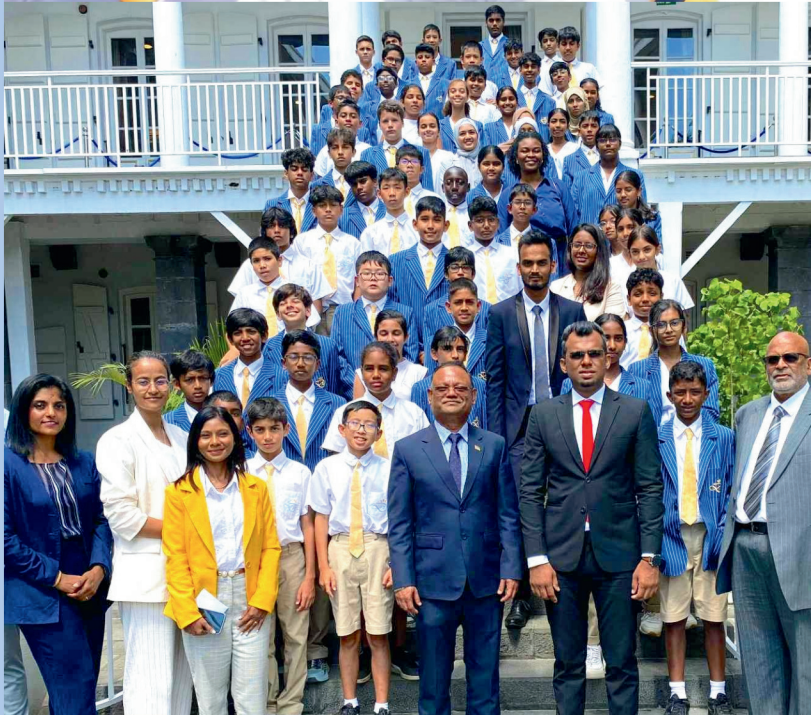


THE GOOD, THE GAPS AND SOME GREAT IDEAS

Reflections & Proposals



THE
EDUCATION
SECTOR IN
MAURITIUS

APRIL 2025

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1. Revisiting the National Curriculum (the academic aspect)	<u>Page 4</u>
2. Addressing Indiscipline, Bullying & Violence, and Substance Abuse in Schools	<u>Page 7</u>
3. Reviewing Automatic Promotion, Assessment, and Admissions in Schools	<u>Page 12</u>
4. Strengthening the Home–School Partnership	<u>Page 14</u>
5. Promoting Extra–Curricular Activities	<u>Page 15</u>
6. Assessing the Current Gender–Based Model in Academies	<u>Page 16</u>
7. Enhancing Training and Capacity Building for Staff	<u>Page 18</u>
8. Promoting Foundational Learning and Early Childhood Development	<u>Page 20</u>
9. Revisiting the Legal Framework Governing Education and the Informal Sector	<u>Page 24</u>
10. Instilling Inclusivity and Promoting the Special Education Needs (SEN) Sector	<u>Page 25</u>
11. Foundation Programme on Literacy, Numeracy, and Skills (FPLNS)	<u>Page 28</u>
12. Addressing Skills Mismatch and Promoting Career Guidance	<u>Page 30</u>
13. Embedding Technology, Innovation and Creativity in Education	<u>Page 32</u>
14. Other Strategic Issues Pertaining to Education	<u>Page 34</u>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a contribution to the national conversation on the future of education in Mauritius, ahead of the Assises of Education scheduled for mid-April 2025. It has been prepared from the unique vantage point of an individual who has a passion for education and wears multiple hats: founder of the largest private school group in Mauritius, parent of a child with autism, and a former laureate of the national public schooling system.

The document seeks to offer pragmatic, child-centred and forward-looking proposals—not from a purely institutional perspective, but from a deeply personal one. It blends insight from years of school leadership with the lived experiences of parents and educators across the country.

The structure of the report follows the 14 thematic pillars identified by the Ministry of Education for stakeholder consultation, ranging from curriculum reform and bullying prevention, to inclusive education, teacher development and legal frameworks. Each section highlights both systemic gaps and untapped opportunities—with a strong emphasis on equity, flexibility and preparing children not just for today's world, but for the one that awaits them tomorrow.

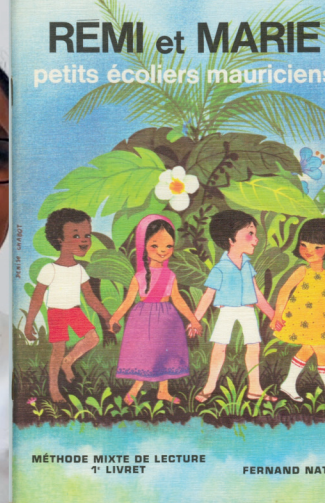
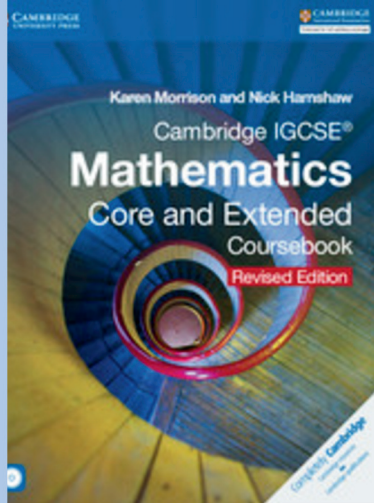
Across the themes, three messages are clear:

- 1. Education in Mauritius must be rehumanised**—restoring joy, curiosity and dignity at school. Children must not be made to fit the system, the system must adapt to fit the child.
- 2. Private and public schools must be treated as partners, not opponents, in national development**, united in a shared mission to uplift standards, address pressing issues like bullying and school violence, and position Mauritius as a regional Education Hub.
- 3. Childcare must become a top national priority**—to support early learning as well as to reverse the alarming decline in birth rates and help more mothers return to the labour force.

