



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

SENATOR HAZEL MANNING

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Primary School Computerisation Project

Sensitisation Seminar 111

**RUDRANATH CAPILDEO
LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRE**

JUNE 5, 2007 @ 9 A.M.

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SALUTATION:

- Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Angella Jack
- Deputy Permanent Secretaries Mrs. Marlene Juman and Ms. Marlene Felix
- Chief Education Officer, Mr. Peter O'Neil and staff of the Ministry of Education. In the inclusive language of the reforms staff includes all employees:-
 - Our staff in central administration
 - Our staff in the districts and
 - Our staff in schools
- Mr. Keith Thomas, Chairman of Illuminat
- Specially invited guests
- Teachers
- Members of the News Media
- Ladies and gentlemen.

I am honoured to join this historic sensitization seminar and share with you the successful experience of our Primary School Computerisation Project. But, before doing so, I wish to pay tribute to our students and teachers on World Environment Day.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY!

Today, June 5, the school children of Trinidad and Tobago join with the United Nations and students in 106 countries celebrating World Environment Day.

The theme selected by the United Nations for this year's activity focuses on climate change, its consequences and the promotion of an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes on environmental issues

Today, in many of our primary and secondary schools, World Environment Day is being celebrated with tree planting, essay and poster competitions, recycling and clean-up campaigns. Some of our students are engaged in a science and education initiative called GLOBE, - 'Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment.'

Shortly after my arrival this morning at the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, I joined in the environmental activities by planting a tree outside this auditorium. As this tree grows, it is my hope that together we share in the mission to support education and teaching on environmental issues and that we all protect and conserve the diversity of life on this planet

THE ENVIRONMENT AND ICT

Just as environmental issues are impacting on us, a wave of information and communications technology is impacting on our economy. When the personal computer was invented in 1981, it took a long time for suppliers and users to figure out exactly what it would be used for. It held great promise, yet, at that time it was hard to articulate what it would actually deliver. A few years later, we had the same difficulty with the Internet. It looked very promising.

Today, a veritable implosion has occurred around the personal computer, the Internet and the range of digital formats, digital connectivity and mobility that has brought us something that is even more exciting – **e-Learning**. It is now widely accepted that Information and Communications Technology has the greatest potential to contribute to the social and economic progress of our country.

Information and Communications Technology is now the driver of knowledge societies. We are being constantly reminded that the workforce of the future will need a new spectrum of knowledge and skills to deal with technology and the globalization of knowledge. We are also being told that there is a need to be agile and flexible and to adjust to continuous change, both economic and social. This means, ladies and gentlemen, that in Trinidad and Tobago we must embrace a holistic approach to education, investing concurrently in the whole pyramid of Early Childhood Care and Education, primary education, secondary education, Technical and Vocational, and

higher education. As a result, Information and Communications Technology is now one of the building blocks in making Trinidad and Tobago a sustainable knowledge-based society.

ICT POLICY

As our Ministry of Education becomes more student-centered and ICT driven, we know that greater use must be made of the global currency of information –a small step in the reform process but a giant leap in the delivery of quality education. Indeed, in our policy thrust we see Information and Communication Technology as “the vehicle for new and faster ways of delivering and accessing information...for instant communication...for developing new ways to do business...for creating jobs...reducing the digital divide and...providing educational opportunities for all.

We see ICT as radically transforming the teaching/learning environment...providing equity and access...and creating an environment that would facilitate creativity, critical thinking and decision-making. The pervasive use of ICT in education would optimize our operations to the extent that at the Ministry of Education we would be in a position to better provide the highest quality service to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Ladies and gentlemen: this ICT in education policy is underpinned by the Ministry’s vision “to be the premier institution leading and transforming education through Information and Communications Technology...”

PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPUTERISATION

As you are all well aware, this is the third Sensitisation Seminar as part of our Primary School Computerisation Project. Computer labs are to be installed in 340 primary schools.

The establishment of computer labs in all primary and secondary schools is in keeping with the Ministry of Education’s vision for the integration of Information and Communications Technology in the classroom.

It is very timely to discuss and share experiences on issues of primary school computerization, its policy, regulations and technical aspects. We are all very well aware that the computer will play a key role in helping our students to benefit and share in the information society.

In all of this we must not lose sight of the fact that the computer is only an instrument – an important instrument for development. The strategy therefore includes arming all our teachers with the means of moving forward toward a Knowledge Based Society.

This is an opportunity for our teachers, ICT providers, technicians and Ministry personnel to discuss and exchange experiences and practices, potentials and capabilities in Communications Technology. In this effort the Ministry is partnering with Illuminat Trinidad and Tobago Limited and Hewlett Packard to establish computer laboratories in three hundred and forty primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPUTERISATION

In March of this year I inaugurated two projects in the Ministry Secondary School Computerisation effort:

They included:

1. The Basic ICT Infrastructure For Secondary Schools
2. Library Detection Systems For Secondary Schools

Other ICT projects in the Computerisation for Secondary Schools Programme include:

- A Collaborative Classroom Project
- Educational Software for Schools Project
- An Inter-School Collaborative Learning Project which some of us refer to as Video-conferencing for Schools, and
- The School Based Management Systems Project

For the “Modernisation of Secondary Schools Libraries”, follow-on projects include:

- An Integrated Library Information Management System;
- Supply of over 5000 new Library Books;
- Annual Subscriptions to at least 10 Periodicals;
- Book Shelves and Book Carts;
- Photo-Copying Machines for Student Use
- Multimedia Equipment and Systems;
- DVD-based and CD-based Learning and Research Materials;

These projects, ladies and gentlemen, are aligned with the Ministry's Primary School Computerisation Project which I had the pleasure of launching in the last quarter of 2006. Together they demonstrate this Government's commitment to providing high quality world-class education for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first batch of sixty schools in this Primary School ICT Project has been completed and, as we speak, ICT equipment is continuing to be delivered to primary schools. Technical Teams from both the Ministry of Education and Illuminat are installing labs in the second batch of sixty schools.

