

Budget 2012

INTERVENTION of Hon V.K.Bunwaree, part Two

Minister of Education and Human Resources

Education and Skills for a Resilient Economy

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 of the 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 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

We are thankful 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 resolutely embarked, at the level of education, on long-awaited and much needed reforms in the education sector **since the last three years.**

We are now at an important turning point, that is, in the implementation phase. I know that the proposed reforms have had widespread acceptance, and stakeholders have recognised the 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.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The 2012 budget brings the necessary financial support required to sustain our reforms.

It would be difficult here to enumerate all that has been accomplished but with the support of one and all, we shall continue our mission to improve performance at all levels of education.

Mr. Speaker , Sir (Preprimary Education)

It is believed that the foundations of human development are laid during the child's early years. Learning begins at birth and continues throughout life. Therefore, *investing in pre-primary education means investing in our country's future.*

We all know 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 in the early grades of primary schooling, and reduce school dropout and risky behaviour.

I would like to refer the House to the latest findings of the SACMEQ (Southern African Consortium for Monitoring of Education Quality) study (2011) which confirm that pupils who attend preschools tend to perform better.

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.

Extension of Grant to 3+

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 Rs 200 will be extended to this age group as from January 2012.

In this way, one of the key measures announced last year in the Government Programme has now been met. This will reinforce our efforts to improve enrolment rate. *L'école devient partiquement gratuite maintenant, dès l'âge de 3 ans.*

In fact, Mr. Speaker Sir, I must point out that the enrolment rate for this age group has increased from around 85% in 2007 to reach 95% in 2011.

This spectacular result was obtained thanks to targeted intervention programmes which were put in place.

I am pleased to announce that some 950 of these children have been successfully enrolled in both private and public schools in 2011.

To ensure that children coming from the deprived and vulnerable conditions attend school, the ECCEA is working in close collaboration with the NEF to sustain appropriate social, financial and educational interventions that will best mitigate the risks and vulnerabilities confronted by these children and their families.

An additional provision of Rs 40 Million has been allocated to Early Child Care and Education Authority to enable us to implement all the measures announced for the Early Childhood Sector.

Mr. Speaker, Sir

(Child minding services)

Poverty has been one of the reasons for some parents not to send their children to school. In our quest 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.

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.

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

While much attention has been laid on broadening access and equity in the preprimary subsector, our focus remains on the **improvement of quality**. For this, norms and standards governing the provision of quality education are being reviewed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Primary Education)

Our biggest challenge at the primary level is to ***tackle the rate of failure at CPE.***

Many of my predecessors 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** .

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*** and allow him 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 re-structuring of the six years of primary schooling into three stages instead of two (Stage I: Std I-II; Stage II: Std III-IV; Stage III: Std V-V) and the provision of an updated national curriculum design supported by ***innovative child friendly teaching and learning materials.***

In recent years, several innovative measures have been successfully implemented and are now proving to be '*incontournable*'.

Mr. Speaker Sir, (Innovative Measures)

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:

Diagnostic assessment at the beginning of Standard III. It aims at identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses and charting their progress in English and Mathematics. It so helps educators with an early identification of learning difficulties for the adoption of a timely and structured remedial work plan.

Continuous assessment, which is currently in place in Standards III & IV, improves teaching and learning and helps to prevent the accumulation of learning deficits. C'est une façon au prof de se juger lui-même, si ses élèves ont bien assimilé son enseignement.

Timely remedial support is provided at Stds III and IV to bridge learning gaps and improve performance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these practices were introduced quite recently and we will only be able to gauge the effectiveness of these measures when these pupils take part in the CPE examinations in the years 2013/ 2014.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Enhancement Programme)

As you are aware, my Ministry has already shown its determination to eliminate the scourge of private tuition at Standard IV. The necessary amendments are being made to the Education Act 1957 accordingly. We are all convinced that private tuition stunts the holistic development of the child.

In this regard, the Enhancement Programme introduced in Standards III and IV in 2011 and 2010 respectively 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 7-8 with different ability levels has made learning a pleasant and lively activity.

Annual competitions have revealed that the creative potential of our children was only waiting to be unleashed.