This report is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather a constructive and honest invitation to reimagine what education in Mauritius could look like.



Rishi Nursimulu,
Founder and Chairman of Dukesbridge schools



1. REVISITING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM (THE ACADEMIC ASPECT)

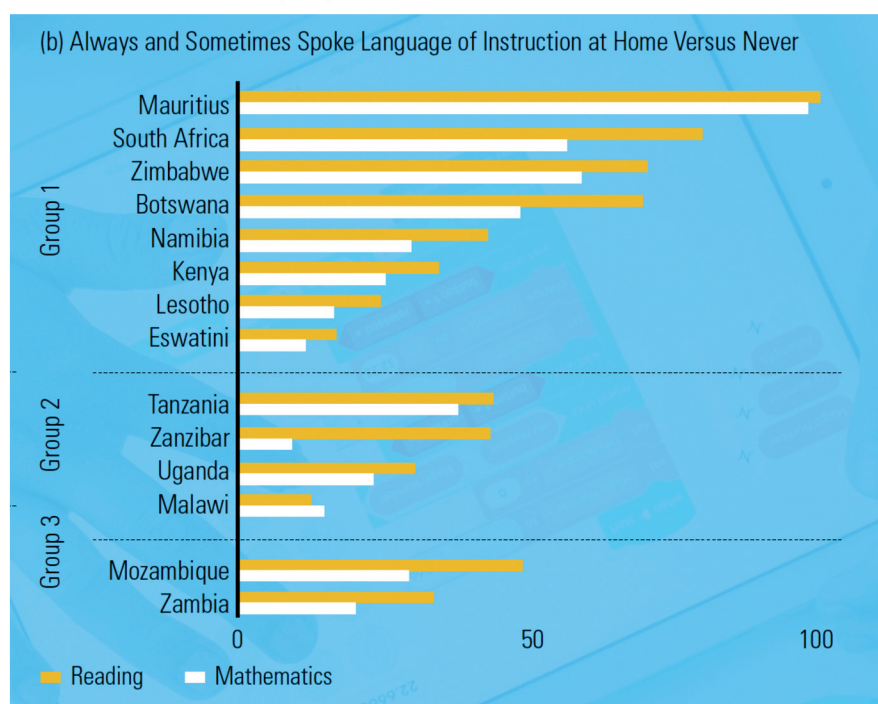
Literacy and Numeracy at the Heart of Curriculum Reform

It is an undeniable fact: academic performance in Mauritius has dropped significantly in recent years. While it is true that education is about more than just academics, this core aspect of learning cannot be ignored. If we are serious about transforming education in Mauritius, we must go back to basics. **Literacy** and **numeracy** are the core of learning. Get these right and everything else follows. Get them wrong and the system, however well-resourced or digitalised, will continue to fail its students. Fluency in English is not just a linguistic asset. In the Mauritian system, it is a gateway to academic success.

Among the 25% of exam-takers who failed the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) in 2017, three quarters were unable to solve Grade 6 Mathematics problems.

Many students struggled with Maths not because they lacked mathematical ability, but because of the English language used in the papers. According to the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ), Grade 6 students in Mauritius who always or sometimes spoke English at home performed significantly better in Maths—by about 1.0 standard deviation—compared to those who never spoke English at home. This was the largest performance gap among all participating countries, which is remarkable.

Std deviation in Grade 6 Reading & Mathematics Scores by Home Language, Southern and East Africa, 2007



Source: Bashir, Sajitha; Lockheed, Marlaire; Ninan, Elizabeth; Tan, Jee-Peng. 2018. Facing Forward: Schooling for Learning in Africa. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Literacy: Building Language from the Start. A meaningful curriculum reform must begin in the early years—with explicit, structured support for language acquisition. We recommend the formal, national introduction of phonics programmes in pre-primary settings, along with daily speaking, listening and vocabulary-building activities. Children must be exposed to rich, expressive language from the very beginning—through songs, stories, conversations, and purposeful play. Seychelles stands as a strong regional example, where children develop fluency in both English and Kreol Seychellois, demonstrating that bilingual literacy is both possible and empowering.

Numeracy: Reigniting a Love for Mathematics

Alongside reading, we must boost children's confidence and enjoyment in Mathematics. National exam data shows a worrying decline in mathematical achievement in recent years. But the solution is not more worksheets or increased pressure—it is a reframing of how Maths is taught and perceived. Maths must be presented not as a rigid subject of memorisation, but as a discipline of patterns, logic, creativity and problem-solving. It should inspire curiosity and critical thinking, not fear. When students feel competent in Maths—so often perceived as the most difficult subject—they gain a general sense of academic self-belief, which ripples out into other areas. Indeed, core subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Economics, Business, ICT and even music depend increasingly on mathematical fluency. When students struggle with Maths, it becomes a bottleneck that blocks access to other disciplines. We recommend the use of diagnostic tools and early intervention to identify struggling learners quickly, and provide targeted support before the gaps widen.