Ladies and Gentlemen – primary school teachers: we are here today because your time has come. Within a month, you too will see our technical teams, delivering or installing equipment at your schools or commissioning your school laboratories. Our vision is becoming a reality.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Let it not be said that we have not forgotten our Special Schools. At the Ministry of Education we are of the belief that “every child has an inherent right to an education that will enhance the development of maximum capability regardless of gender, ethnic, economic, social or religious background...

“This right to education pertains to all children regardless of location, physical or mental ability: It is in this regard that this Ministry will be furnishing eleven special schools with

ICT equipment, assistive technology and special learning software. To date, three of the eleven special schools have been outfitted with ICT equipment.

TRAINING

It is imperative that schools embrace the technology. This initiative is more than hardware and software, it is a reform of the classroom from ‘talk and chalk’ to an ICT based environment. The Ministry is making efforts to ensure that there is a seamless transition.

We would like all teachers to be comfortable and confident in the use of technology. To ensure that the ICT is effectively utilized, schools teachers will be receiving ICT training to work in their new environment. To date, one hundred and eighty teachers have been trained under this project. Training is in progress at our newly developed laboratory here at the RCLRC and at Newtown Boys RC in Port of Spain.

The Ministry’s aim is to ensure that all 14,000 teachers are capable of using ICT as a classroom tool and as educational content. A critical ingredient for the success of this project is the teachers’ willingness to accept and utilize the technology. We are asking that you work with us, especially in our efforts to train teachers during the July / August period.

CURRICULUM

Our new teachers are being training in Technology Integration at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). You can look forward to the Curriculum Development Division working with you at your school to provide guidance on ICT Curriculum Integration.

www.moe.gov.tt

Our website – www.moe.gov.tt is a major tool in our work of promoting equal opportunities. I am advised that each of you have received a ‘mouse-pad’ with our website address. We are working to enhance the website but please, do visit our website and send us your comments.

THE INTERNET

I wish to advise that the Ministry of Education has entered into a contract with TSTT to provide all public schools with high speed Internet Access.

We envision that all Secondary Schools will be connected with high speed Internet Access by the end of August 2007.

As the computer labs at the Primary Schools are developed, TSTT is working in conjunction with our Project Team at the Ministry of Education to provide high speed Internet access to these labs. This project recently met the milestone of providing high speed Internet Access to one hundred public Primary and Secondary schools.

SCHOOL AGREEMENT LICENSE

The Central Tenders Board has recently approved a three-year School Agreement License with Microsoft Corporation. This is to provide all public schools with Microsoft productivity tools and related software to enable teachers to seamlessly integrate technology into their relevant subject area. When this Agreement is finalized, Public Schools will be entitled to ICT training in Microsoft products at their authorized agents in Trinidad and Tobago. Additionally, under Microsoft's Partners in Learning Programme, there is a 'Work at Home Programme' which will provide licensed copy of Microsoft productivity tools to teachers.

RCLRC's TRAINING LABORATORY

Today we formally commission our computer training laboratory here at the RCLRC. This lab was developed by our Education Facilities Management Division and is outfitted with ICT equipment by both Illuminat and Hewlett Packard (HP). Some of you will be trained in this lab or may subsequently test software for your school in this environment.

TEACHER

EMPOWERMENT

Because of all these demands, teaching is now one of the most challenging and crucial professions in the world. We know that teachers are critical in facilitating learning and in making it more efficient and effective, and they will continue to be so in the future. Modern developments may have eased some teaching burdens, but they have certainly not made life easier for teachers:

- The objectives of education have become more complicated.
- Knowledge is expanding rapidly, which puts an unavoidable burden on teachers to continue updating their knowledge and exposing themselves to modern channels of information.
- Information and communication technologies have brought new possibilities into the education sector, but, at the same time, they have placed more demands on teachers.

Obviously, teachers cannot be prepared for these unfolding challenges at one sitting. One shot training, no matter how effective and successful, will not suffice. A new paradigm must emerge that replaces training with lifelong professional preparedness and development of teachers

CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen, together we all have a critical role to play in realizing our dream of “Excellence in Education”.

Let us seize this opportunity to use ICT across the curriculum. Let our enthusiasm for receiving these new labs grow beyond project implementation. Help us to maximize the return on this investment and use ICT as a tool to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Utilise it for your lessons planning, utilize it for the delivery of your lessons. As teachers who will undergo this ITC training we ask that you fully participate in the global information society by making effective use of the technology... and remember this one thing, lifelong learning and training for the workplace cannot be confined to the traditional classroom.

Thank you.