This confirms 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 Asian Languages and Arabic in the course of this year. This has met with great success. It will certainly integrate the Kreol Morisien in time.

In due course, it is expected that the Enhancement Programme will eliminate the reliance of parents on private tuition at least in Standard IV.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

My Ministry fully realises the importance of an **evaluation of the programme**.

However the two years of implementation is too short a period and 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 a special attention **to those pupils who are repeating standard VI**. A specially adapted programme, the '**CPE Repeaters 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, it is worth noting that my Ministry has embarked on an exercise on a **review of the CPE examinations** which currently focuses on certification and selection.

In December this year my Ministry will organize a brainstorming session with stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Mother Tongue)

This Government has made history 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 in January 2012.

With regard to Bhojpuri it will be taught as an oral component in schools as from January 2012 as well.

The budget has made necessary provision for the recruitment of some 80 new trainee Educators (Kreol Morisien) for 2012 and beyond.

Furthermore 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

(Summer School Programme)

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 with less than 50% CPE pass rate.

The programme will, in fact, ***start on a pilot basis in 12 schools*** this year itself during the 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 from a hot meal**. This programme will be activity based to give slow learners the opportunity to improve in literacy and numeracy

It is expected 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 '*Zone d'Education Prioritaire*' (ZEP) schools project.

I would like, here, to thank the 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 to-morrow, other important projects and supporting measures have been initiated to make education more effective.

Mr. Speaker Sir, (Digitisation of Classrooms)

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 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 laptop. These are also now provided to Rodrigues. .

We have already completed a first cycle of training of Head Masters, Primary Educators and ICT teachers in the use of the equipment. A key aspect of the project has also been the creation 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.

*To further support the digitization process, 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 my colleague, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, for having provided necessary funding to regularize the situation of some 172 ICT Support Teachers who had been working on a contract basis for some nine years.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Open School Program)

The Open School Program which will allow the use of school premises by the community will further democratize and optimize 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 behavior. School infrastructure will be used to create a platform for their self-learning and also meaningful interaction with the school.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Health, PE and Sports)

My Ministry is committed to ensuring the overall well-being of the student whilst at the same time creating conditions for schools to become nurseries for future sports professionals.

In this context we fully support the setting up of the **Mauritius Schools Football League** which will involve organization 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 P.E has, as from this year, become an examinable subject at S.C and, as from next year, will be offered as a subsidiary subject at HSC.

Mr. Speaker, Sir **(Student Tracking)**

The increasing trend in drop-out rate at the lower secondary education level is a cause of serious concern. Up to now, the matter had been dealt with in a haphazard manner because the real number of out-of-school children could not be 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 & HR.

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, (Pre Vocational Education)

It is a fact that Pre-vocational education 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 4th year schooling** will be added to the programme. I would like to express my appreciation 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 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 has already been worked out and will definitely be effective as from 2012.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Form III National Assessment)

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.

The National Assessment Form III, introduced in 2010 at pilot level in 33 schools, 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 been extended to 139 schools in 2011 and all schools will be concerned in 2012 and covers five subjects

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

(Increased access to Upper secondary)

It is very unfortunate that, in the past, many students saw their “*parcours académique*” coming to an abrupt end due to the rigid conditions for promotion 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.

Some 2000 students have thus accessed ‘A’ Level studies in 2011 and this number is expected to increase during 2012.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Quality Assurance)

One of our most important priorities in education is Quality Assurance.

Quality cannot be ensured unless we have the proper monitoring and inspection mechanism.

This budget makes available to us the necessary financial resources 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 & inspection in secondary schools. The importance of ensuring quality has been stressed at all international fora on education.

Moreover, it is expected that there will be more accountability at all levels and, an improvement in the teaching and learning process will be shown in not only in 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, (The Issue of Indiscipline)

We welcome the setting up at the level of the Prime Minister's Office of 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 extra curricular activities for the overall development of students with particular attention to their physical and emotional well being.

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.

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 some private schools**. The system is being further enhanced to improve communication with parents for other educational purposes.

As a further effort to curb absenteeism, 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, (Embedding Evaluation into the system)

Any programme or project needs to be assessed and evaluated to gauge its effectiveness and impact and consequently allow informed decision-making.