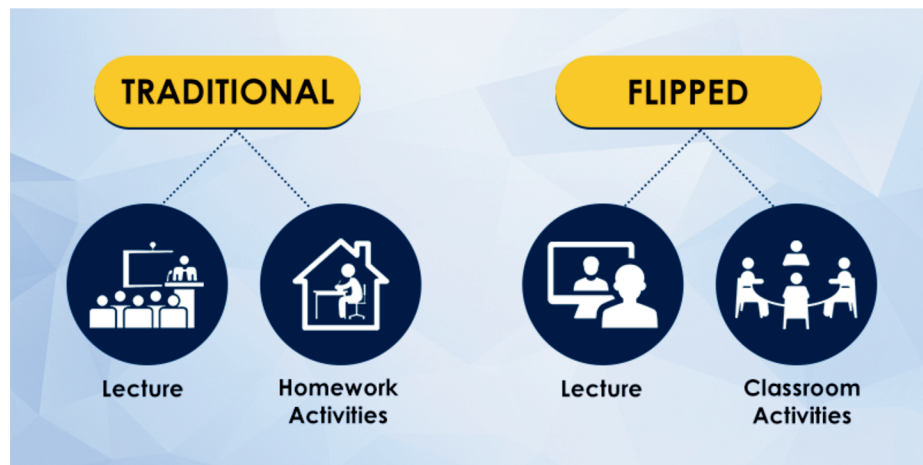
The national curriculum itself may not require a radical overhaul.

Most of the national curriculum structure remains sound, though some specific topics should be upgraded, removed where outdated or slimmed down where unnecessarily bulky. For example, for Primary, we recommend reverting back to a combined EVS subject instead of specific modules like History, Geography and Science with individual papers which make the learning bulky. Other than that, we do not propose reinventing the wheel which will be both time-consuming and difficult to implement. What is needed is a paradigm shift in **how** teachers teach. Children learn best when they are actively engaged, curious and unafraid to ask questions. When learning is fun and rewarding, students are far more likely to explore, discover and embrace challenges.

To support this, we recommend reducing reliance on textbooks—which should act as tools, not crutches:

- Subjects like **History and Geography** in primary school must break free from exam-led teaching and be reframed as exploratory, discussion-based subjects. We propose converting the content of these subjects into storybooks and songs, offering alternative and creative modes of engagement.

- In language subjects like **English and French**, teachers should be encouraged to involve students in spelling bees, debates, role plays and storytelling to foster confidence, fluency and expression.
- In **Maths and Science**, pedagogical models like flip-teaching (flipped classrooms), already widely adopted globally, can be highly effective. Rather than using classroom time for passive spoon-feeding lectures, students study new content independently at home (via videos, slides or reading), and then use class time for collaborative problem-solving, guided practice and discussion, with the teacher acting as a facilitator and mentor.



Ultimately, with AI and technology advances, today's jobs will not necessarily exist tomorrow. The national **curriculum must teach children skills to think critically and adapt, not how to do jobs as we know them to be**. Success therefore lies in reinstating the teacher as a professional, not a script-follower. And this can only be achieved when teachers are encouraged to step outside of the box and when the school environment allows for creativity and flexibility.

More on these non-traditional methods is covered under Section 13.

Many **international schools and teachers from the diaspora community are ready and willing to collaborate with Government to pilot these teaching models** and work collectively towards a more relevant, child-centred future for education in Mauritius.



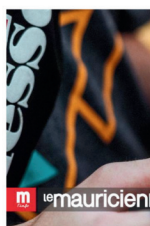
2. ADDRESSING INDISCIPLINE, BULLYING & VIOLENCE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN SCHOOLS

On 18 March 2025, the Honourable Minister of Education informed the National Assembly that 147 cases of **bullying** had been reported in just the first two months of the 2025 school year. That equates to an average of nearly four cases per school day, and these are only the reported cases. On 17 February 2025, the country was shaken by the **suicide** of a 14-year-old girl, reportedly linked to sustained **cyberbullying**. Just a few weeks later, in March, **drugs** were discovered in the school bag of a Grade 5 student at a primary school in the East. They are symptoms of a deeper problem. The situation is not just urgent—it is critical. It demands a coordinated, national response rooted in prevention, support, and accountability.

ACCUEIL • ACTUALITÉS

Assemblée Nationale : 72 cas de drogue rapportés dans les écoles de 2015 à 2024

5 Mar 2025 12h00



Violence: bullying in schools or a rampant evil



"Mummy, mummy, I'm scared. He will hurt me... again..." Such are the words uttered by a young child during a nightmare following episode bullying at school. No child should ever scream out these words his/her sleep. No parent should ever have to hear

APRÈS LE SUICIDE D'UNE ÉLÈVE D'ÉBÈNE SSS

Une collégienne sauvée et une «secte» en ligne démantelée



Cité La Cure : Une enseignante de 40 ans insultée et agressée par des écoliers
Blessée, l'enseignante s'est rendue à l'hôpital

CORPS RETROUVÉ SOUS LE PONT SAJ

Suicide d'une ado, Navarre-Marie évoque le harcèlement scolaire



Une élève de 15 ans, en Grade 9 dans un collège des hautes Plaines-Wilhelms, avait disparu dans la nuit du lundi 17 février. Son père avait signalé sa disparition à la police vers 8 h 30, précisant que, d'après les images de vidéosurveillance, elle avait quitté la maison à 4 h 10. Les autorités ont immédiatement lancé des recherches. Dans l'après-midi, à 16 h 45, le corps sans vie de l'adolescente a été retrouvé sous le pont

Harcèlement scolaire : les solutions à mettre en place



Défi Media

Schools must be legally empowered to act. Although section 34 of the Education Regulations 1975 empowers the school Principal to “inflict punishments”, it is short and vague, particularly as section 13 of the same regulations suggests that the Minister’s approval may be required to enforce sanctions. In contrast, section 89 of the UK Education and Inspections Act 2006 explicitly gives headteachers statutory powers to discipline pupils for poor behaviour, including incidents occurring off school premises such as on social media.

