beau parler d'avoir des professionnels. Nous avons vu ce matin l'espace d'une question parlementaire que nous n'avons pas de professionnels, mais pour avoir des professionnels, il faut de l'entraînement. Je pense que c'est à partir du pré-primaire, primaire que le travail devrait commencer. C'est ce que je suis en train de dire.*

In this context, we fully support the setting up of the Mauritius Schools Football League which will involve organisation of Saturday inter-schools tournaments among secondary schools.

This measure will help to revive football at grass roots level, detect young talents at an early stage and develop spirit of fair play among young players (13 to 17 years).

It is also worth mentioning that Physical Education, Mr Speaker, Sir, has, as from this year, become an examinable subject at S.C – *les enfants ont déjà passé cette année-ci pour la première fois dans l'éducation physique et sportive* - and, as from next year, it will be offered as a subsidiary subject at HSC level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to one point which is very important to me at least – student tracking. The increasing trend in drop-out rate at the lower secondary education level is, in fact, a cause for serious concern. Up to now, the matter has been dealt with in a haphazard manner because the real number of out-of-school children could not be really ascertained.

For the first time ever, Mr Speaker, Sir, a tracking mechanism has been set up by my Ministry this year to follow every child who enters the school system and monitor his individual school-going status and progress in school and beyond.

Such a tracking will cover all schools including those institutions not registered by the Ministry of Education & Human Resources. The collection and speedy dissemination of such data on schooling will be a priority for my Ministry for prompt intervention for reintegration to schooling with the support and collaboration of State and non-State Actors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, talking of prevocational education now, it is a fact that it has not delivered on its promises and there is urgency for its revamping. More than a decade after its inception, a new strategy has been charted out whereby a 4-year schooling will be added to the programme. I would like to express my appreciation again to the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having agreed to provide the necessary funding in this regard.

The curriculum is also being reviewed to suit the needs of children attending the prevocational education and will place greater emphasis on the work-based experience, social skills, lifelong learning skills and development of trade skills.

I am also proposing to introduce a 'Bridging the Gap' project based on practical activities aiming at helping these children regain their self-esteem and develop their self-confidence. The 4-year programme will also lead to a formal certification pitched on the national qualification framework. This would open up

pathways to further education and training and for either vocational educational, or reintegration of the academic stream or again becoming functional and employable. The implementation plan for this project, Mr Speaker, Sir, has already been worked out and will definitely again be effective as from January 2012.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come now to a few of the measures in secondary. I am speaking only of the innovative measures – those which have been introduced in the past three years apart from what is known for education which everybody knows.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the five-year span of schooling after CPE to Form V does not allow the detection of weaknesses of students which would have enabled remediation. *C'est à la fin de la cinquième année qu'on voit des faiblesses et c'est souvent trop tard.* The National Assessment at Form III has been introduced in 2010 at pilot level in 33 schools and it addresses this problem.

This assessment aims at evaluating the level of competencies acquired by Form III students after the first 3 years of secondary schooling and helps timely remedial action to be provided to them.

The data obtained will also serve as a basis for improvement of the quality of education in general. The project has, this year, been extended to 139 schools in 2011. There were 33 in 2010 and 139 in 2011 and all schools will be concerned in 2012 because during these two years, it was on a pilot basis. *A partir de l'année prochaine, ils rentrent dans le système ;* it covers five subjects for all secondary schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also, I must say, very unfortunate that, in the past, many students saw their, what we call, *parcours académique* coming to an abrupt end due to rigid conditions for promotion from Form V to Lower VI. This rigidity was out of tune with the new paradigm which advocates opening up learning opportunities for higher education in the context of the building of a knowledge-based society.

Necessary steps have been taken this year for increased flexibility to be brought into the system to allow students to proceed to Lower VI. I have already replied to PQs on this subject in this Assembly, so I won't enter into detail, but I must say that some 2000 students have thus acceded 'A' Level studies in 2011 and this number is expected to increase during 2012.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another most important priorities in education is what we should call Quality Assurance. Quality, Mr Speaker, Sir, cannot be ensured unless we have the proper monitoring and inspection mechanism. This budget makes

available to us the necessary financial resources – I have been fighting for that for three years and I am happy that I have got it this year - to be able to fill all the posts of Quality Assurance Inspectors.