My Ministry has implemented a number of programmes and projects over the last few years. Mr. Speaker, Sir, attention is now being devoted to proper evaluation and benchmarking. This is absolutely important and the time is ripe for it.

Again, for the first time, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am happy to confirm that Mauritius has successfully participated in the PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT (**PISA**) - designed, developed and administered by the OECD.

This study benchmarks a country's performance against that of other participating countries.

The International report for PISA 2009+ is expected to be released in December 2011. A National report will be released simultaneously.

Mr. Speaker Sir: (SCHOLARSHIPS)

In the 2011 budget, it was announced that fundamental changes would be brought to the Government Scholarship Schemes with a view to awarding scholarships on a more equitable basis with the social background factor being taken into account.

I would like to inform members of this august Assembly that my Ministry is now taking this policy one step further by working out its *modus operandi*.

This provides for an increase in the total number of scholarships from **30** to **60**. Eight (**8**) new Bursaries for students from low income backgrounds will also be provided. The social criterion which was inexistent before has now been brought into the system. This measure will help improve the learning opportunities and achievement of students who come from the most disadvantaged communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Other Scholarships)

I must point out that this Government has always been sensitive to the case of students facing hardships.

Already since 2009, my Ministry has been implementing a special scholarship scheme under the Human Resource Knowledge and Arts Development Fund for needy students to enable them to pursue tertiary studies.

For academic year 2010/2011, **584 students benefitted from scholarships** under this scheme which covers their full tuition fees at a locally recognized tertiary institution and provides them with a small stipend.

The number of beneficiaries is expected to double by 2012. This measure has greatly contributed to increase the Gross Tertiary Enrolment Rate in line with the national goals.

Further under the same Fund, **Government guaranteed loans** are also provided to those students who wish to pursue higher studies but who have no property or other security to fall back upon. In 2010, 67 students benefitted from the scheme, including 37 students from Rodrigues.

Moreover, the **MITD** has signed an agreement with the **SBM Education Fund** on 12 September 2011 whereby over 100 scholarships will be offered to Mauritian students living in the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega and whose family income does not exceed Rs 15,000 monthly to enable them to cover part of their expenses for courses leading to Post Secondary Diplomas and National Certificate (NC) 3, NC4 and NC5.

Mr. Speaker Sir, (Special Education Needs)

I wish to reiterate that equity of access to education is and will continue to remain high on the agenda of this Government. I am fully alive to the difficulties being encountered by children with special education needs, especially those coming from areas where specialized schools are not available.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the first time ever, my Ministry initiated in 2010 an outreach exercise for the registration of children with special education needs in primary schools. The results have been encouraging indeed.

From 5 students registered in 2010, the number increased to 68 in 2011.

A special team has been set up in my Ministry to channel these children to those institutions that can best address their specific needs. The team is constantly monitoring the situation and is working in close collaboration with the NGOs engaged in SEN activities.

And here, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must recognise the role played by the NGOs for the development of the SEN Sector.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, *I wish today to thank my colleague the Minister of Finance and Economic Development for having taken the laudable initiative to increase the Grant-in-Aid payable to the NGOs running SEN Schools by 25%.*

Such an increase will no doubt go a long way in alleviating the financial hardships of these NGOs while at the same time ensuring their empowerment and the capacity building of their personnel and providing a better service to the children.

Indeed, the need to review the Grant-in-aid formula was already announced in the Government Programme 2010-2015, and I am happy that the proposal has now materialised.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

Caring for our children with special education needs is very close to my heart. Our objective is to ensure that none of our children who require special education needs is deprived of his fundamental rights.

With a view to providing specialised services and also dealing with the problem of access, the first instance, my Ministry is also setting up three **(3) SEN Resource and Educational Development Centres** at Ferney, Maingard (Beau Bassin) and Plaines des Papayes respectively. These Centres are expected to be operational in 2012 and are part of our mission to achieve the Inclusive Education concept.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in order to upgrade the quality of services, my Ministry has solicited the assistance of the **European Union** in the implementation of our national policy and strategy for SEN as outlined in the Policy and Strategy Document published in 2006. Consultants from the European Union will make recommendations on an appropriate curriculum and pedagogy for children with special education needs, training requirements, management of SEN Resource and Development Centres and on the elaboration of a regulatory framework for SEN.