We recommend that the Student Behaviour Policy 2015 be updated to include clear, nationally endorsed protocols allowing schools to apply **sanctions for poor behaviour—including suspensions—without fear of reprisal from parents or public opinion.** We propose an unambiguous behaviour chart with consequences like the one below from Western Australia:

BEHAVIOURAL CONSEQUENCES



	Examples	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
LEVEL 1	Teasing	Verbal Warning	Reflection Sheet sent home	Time Out
	Disrupting learning	Verbal Warning	Reflection Sheet sent home	Time Out
LEVEL 2	Persistence of Level 1	Head Teacher’s office and written warning home	Meeting with parents	
	Swearing	Reflection sheet sent home	Time out and Reflection sheet	Meeting with parents
LEVEL 3	Bullying	Reflection sheet sent home	Head Teacher’s office and written warning home	Meeting with parents
	Physical Harm	Reflection sheet sent home	Head Teacher’s office and written warning home	Meeting with parents
	Damaging School Property	Time out and Reflection sheet sent home	Head Teacher’s office and written warning home Refund damage	Meeting with parents Refund damage
	Persistent Swearing	Head Teacher’s office and written warning home	Meeting with parents	
	Stealing	Head Teacher’s office and written warning home		
LEVEL 4	Persistent Bullying	Meeting with parents	1 day suspension at home with specific tasks for day	
	Putting safety of others or themselves at risk	Meeting with parents	1 day suspension at home with specific tasks for day	
	Persistent lying, stealing and swearing	Individual behaviour management plan		
	Persistent disruption	Individual behaviour management plan		
LEVEL 5	Persistent failure to comply with the conditions of the Behaviour Management Plan	Senior Managers Meeting	Suspension	

While stronger policies and consequences are important, they alone will not solve the problem. If we want to combat these issues in schools, we must address their roots: emotional distress, lack of positive role models, and a growing disconnect between children and values we expect them to uphold. **So how do we turn this around?**

- **Emotional distress:** Teachers must go beyond academic instruction. They should be trained to identify emotional vulnerabilities in students, and empowered to act as mentors and supportive figures. On 2 September 2024, the UK Department for Education published a comprehensive statutory guidance for schools and colleges called '*Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2024*' which could be adapted into the Mauritian context.
- **Disconnect from values:** We must actively promote positive values—not only through Moral Education classes, but through daily routines that cultivate joy and human connection. For example, at Dukesbridge schools, the day begins every morning with music, movement and laughter. The assemblies are designed to build belonging. Children dance, jump and sing together. Simple yet powerful. When children feel connected, they are far less likely to cause harm to others.



- **Lack of positive role models:** The surge in indiscipline, bullying, school violence and substance abuse is not necessarily school problem—it is a societal one that plays out most visibly in schools.

One uncomfortable truth is that children mirror the behaviour of adults. In recent years, parents, enabled by WhatsApp and other social media platforms, have increasingly engaged in gossip, online criticism and collective pressure campaigns. If children watch their parents undermine and publicly shame others to get what they want, they will think it is normal and imitate those exact behaviours in the schoolyard. **Bullying begins at home—not just between siblings, but in how adults handle conflict.** We therefore call for a national campaign directed at adults and community leaders.



Students must be at the heart of the solution. Nothing changes hearts and minds like student-led action.

In 2024, we organised for some **500 students** from different schools across Mauritius to sing an anti-bullying song along with The Prophecy. Hearing them speak about what the song meant to them and what it made them consider was a reminder that the most powerful deterrent against bullying is when children challenge each other's behaviour. Campaigns like this work because they do not talk at students—they give them the microphone. If we want a generation of kind, courageous and respectful children, we must build systems that treat them not as problems to fix, but as positive influencers.

L'express du lundi 16 septembre 2024 • www.lexpress.mu • PAGE 32

junior

«ANSAM» AVEC MURVIN CLÉLIE

Quand 500 élèves chantent en chœur contre la violence



L'école Dukesbridge à l'île Maurice est connue pour sa façon unique de mêler l'éducation académique à des projets créatifs et inspirants. Cette année, l'école a surpris tout le monde avec une nouvelle chanson intitulée «Ansam», interprétée par 500 élèves et composée avec Murvin Clélie, membre du groupe The Prophecy. La chanson porte un message puissant d'unité et de refus de la violence. Rishi Nursimulu, fondateur de Dukesbridge et compositeur de «Ansam», nous en dit plus sur ce projet exceptionnel.

■ Qu'est-ce que l'école Dukesbridge et en quoi est-elle spéciale ?

L'école Dukesbridge est un réseau d'écoles à travers l'île Maurice qui place la créativité et l'apprentissage pratique au centre de son programme. Nous pensons que les élèves apprennent mieux lorsqu'ils sont engagés dans des projets qui ont un impact sur leur environnement. Chaque année, nous organisons des projets qui aident les élèves à développer des compétences en dehors des matières académiques, comme la musique, l'art et la citoyenneté. Nous essayons de former des jeunes responsables, capables de comprendre et d'agir sur les enjeux du monde qui les entoure.

■ Pouvez-vous nous en dire plus sur la chanson «Ansam» ?

«Ansam» est une chanson spéciale pour nous cette année. Elle a été créée dans le cadre de notre projet #TogetherMorein2024, un thème qui met l'accent sur l'unité. Avec l'augmentation des violences dans certaines écoles, nous avons voulu donner aux jeunes une voix pour s'exprimer contre cela. «Ansam», qui signifie «ensemble», est une réponse à ce problème. Nous avons voulu que les élèves chantent l'unité, la solidarité, et qu'ils comprennent qu'ils peuvent dire «non» à la violence. Le fait qu'ils chantent en chœur donne une force incroyable au message.

