

Launching of « Life Skills for Teens »

Speech for Director General

Mr. Mahadeo, Director of Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources,

Representative of the Mauritius Institute of Education,

Representatives of Zone Directorates

Heads of Secondary Schools

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to extend to all of you a warm welcome as the newly appointed Director General of the ICAC. Your presence here bears testimony of your commitment to help us fight against corruption through education targeted mainly at the younger generation. The booklet that will be presented to you in a few moments has been devised with the assistance of psychologists and specialists in the educational field. It responds to a particular need for teenagers and will empower them to make the right choices, in decision making skills, in resisting peer pressure and in self management skills.

All of us here have been through this transitional period of adolescence where we discover ourselves, we undergo through this period of instability, where we try to build up and forge our character. During this period all teenagers are submitted to external factors that influence them. At this age, though teenagers are not corrupt in the real sense of the term, they are not necessarily honest, trustworthy and do not speak the truth. This booklet is aimed to build their capacities to address moral and ethical dilemmas. During this adolescence period when they are most vulnerable it is worth “catching them young” and make them perform the

developmental tasks pertaining to moral and ethical development. In short, the aim is to make them develop a personal value system that will assist them in developing socially and morally responsible behaviour.

At the ICAC, we have regular inter-action with the young because we strongly believe that in the long term, the commitment of today's youth will contribute in a very significant manner, in the shaping up of our tomorrow. We believe that the youth of this country are the best anti-corruption advocates. In the National Baseline Survey published in March 2004, it has been revealed that the young in the age bracket of 18 to 24, are more prone to report a case of corruption than other age groups. This is a good sign and augurs well for the future of our country. The behavioral attitude of the younger generation, their sense of honesty and their sense of integrity can only help in paving the way for a cleaner Mauritius.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

But if we achieve to make integrity one of the main pillars of the younger generation, we can meet this challenge and bring the change in the mindset of people and in their cultural habits. We need to sow the seeds of this new culture of integrity now.

The emergence of a culture of integrity will certainly necessitate the close collaboration of all forces including the civil society, the NGOs, the trade unions and all the "forces vives" of the country, where each and everyone through their commitment and action will contribute to a large extent towards building a better Mauritius and that will enable us to meet the vision of the ICAC, which is to make our country "fair, just and stable".

The fight against corruption needs public support and this support should be volunteered. It should be prompt and spontaneous. No guns, no bullets can fight corruption. Only the committed will and support of the public can be the crux of

this fight. The more there is public volunteerism the more we will be able to bring this scourge to manageable levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is crucial to understand believe that the youth can lead in the fight against corruption since they account for a very large chunk of world population – 1.1 billion according to the United Nations Population Fund and in Mauritius youth represent slightly above 20% of the Mauritian population. Our aim is to bring these youngsters to promote the virtues of accountability, transparency and integrity in their public and private lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fight against corruption can only be successful if we enhance and maintain the integrity of people and integrity of systems. Upgrading integrity of people is a long term process. As far as youth is concerned, this can only be achieved through a sustained educational campaign. The prime objective is to bring a change in the mentality of people and develop a culture of intolerance to corruption. We all know how difficult it is to bring a change in the mindset of people where the culture of corruption is well anchored in their psyche. But we strongly believe that education is the only long term process that can operate the change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Basically, people are not born corrupt. But we cannot escape the fact that in very many cases, circumstances dictate them to become corrupt or indulge in corrupt practices. This is why we are targeting the teens through this booklet which will help them discover themselves and enable them to forge their character with the seed of integrity. We want integrity to be the buzzword of the younger

generation. If we succeed in this endeavour, we, as elders, can only be proud to have created a generation of graftbusters imbued with a culture of integrity that will have a direct bearing in all spheres of life.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Integrity can be considered as a seed. It is planted in youth, watered in adolescence and blossoms in adulthood. The more you water it throughout life, the more it grows and blooms. Just as it is with plants, if neglected at any point, it will wither and die.

At the ICAC we have great expectations from you as Rectors of secondary schools. We hope that you will motivate members of your staff to commit themselves to the implementation of this programme.

Before ending, I would like to leave you with this quote of former US President, George Washington: I quote. "A good moral character is the first essential in a man. It is, therefore, highly important to endeavour not only to be learned but to be virtuous." End quote.

I have now the pleasure to launch the booklet, entitled: Life Skills for Teens.

Thank you