

ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE A.K GUNGAH, MINISTER OF THE CIVIL SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS ON THE OCCASION OF THE AWARD OF CERTIFICATES FOR THE ODL COURSE ON SUPERVISION AND LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE ON 28 JULY 2010 AT 14 00 HOURS AT THE UTM

Mr Pather Supervising officer of my Ministry

Dr Sukon, Chairman, Mauritius College of the Air

Mrs Oree, Acting Permanent Secretary of my Ministry

Mr Jheengut, Officer-in-Charge, Mauritius College of the Air

Officers from Ministries and Departments

Officers of the MCA

Distinguished guests from the UTM

Awardees

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to be in your midst this afternoon for the Award Certificates Ceremony to reward 140 Officers who have successfully completed the Open Distance Learning Course

on Supervision and Leadership for Change at the Mauritius College of the Air. First and foremost, I take this opportunity to congratulate all the awardees for having successfully completed this 90-hour course spread over 16 weeks in spite of their professional duties and numerous family and personal commitments.

It is encouraging to note that 21 Ministries and Departments responded positively to our invitation for enrolment on this course. More than 325 participants grouped in 10 batches have followed the training.

It would have been practically impossible for my Ministry to meet the demand for this training by resorting solely to the traditional classroom type. This explains our collaborative efforts with the MCA for the Open Distance Learning mode for two courses already mounted,

namely “Customer Care and Quality Management” and “Supervision and Leadership for Change.” I understand that this collaboration has resulted in providing training opportunities to a total of some 3000 public officers who have benefited from these two courses.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

There is no doubt that the accelerated expansion of Information and Communication Technologies and the rapid growth of their application in the field of education and training have opened new vistas for better access to learning, within a life-long perspective of development and growth.

ICT has in fact created the platform for Distance Learning and offered greater opportunities for self development. Physical barriers have disappeared and time constraints harnessed.

New ways of communication and relationship-building between trainers and trainees and among trainees themselves are set up thus facilitating the learning process which can be more interactive.

Public Officers are encouraged to make an optimum use of ICT tools already in place at IT corners set up in Ministries and Departments. These IT corners can be converted into an open learning space that allows for a more effective and efficient use of such facilities for interaction.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

By adopting modern management principles the public sector has shifted its focus from being input-based to an output-based and result-oriented one. Citizens, as customers, have a legitimate right to quality, timely, efficient and effective services. The need to develop a customer care and a performance-based

approach among Public Officers has become imperative for our 21st century civil service.

The enthusiasm of the participants in the face-to-face training sessions shows their willingness to improve their supervision and leadership skills. They would thus be able to motivate their team members to work with a team spirit so as to provide quality services to both their internal and external customers.

In a constantly changing business environment, organizations need to adapt to survive. They need to actively maintain a competitive edge by anticipating future developments and keeping up to date with the latest developments in their field.

This training programme came at an opportune moment when Government has reiterated its commitment to transform the civil service into a world class service provider and facilitator. For this change to happen smoothly and harmoniously public officers must feel that they own the change process and are part it.

Knowledge-base is constantly changing. Research and practice are never static. What is leading edge today, becomes conventional in a few years. So it is imperative that successful Leaders and Supervisors in public sector organizations to constantly learn, unlearn and relearn their trade.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As you are aware, the Pay Research Bureau (PRB) in its 2008 Report has, *inter-alia*, recommended that Public Officers, at all levels, should undergo between 40-60 hours training annually depending on their grades. In fact, with the ODL mode, our objective is to go beyond that minimum 40 hours training.

Training has become such a vital element in human resource management and development that it reminds me of an old Chinese proverb which reads as follows:

“Give a man a fish; you feed him for a day. Teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”.

But this old idea of ‘teaching a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime no longer holds. In this modern business world, new species of fish are constantly emerging, the water currents are unpredictable and rival fishermen are more competitive than ever before. The fishermen must constantly relearn and upgrade his skills to take home a decent catch.

Unless we embrace the principle of lifelong learning, unless we become once again a person who cherishes knowledge and takes pride in skill, then we cannot begin the process of reforming the civil service.

to again, instill a thirst of learning and a hunger for more. As John Ruskins said ‘The highest reward for a person’s toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it’’. And that’s why I see learning not as something that can be carved up into useful and less useful pieces, but as a continuum. I would say that training or learning is not the filling of the pail, but the lighting of a fire. A fire that can burn warm hearts, ignite passions - even at this challenging time, the flame of learning must burn bright.

Before ending I would like to thank the Mauritius College of the Air and its officers as well as the officers of my Ministry for all the support provided. Today, we are proud that such collaborative efforts have been crystallized and have culminated into an award of certificate for those who have successfully completed the programme.

I would also like to thank the resource persons, who are or have been practitioners within the Public Service, for all the help provided.

Allow me also to express a special word of thanks to the University of Technology, Mauritius for having graciously put at our disposal this Conference Room and other facilities for this function.

Last but not least, I wish to thank you participants, as without you this ceremony would have had no place.

Before ending I wish to reiterate my sincere congratulations to you on your success which you really deserve after much hard work, perseverance and sacrifice.

With these words, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.