■ Comment les élèves ont-ils participé à ce projet ?

Plus de 500 élèves ont pris part au projet, venant de diverses écoles, et ils étaient soutenus par 200 enseignants. C'était un travail d'équipe et cela reflète l'esprit de la chanson. Les élèves ont appris les paroles et la mélodie en quelques semaines et ils ont chanté avec une énergie incroyable. Certains enfants étaient même fiers de pouvoir faire partie d'un projet aussi important.



Le Défi Plus
N. 38 | DU 7 AU 13 SEPTEMBRE 2024
| Magazine |

Dukesbridge United et Murvin Clélie : «Ansam» pour dire non à la violence

Dukesbridge United est de retour avec un nouveau single intitulé «Ansam», en collaboration avec Murvin Clélie de The Prophecy. Ce 11e titre, lancé le 5 septembre, vise à sensibiliser les jeunes à rejeter la violence sous toutes ses formes pour construire une nation unie et prospère.

Après les succès de «Children of all colours» («Zandran tou kolè») en 2021 avec Lanny Bachette, «Zoli garsen» en 2022 avec Jason Heeral, et «Happy» en 2023 avec Laura Bag, les élèves de Dukesbridge marquent leur quatrième collaboration en mettant cette fois-ci à l'honneur Murvin Clélie. Le clip vidéo de «Ansam» est disponible sur la chaîne YouTube de Dukesbridge et a été lancé pour célébrer les 10 ans de l'école Dukesbridge.

«Chaque année, nous choisissons un thème différent pour notre école. En 2023, notre objectif avec le hashtag #Happy24 était de répondre la joie. Cette année, nous avons décidé de mettre l'accent sur l'unité avec le hashtag #TogetherMorein2024. Face à la violence croissante dans de nombreuses écoles à Maurice, j'ai ressenti le besoin d'agir. Comment pouvons-nous chanter «As one people, as one nation» comme le dit notre hymne national, si nos enfants se battent de manière si déplorable ? Il est encore, au lieu d'intervenir pour stopper ces actes de violence, ceux qui sont présents filment toute la scène. C'est dans ce contexte que j'ai composé «Ansam», une chanson qui vise à sensibiliser les jeunes à dire non à la violence sous toutes ses formes.

«Ansam», il souligne qu'il ne souhaite pas que les enfants détourner le regard face à la violence ou attendent l'intervention des enseignants ou des parents pour arrêter l'intimidation. Avec cette chanson, mon objectif est que les enfants prennent conscience qu'ils ont eux-mêmes le pouvoir de mettre fin à la violence. J'ai été ravi de les entendre exprimer cette idée à leur manière après avoir chanté «Ansam». La musique est un outil fascinant qui touche l'âme de chacun, elle ne se limite pas au divertissement, mais constitue également une forme d'éducation alternative. En impliquant naturellement les élèves dans ce processus, nous leur offrons une voix pour défendre les droits des victimes», explique-t-il.

C'est Murvin Clélie, du groupe The Prophecy, qui a été choisi pour coopérer avec la trentaine d'enfants qui interprètent «Ansam» en créole mauricien et en anglais. Pour Rishi Nursimulu, cette collaboration «A été imposée naturellement. Au cours des dernières années, Murvin nous a déjà aidés à enregistrer nos élèves en studio pour nos chansons avec Jason Heeral et Laura Bag. Nous nous sommes rencontrés en studio pour discuter humblement, qui adore les enfants et fait preuve d'une immense patience envers eux. En créant «Ansam», je ne pouvais imaginer meilleur partenaire que Murvin pour se joindre avec les élèves. Il y a une émotion naturelle dans sa voix qui apporte une dimension unique aux paroles profondes que j'ai écrites, indique-t-il. Rishi Nursimulu a écrit les paroles et la musique de la chanson, tandis que

l'arrangement musical a été réalisé par Geraldine Pierre, musicienne et parent d'un élève de Dukesbridge. Shanon, épouse de Rishi Nursimulu, et leurs trois fils ont travaillé sur les harmonies vocales avant d'encadrer la chanson au personnel et aux 1500 élèves de l'école Dukesbridge. La musique est une fusion de divers styles, mêlant séga avec des instruments tels que le tabla et le tambour, créant ainsi un mélange de cultures.

Pour le clip vidéo, avec Murvin, nous avons eu l'idée de rassembler 500 enfants provenant de différentes écoles de l'île pour diffuser largement le message de lutte contre la violence. Nous avons été ravis de la participation des collégiens Lorette, du MGL, entre autres», relate Rishi Nursimulu.

Le clip de «Ansam» réunit 500 enfants issus de plusieurs écoles, se joignant aux élèves de Dukesbridge. Main dans la main, les pieds dans l'océan, ils forment une chorale géante, chantant d'une seule voix. Parmi les participants figurent des élèves des établissements scolaires MGL Solitaires, MGL Moka, Lorette de Mahébourg, Lorette de Bambous Village, St Bartholomew's College et MGSS Nouvelle France.

Le clip de «Ansam» réunit 500 enfants issus de plusieurs écoles.

l'express

Ek enn sel lawwa
R touski nwen
Rezet violens dan nu paradi
Lame dan lame
Nu pu avanse
Touzour ansam kuma enn sel

With one voice we sing
With everything
Say no violence under our sun
We walk hand in hand
In our motherland
Forever stand together as one

Mo kamwad,
Non la guer pa kre boner
Li pa montre to grander
Alors aret fer dominer
To sikse trouv dans nou solidarite
Ki nou zanset ti koumanse
Sa mem la kle pou to avanse

Dreaming of a peaceful world
Stop the anger please, heal the hurt
Be the light that shines so bright
Together we can make things right

As one people, as one nation
Enn sel lepep, enn sel nasyon

We therefore recommend:

- **Nationwide student-led anti-bullying initiatives**, through art, music, theatre and digital media
- **Peer-led support teams**—train students to look out for others and mediate tension
- **A national 'Respect Week'**, led by students, centred on empathy, inclusion and dialogue



<https://youtu.be/s30NpagbmVs>

Lastly, we must also recognise that **bullying has evolved**. It is now more **covert, psychological and digital**. Children are excluded from WhatsApp groups, ridiculed through comments, or subjected to group manipulation and passive aggression. These forms of bullying are harder to detect—but equally, if not more, damaging.

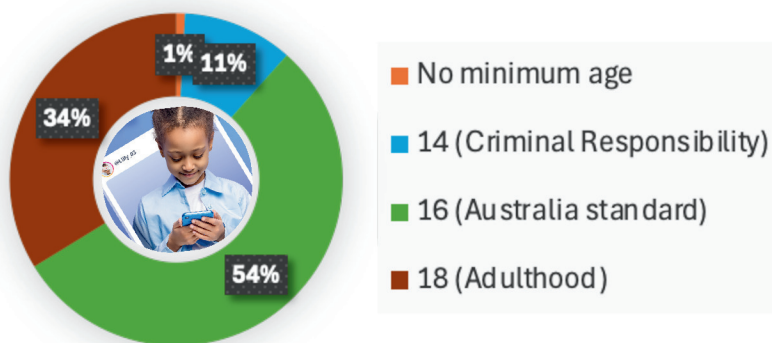


TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat are not neutral platforms. They are engineered to addict, provoke and manipulate behaviour. International research is now clearly linking early social media exposure to **increased anxiety, sleep disorders and social withdrawal**. And while many parents attempt to regulate their children's online habits, this is “**social**” media—it **only works if the child's entire peer group is removed too**. No parent can successfully do this in isolation.

We understand that the Mauritian authorities may be reluctant to legislate on this issue following the backlash after the Government's decision to suspend social media for one day during the November 2024 General Elections. But **this is different**. This is about children, not mass censorship, and many countries worldwide are adopting a targeted ban:

- In November 2024, **Australia** passed the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024, banning individuals under 16 from social media.
- In the fall of 2024, **Norway** announced plans to ban children under 15 from social media.
- In **France**, President Macron commissioned a report recommending no smartphone use for children under 13 and banning social media access until age 18.

SHOULD THERE BE A MINIMUM AGE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA?



In March 2025, we conducted our own survey. The data was collected from a Facebook and LinkedIn poll, with almost 1,200 participants.

A staggering **88% believe that children should at least be 16** to have a social media account.

We regulate the age for driving, voting, sex and drinking, but in an era where algorithms know our children better than we do, the question of minimum legal age for social media access seems even more relevant. Raising awareness and educating our children is not enough.

We therefore propose that the Government:

- Engage in a national consultation around social media regulation for minors
- Consider legislation requiring platforms to verify age and obtain parental consent
- Introduce a *Digital Well-being* module in the national curriculum
- Conduct social media awareness sessions for all parents

This is an opportunity for Mauritius to **protect**, not control.



3. REVIEWING AUTOMATIC PROMOTION, ASSESSMENT AND ADMISSIONS IN SCHOOLS

The automatic promotion policy was originally introduced with the right intent: to prevent children from being stigmatised or held back unnecessarily during their early years. But today, it has become part of the problem. Students are moving from one grade to the next without mastering foundational concepts—**particularly in literacy and numeracy**—leading to a **cascading gap in understanding, confidence and motivation**. By the time they reach upper primary or secondary school, many are **overwhelmed, disengaged and labelled as failures** in a system that failed to catch their needs early on.

Nevertheless, we believe that **automatic promotion should not be abolished, but should be flexible**. Progression must become **competency-based**, much like the Cambridge “checkpoint” model instead of formal exams. Students should only move forward when they demonstrate readiness across core domains, especially literacy, numeracy and basic cognitive skills, based on teacher-led assessment, not formal exams. For those who fall short, there should be immediate and supportive remediation—not to penalise them, but to rebuild their confidence and close the gaps.

The culture of national exams in Mauritius needs rethinking. The rat-race begins early, with pressure building from Grade 5 (PSAC part 1), Grade 6 mid-year (PSAC part 2), then Grade 6 end-of-year (PSAC part 3), followed by NCE in Grade 9, SC O-Level in Grade 11, and HSC A-Level in Grade 13. A system which sets exam after exam inevitably promotes rote learning to score well over deep understanding and essential skills such as creativity, critical thinking and teamwork. Notably, there is **no conclusive evidence to suggest that modular PSAC exams enhance student performance or that NCE exams better prepare students for the Cambridge O-Level**. Contrastingly, several countries have adopted educational models that delay formal examinations to prioritise foundational learning and personal development. In Finland, for instance, the only significant formal examination, the *matriculation exam*, is administered at the end of upper secondary education around the age of 18.

We recommend that, in the early years and lower primary, assessment should be diagnostic and supportive, helping identify children who need help—without labelling them as underachievers. From middle primary onwards, students should be assessed through a **mix of projects, oral presentations, collaborative tasks and personal portfolios**, all conducted within the school environment, rather than intense national exams, albeit with a certain degree of regional moderation.

Culturally, we find that Mauritians still favour the concept of national exams at the end of Primary. Similar to SATs in the UK and NAPLAN in Australia, we recommend that **PSAC exams be refocused strictly on Literacy and Numeracy**. Subjects such as ICT, History and Science should remain part of the curriculum, but we question the value of formally examining them at this stage. There is no clarity around what exactly we are testing for in these areas, and whether the results reflect understanding or simply memorisation of surface-level content. We also recommend a **return to the CPE-style of a single sitting at Grade 6**, eliminating the ongoing stress of modular format spanning Grades 5 and 6.

In the secondary cycle, we question the value of the NCE exams at Year 9. Instead of filtering students based on performance in national exams, schools should be empowered to guide students according to their individual strengths, interests and aspirations using school-based evaluations and teacher insights. It should never be the case that those who fail NCE are automatically tracked into vocational paths. Every child should be supported to sit for the School Certificate (O-Level), but with a more **flexible curriculum**. For example, **lower-ability students might take adapted subjects**, such as *Maths for Life*, as is done in Australia, while still achieving a formal qualification at Year 11.

In summary, we recommend the simplification of the PSAC exams, elimination of NCE exams at Year 9 and the introduction of differentiated subject pathways at O-Level to cater for **varying student needs**. Assessment should be a **mirror**, reflecting how far a student has come—and a **window**, helping teachers support them to go further. It should never become a **wall** that blocks their potential.



10

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT CAMBRIDGE CHECKPOINT



#1



Cambridge Checkpoint Course book comes with a work/practice book and tutor's resources.

#2



Students get a Statement of Achievement.

#3

The two Checkpoint assessments offered by the CIE

- Cambridge Primary
- Cambridge Lower Secondary program



#4

The Cambridge Primary Checkpoint meant for 5-11 year olds.



#5



The Cambridge Primary Checkpoint test results give more clarity about their strengths and weaknesses in the main subjects.

#6



Each learner receives two documents:

- A Statement of Achievement which gives the learner's overall results.
- A report which provides additional facets on the learner's performance.

#7



Cambridge Primary Checkpoint scores are between 0.0 and 6.0, ranging from the weakest performance to the best performance.

#8



Cambridge Primary Checkpoint offers a good opening to Cambridge Lower Secondary.

#9

The Cambridge Lower Secondary Checkpoint is meant for 11-14 year olds.



#10

The Cambridge Lower Secondary Checkpoint is a novel assessment service that has proven to be valuable for educational institutions.



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4. STRENGTHENING THE HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP



One of the most urgent challenges in education today is the **misalignment of expectations** between schools and parents. Far too often, when something goes wrong—be it a dip in performance, a behavioural issue or a disciplinary matter—the **blame is laid on teachers**. But education is not a service delivered by institutions and consumed by families; it is a **shared responsibility**. It takes a village to raise a child—and that village includes both school and home.

We must re-establish a cultural understanding that **parents are the primary educators**. Schools play a pivotal role, but teachers cannot—and should not—carry the entire burden of a child’s development, values, discipline and digital behaviour. No matter how excellent a school’s curriculum or staff may be, **progress is impossible if parents are not engaged** in their child’s daily life and learning journey.

We therefore call for a national reframing of the parent-school relationship built on 3 **principles**:

1

Shared accountability

Parents must take responsibility for monitoring their child’s behaviour, wellbeing and online activity—especially after school hours. We urge parents to implement screen time limits, check social media access, and talk openly about digital safety and values at home.

2

Consistent engagement

Parents should meet teachers regularly, not only when a problem arises. These meetings should be collaborative check-ins on the child’s progress, challenges and emotional development. We have found that when families attend short, focused progress dialogues at least once a term, outcomes improve and tensions reduce.

3

Mutual respect

Teachers are professionals. When parents model respect for educators, children follow suit. When parents publicly criticise teachers—especially in group chats or in front of children—they undermine the authority of the school, and the child’s motivation to follow school values collapses.



5. PROMOTING EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Education must go beyond textbooks and test scores. It should aim to **develop all-rounder individuals**—students who are not only literate and numerate, but also confident, creative, resilient and socially grounded. Extra-curricular activities play a vital role in achieving this, helping students explore their passions, develop soft skills, and discover talents that might otherwise go unnoticed. We therefore urge the Ministry to recognise after-school development as a **core metric of success** at school. One way of doing so is by enforcing non-academic portfolios for students which follow them as part of their educational profile.

We strongly recommend that extra-curricular activities be held after school hours to complement the learning at school and to provide micro-grants or subsidies to fund school-based clubs. This also addresses another urgent challenge: **keeping students engaged and safe during the critical hours after school**, when many are otherwise left unsupervised and vulnerable to the dangers of excessive screen time, online exploitation, drugs and risky behaviours.

We propose a national movement for structured after-school engagement that connects education to the broader Mauritian community:

- Give students access to **music, coding, debating, robotics, chess, photography, or environmental clubs**, tailored to their interests and local resources
- Establish a **National Children's Choir**, with regional groups and opportunities to perform on national platforms
- Involve **local artists, musicians, dancers and theatre practitioners** in extra-curricular activities
- Create partnerships where **national athletes and sports federations** work directly with schools to deliver grassroots training and mentorship
- Encourage schools to **rotate teacher supervision for after-school clubs** and events, so that no single teacher is overburdened, but every child is supported

This is about more than talent. It is about engagement, protection and purpose.