With a dedicated team in place we shall now be in a position to ensure quality assurance and inspection in secondary schools. The importance of ensuring quality has been stressed at all international fora on education. Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, there will be more accountability at all levels and an improvement in the teaching and learning process will be shown in not only the percentage of pass at School Certificate, but also in the quality of the results. All schools, state and private will be taken on board.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we welcome the setting up at the level of the Prime Minister's Office of what is known now as the National Institute for Civic Education. This will support our efforts to promote good citizenship, values and patriotism.

At my Ministry, we are working at different levels to address various problems of indiscipline and misbehaviour in schools. In line with our objective to maintain a safe and supportive environment for the school, necessary efforts have been deployed to enhance school preventive programmes. Greater emphasis has been placed on co and extracurricular activities for the overall development of students with particular attention to their physical and emotional well being.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have reviewed the curriculum framework recently to integrate the teaching of values in education. We are also promoting intercultural dialogue to help children understand each other better and respect the beliefs and traditions of their fellow students because, Mr Speaker, Sir, we believe that, at school, it must be started and taught.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the SMS alert system which informs parents of the absence of their wards from school is now fully operational in all our State Secondary Schools and in most of the private secondary schools. The system is being further enhanced to improve communication with parents for other educational purposes – *pas seulement pour les absences, mais pour les autres choses aussi.*

As a further effort to curb absenteeism, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are seriously considering making regulations to ensure a minimum compulsory attendance rate at schools for all students during the school year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius should, at all costs pursue its efforts to invest in human resources - because these also fall under the purview of my Ministry; I am coming to that at the end of my speech – as this is the key for achieving growth for the greater good.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we welcome the pre-job training initiative announced in the Budget Speech and for the financial resources that will be provided for the benefit of young unemployed graduates. This is in line with the vision of my Ministry to empower every young Mauritian.

Everybody in this House, Mr Speaker, Sir, will agree that one of the worst things that can happen to a person is to lose his/her job or being unable to find his/her first job. This does not only lead to hopelessness, but also to loss of self-respect among the unemployed people, and their families as well do endure greater hardship.

I must say that the present Government has spared no effort in ensuring a conducive environment for job creation, especially during these times of financial crisis. Due to the world economic crisis, the number of unemployed people in the world is on the increase.

However, I must say that during the 2007-2010 period, the number of unemployed people in Mauritius decreased by 3.4% thanks to the sound economic measures adopted by this Government. We believe that investing in education, Mr Speaker, Sir, and training and promoting research in leading edge technologies will provide the workforce with the opportunity to acquire the skills needed for jobs in today's labour market. Further, providing training and education opportunities for the unemployed to reskill and upskill, will enhance their chances of securing employment. I did mention what we are planning for those people who are unskilled.

My Ministry, through the Human Resource Development Council, has started a labour and skills shortage survey which involves around 1,100 organisations both in Mauritius and Rodrigues, the aim of which is to build a database of skills required by employers in the major economic sectors while analysing at the same time the skills mismatch. The findings of this survey will be published soon and will provide pointers as to the orientation the economic sectors will be taking.

In today's rapidly changing work environment, Mr Speaker, Sir, guidance is essential to enable all the young people and adults also to make informed choices in both their professional and personal lives.

We believe that it is essential to bring together all the relevant guidance stakeholders and put up a programme for an integrated lifelong guidance service for the benefit of all young Mauritians. This vision is enshrined in the Government Programme 2010-2015.

The Human Resource Development Council is setting up an ICT-based *Centre d'Orientation Académique et Professionnelle* in order to help citizens better manage their education, training and future employment. This will help young people plan their future and help them to 'match' their interests and qualification aspirations to a list of suitable careers through an innovative online tool.

The Careers Guidance Section of my Ministry and the HRDC have accordingly piloted a webbased platform in September 2011 through a case study of potential users. We will leverage on this piloting to ensure that the process is rolled out in 2012, with more schools joining this piloting which will provide a wider stage for an expanded online career guidance and information program.