We are also partnering with the French side for support and assistance in the field of SEN. The **French Authorities** have agreed to share their expertise in the field of SEN and **Mr. Mustafa Fourar**, the Rector of the *Académie de la Reunion*, has personally written to me to confirm his intention to come to Mauritius to discuss the modalities of cooperation between Reunion and Mauritius in the field of education, including the SEN sector.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Improving School Infrastructure)

Equitable access to quality education also means equal life chances with parity of environment in all institutions. Moreover, proper set up and modern adequate infrastructures are a *sine qua non* condition to successful implementation of any endeavour, particularly, in the education sector.

Within these perspectives, my Ministry has been sparing no effort in the provision of appropriate infrastructure adapted to modern trends and requirements. The substantial amount of Rs 3.2 billion spent over the last 6 years to provide new infrastructure as well as to upgrade existing one bears testimony to that.

The provision of **Rs 500,000 per school** for infrastructure in the 2012 budget is a much welcome measure and I must thank my colleague the Minister of Finance for his thoughtfulness. By empowering Heads of schools to become more autonomous in the management and improvement of the school infrastructure, we will go a long way in improving the situation and developing a sense of ownership.

The upgrading of toilets in both primary and secondary schools will be carried out as a matter of priority. We shall also include facilities for easy access for special needs pupils.

Mr. Speaker, Sir *(Matching Skills with the Requirements of the Country)*

Mauritius should, at all costs pursue its efforts to invest in its human resources 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 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 the first job. This does not only lead to hopelessness and loss of self respect among the unemployed people but their families as well endure greater hardship.

I must say that the present Government has spared no effort in ensuring a conducive environment for job creation, especially during the financial crisis.

Due to world wide economic crisis, the number of unemployed people in the world is on the increase.

However, during the period 2007-2010, ***the number of unemployed people decreased by 3.4%*** in Mauritius thanks to the sound economic measures adopted by this Government.

We believe that investing in Education 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 re-skill and up-skill, will enhance their chances of securing employment.

My Ministry through the Human Resource Development Council has started a **labour and skills shortage survey** which **involves around 1100 organisations** both in Mauritius and Rodrigues, the aim of which is to build a data base of skills required by employers in the major economic sectors while analyzing 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. ,

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Centre d’Orientation Academique et Professionelle)

In today’s rapidly changing work environment, guidance is essential to enable all our young people and adults 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 (HRDC) 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 web based 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.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET))

Not all children 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 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 to cater for other target groups, such as women and the disabled.

Introduction of a Baccalaureat Professionel (Bac Pro)

The ‘Brevet de Technicien” (BT) Course, dispensed by the Lycee Polytechnique de Flacq, is being phased out internationally. In this respect, the BT will be upgraded into the Bac-Pro with the help of French expertise.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

(MAURITIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK)

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 MQA is developing standards based on international benchmarks in **Fire Fighting, Hospitality on Cruise Ships, Scaffolding and Marine Safety**. In its quest to review pre-vocational programmes, the MQA is proposing to provide more relevancy to students with learning difficulties whereby learners are able to acquire NQF Level 2 qualifications as a stepping stone for further learning.

It is to be noted that 125 NQF qualifications have already been developed. Some 25 additional NQF qualifications will be developed next year.

Learning Pathways

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, MQA will be coming up pathways for other sectors like Electrical trades, Health & Social Care and Beauty Care & Hairdressing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, (RPL)

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 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 recognized into formal qualification.

To date, RPL has been implemented in ***Tourism, Plumbing, Printing, Construction and Adult Literacy***. MQA is now envisaging to extend RPL to other sectors like ***Agriculture, Automotive trades, Electrical trades, Panel Beating and Spray Painting***. In addition, RPL will be introduced in Rodrigues Island in 2012.

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

CONCLUSION

This Government is thus fulfilling most of its electoral promises it made to the nation although it could have easily invoked the European crisis to shirk from its responsibilities.

One of the key messages this budget has sent to the nation as a whole 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.

We welcome positive criticism. 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 a Mauritian citizen.

In such a context, the Opposition has and will have its say but government must work, deliver and thus must have its way

Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir.