



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

MOE ACCESS: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION LAUNCH

(REMARKS)

Message By

Dr the Honourable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly

Minister of Education

Tuesday 21st March, 2023

9:30am

SALUTATIONS:

- **Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.
- **The Honourable Penelope Beckles**, Minister of Planning and Development
- **Senator the Honourable Allyson West**, Minister of Public Administration
- **Senator the Honourable Hassel Bacchus**, Minister of Digital Transformation
- **The Honourable Lisa Morris-Julian**, Minister in the Ministry of Education.
- **The Honourable Symon de Noreiga**, Minister of Communications in the Office of the Prime Minister
- **Assemblyman Zorisha Hackett**, Secretary of Education Research and Technology - Tobago House of Assembly
- **Mr Kurt Meyer**, Permanent Secretary - Ministry of Education.
- **Other Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries.**
- **Dr Peter Smith**, Chief Education Officer, Directors, Heads of Departments and other staff of the Ministry of Education.
- **Representatives of International Agencies**

- **Representative Heads of Denominational Boards and other Education Stakeholders**
- **Specially invited guests**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**
- **Members of the Media.**

Good Morning.

“Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.” This quote from Malcom X that resonates deeply with me and when I used it in the past it was to students. Today, its focus is for us, the policy makers, administrators and implementors of this transformation in the Education System. Education is the key to unlocking a brighter future for our children and this digital transformation programme provides the access; today education and technology have a symbiotic relationship. And while a robust educational foundation will arm our young ones for the future that awaits them, having an agile digital education sector will safeguard them even further against the uncertainty of this constantly changing world.

The privilege is mine to address you today at this the launch of “MOE: ACCESS,” the digital transformation programme of the Ministry of Education. Its unveiling has been quietly making inroads within several of the Ministry’s core systems, bearing significant benefit, giving root to new ideas and most importantly teaching us valuable

lessons to support the germination of new teaching and learning digital products.

Our vision is to build a unified digital ecosystem that is seamless functional, robust, self-supporting, with the capacity to expand. The MOE Digital Transformation Programme focuses on the achievement of five (5) critical objectives:

- i. To support the embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment
- ii. To upgrade digital technology infrastructure in all Schools
- iii. To promote administrative growth and increased value from service delivery improvements
- iv. To support vulnerable and marginalised populations within communities

v. To apply dedicated funding and resources to facilitate upskilling of all personnel

Within the context of schools, this means a digital framework that supports learning – course content, assignments, e-testing, grades, shared documents, study tools, and data collection; all of which works together seamlessly.

At the global table, our students and teachers are expected to be well-versed in technology, and their learning experiences should be tailored to meet their needs in and out of the classroom. Thus, it is imperative that the education sector in Trinidad & Tobago embraces digital transformation to prepare them for the future. Staying true to the National Development Strategy: Vision 2030, Trinidad and Tobago has set out to have a progressive, and well sutured educational system established by 2030. Based on where we are at present, I am confident that we are headed in the right direction.

From a pilot project which began in January 2023, over sixteen hundred (1600) Integrated Human Resource Information System (IHRIS) leave applications have been generated– the main users being teachers. This means that a teacher situated in Toco, Icacos, or Guayaguayare no longer has to commute to either a district or head office to submit relevant paperwork. Approval for a leave application has been reduced from weeks to same day and in some cases minutes.

The method of applying for a teaching registration number has gone from an in-person visit to Education Towers to being only a click away on our Teacher Registration site with a further integration into the full application and employment process to be added soon.

When we talk about digital usage, among the over 10 thousand employees using our e-services, there have been over 24 thousand requests for job letters in total; over 13 thousand employees having accessed close to 160 thousand payslips. This online service was first introduced in 2020 and, given the usage numbers and short time-span,

has since been expanded to include a number of additional usability features with upcoming added features to include a downloadable version of your TD4. MOE Access means, cost efficiencies, time efficiencies and operational efficiencies.

We hear calls for better access to and use of data to drive policy decisions, well the Ministry has always used data for the basis of critical decision making but what the use of digital technology has done, is make it faster and easier to access. Faster and easier access to data informs which schools have the highest level of absenteeism on any given day and which ones require more focused attention based on student performance via the Student Management System and which ones at a moment's notice require immediate infrastructural attention via the School Infrastructure Management System.

In 2022, parents were better able to manage theirs and their children's anxieties with the online release of SEA results at 12 midnight instead of from 9am and for 2023, the results will be downloadable in pdf

format with secondary school principals having immediate access to the list of children assigned to their schools. You will hear more about these and other initiatives later in the programme but what this means is that the Ministry can better direct use of limited resources to where they are needed most.

As a standard characteristic, this has demonstrated that Digital Transformation continues to be an ever-evolving and ongoing project. According to Charlene Li, a bestselling author and Digital Transformation expert to clients such as Microsoft and Adobe - “digital transformation is not just a one-time event; it is a continuous journey towards innovation and improvement.”

The anticipation builds as the Ministry gets ready to launch new and upcoming projects! The top 5 to come on-stream are:

1. The Scholarship and Bursary E-Portal piloted in 2023
2. Curriculum Enactment
3. The Literacy and Numeracy Adaptive Learning System

4. Electronic Card System

5. Student Digital Literacy

You can read more about these on our website moe.gov.tt

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical significance of a robust and adaptable education system. The Ministry of Education has listened to this call and recognizes that exceptional challenges sometimes require an equally exceptional response. This Ministry has made the necessary adjustments; and many of the staff members and partners present here today have played a crucial role in this process.

I thank them all.

One of the major obstacles we faced, however, was the need to shift general attitudes and behaviours to embrace digital technology. This required a significant transformation in the way we approached our work and how we interacted with the public and our education stakeholders. In addition, countless sensitization sessions, meetings, pilots, through various partnerships, utilizing our internal workforce

teams (from OJTs, to APs, to Teachers, to Specialists and the mainstay staff) along with external collaborators - the Ministry of Education began digitization efforts with tangible initiatives borne from a more streamlined, collaborative and efficient approach.

The Ministry of Education will continue to strive towards creating an education system that is adaptable, equitable, innovative, and resilient, capable of pivoting deftly toward success. The Ministry is dedicated to empowering those who matter most - the students, teachers and numerous stakeholders. We have a lot more work to do to make our learning platforms more accessible, more relevant, more adaptable and through the collaboration, imagination and innovation...we can better prepare for the uncertainties of tomorrow.

Thank you all and God bless.