Mr Speaker, Sir, through the National Training Fund, we will continue to support the training of existing employees so that they acquire the skills and competencies necessary for them as lifelong learners. Not all children, Mr Speaker, Sir, are academically endowed and can pursue the traditional routes of study. All those who do not have a propensity for academic pursuits can find fulfilment in the Technical and Vocational Sectors where there are opportunities for them to develop further their aptitudes.

There is already a heavy demand at the MITD for admission to courses leading to National Certificate Levels 3, 4 and 5 and, thereafter, the possibility to read for a diploma. The MITD is, therefore, increasing its capacity by opening new training centres across the country. It is also diversifying its programmes to cater for the emerging needs of new sectors and is also enlarging its focus, Mr Speaker, Sir, to cater for other target groups, such as women and the disabled. The '*Brevet de Technicien*' course offered by the MITD, dispensed by the *Lycée Polytechnique de Flacq*, is being phased out internationally. In this respect, the BT will be now upgraded into what we call the Bac-Pro with the help of French expertise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all local trades need to be encouraged, certified and benchmarked. The MQA has been *avant-gardiste* and has developed qualifications in fields where there were no qualifications previously, such as the seafood and marine industry, agriculture, nursing, BPO and adult literacy amongst others.

Currently, the MQA is developing standards based on international benchmarks in fire fighting, hospitality on cruise ships, scaffolding and marine safety. In its quest to review prevocational programmes, the MQA is proposing to provide more relevancy to students with learning difficulties whereby learners are able to acquire the NQF Level 2 qualifications as a stepping stone for further learning. It is to be noted that 125 NQF qualifications have already been developed and some 25 additional NQF qualifications will be developed next year. Mr Speaker, Sir, the NQF has enabled clear learning pathways for all learners which never existed

before. For instance, fast growing sectors like tourism, BPO, ICT, automotive trades, construction and seafood and marine industry now have well defined pathways. Shortly, the MQA will be coming up with pathways for other sectors like electrical trades, health & social care and beauty care & hairdressing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for too long Paper Certificates were the only means whereby there was a recognition of the level of skills attained by an individual. Those having wide experience with no formal qualifications were not given their due recognition.

The implementation since 2010 of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Mauritius has brought a new dimension to TVET whereby people having wide experience without any formal qualifications can now have their experience recognised into formal qualification.

To date, RPL has been implemented in tourism, plumbing, printing, construction and adult literacy. The MQA is now envisaging to extend the RPL to other sectors like agriculture, automotive trades, electrical trades, panel beating and spray painting. In addition, the RPL will be introduced in Rodrigues next year, in 2012.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as pioneer in the implementation of the RPL in the region, Mauritius is leading the concept in various African countries where workshops, conferences and training have been conducted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the conclusion. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government

(Interruptions)

Leur bateau, c'était le bateau 'naufrage' - vous vous rappelez de cela – qu'on a sorti de la zone rouge et qu'on a amené dans le meilleur port. Maintenant on est en train de conduire vers les destinations où il y a le plaisir, le bonheur pour les mauriciens.

Let me conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, in saying that this Government is fulfilling most of its electoral promises that it made to the nation, although it could have easily invoked the European crisis to shirk from its responsibilities. *Cela aurait été trop facile.*

One of the key messages thatr this Budget has sent to the nation as a whole, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that of resilience. If a country does not have an economy that is resilient in the face of variegated and incessant exogenous changes, then the future is, indeed, bleak.

If a country does not have an economy that is resilient in the face of validated and incessant, exogenous changes then the future is indeed bleak. We welcome positive criticism. I said it at the beginning and I am repeating it now. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, let us give this Budget its chance to succeed for the country. For this, we need the helping hand of one and all. We are in a democracy which gives us all reasons to feel proud to be Mauritian. In such a context, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition has and will have its say but, Government must work and deliver and thus, must have its way. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Dr. Hookoom rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move for the adjournment of the House to Wednesday 09 November 2011, at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.