6. ASSESSING THE CURRENT GENDER-BASED MODEL IN ACADEMIES



The concept of Academies was introduced as part of the 2016 education reform, with the aim of creating high-performing schools for Grades 10 to 13. These Academies were developed by upgrading select schools and aligning them with specialised academic streams such as Science, Economics/Business and the Arts. The implementation of co-education in these schools began in 2021.

While research globally remains inconclusive on whether single-sex or co-educational models are better, a **more pressing concern is the labelling of certain institutions as “Academies” and others as “normal” schools**. This creates a hierarchy that leaves non-Academy schools feeling side-lined and the children in them treated as second-class citizens. In fact, the World Bank Report on Mauritius in 2021 specifically suggests the narrowing of the gap between high- and low-performing schools which is exceptionally wide compared to other countries in Africa.

We recognise the value in fostering centres of academic excellence. The concept of academies, based on the belief that *iron sharpens iron*, has merit. Like grammar schools in the UK, these institutions can provide an environment where high-performing students challenge and inspire each other, and where academic rigour is matched by ambition. However, this must not come at the expense of the rest of the system.

We therefore propose a framework that ensures that every other school is also empowered and expected to strive for excellence, not left behind:

- Hold all schools—academy or not—accountable to the same standards
- Provide public, transparent school evaluations to help parents make informed choices
- Ensure that resources and support are directed where they are needed most
- Celebrate school improvement and excellence wherever it occurs

By combining excellence with system-wide accountability, Mauritius can create a balanced model where every school is encouraged to excel, and no student is made to feel inferior and neglected because of where they were placed. To achieve this, Mauritius could benefit from adopting an objective, independent national school rating system, similar to the Ofsted model in the UK, which publishes school inspection reports publicly and transparently. This naturally compels **all** teachers and school leaders to take their roles seriously.

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) inspects and evaluates schools in the UK on a regular cycle using clear, transparent criteria. These include the quality of education, student behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management. In 2025, Ofsted is introducing an enhanced evaluation framework, including a new visual heatmap-style template for publishing outcomes. This updated format also places greater emphasis on safeguarding, ensuring it is a core component of school accountability.

What Ofsted's new report card will look like

Our evaluation of this provider

Causing concern	Attention needed	Secure	Strong	Exemplary
	Achievement	Leadership & governance	Attendance	
		Curriculum	Behaviour & attitudes	
		Developing teaching	Inclusion	
		Personal development & well-being		
		Sixth form		

Safeguarding evaluation

Safeguarding	Met
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Source: Ofsted

In Mauritius, this approach would encourage **continuous school improvement**, give parents **meaningful information** and trust about what schools are doing, and ensure that **no school is left behind**. Crucially, it allows all schools—regardless of whether they are labelled “Academy” or not—to aspire to excellence. If Mauritius adopts a similar model, excellence in education would no longer be the privilege of a few institutions, but **the collective responsibility of the entire system**.

Protecting the Mental Health of our students in the Academies

Too often, physical and mental health are treated as peripheral concerns in education policy—addressed in passing, rather than embedded as core priorities. However, when young people are immersed in a high-pressure academic environment—especially in elite systems like the Academies—they may appear to thrive, but often carry invisible emotional burdens that accumulate over time.

Many students feel that anything short of perfection is failure. Some experience crippling anxiety if they do not achieve full marks. Others internalise this pressure in quieter ways through chronic stress, sleep disruption or low self-worth. These outcomes are not rare; they are common in school cultures that equate success with relentless performance. The impact is very often long-term, and symptoms may only surface some 20 or more years later.

We believe that a truly holistic education system must take full responsibility for students’ overall wellbeing. **Academic achievement means little if it comes at the cost of long-term mental health.** We therefore propose mental health literacy campaigns that promote balance, self-awareness and resilience, especially for students in the Academies where academic pressure can be most intense.

7. ENHANCING TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STAFF

It is often said that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. We believe that **teaching must be treated with the same professional rigour** and responsibility as fields like law, medicine or finance. Just as lawyers must complete Continuing Professional Development (CPD), **teachers should also be required to undergo mandatory refresher training every two years** to remain up to date with new teaching methods, technologies and advances in child psychology.

Beyond training, there must be a **robust system of performance appraisal**—not punitive, but developmental. This system should include **student and parent feedback, classroom observation and self-reflection**, helping teachers understand the true impact they are having beyond test scores. Education is a people-centred profession. **We must listen to those it serves.**

The Covid-19 pandemic was a turning point. It revealed the stark differences between teachers who showed initiative and deep care for their students—those who ran WhatsApp lessons, contacted parents, or sent homework without waiting for official instructions—and those who treated school closures as holidays. We must acknowledge that **teaching is not for everyone**. It is a profession that demands passion, patience, empathy and dedication. It is not a fallback career, nor a role chosen for its long holidays. We therefore call for a national rethink of:

- **How we select and train** new teachers: motivation must count, not just qualifications
- **How we retain and support** teachers: through meaningful development, not just salary scales
- **How we appraise educators:** with objective input from students, parents, and school leaders
- **How we uphold standards:** addressing underperformance and celebrating excellence



Ultimately, our children deserve great teachers who want to be in the classroom, not just those who ended up there.

Training is not only about improving skills. It is about protecting the integrity of the profession and honouring the immense responsibility we place in the hands of educators.

While we support mandatory training, it must not be monopolised, for example by requiring that all attend the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE). We strongly caution against one-size-fits-all approaches. **A diversity of accredited training institutions** should be promoted through fiscal incentives, partnerships, and professional recognition, to give teachers access to broader, world-class pedagogical models.



Too often, we hear teachers say, “*I’m not able to deal with low-ability students.*” This statement reflects a critical gap in training and mindset. If we allow such attitudes to persist, we risk perpetuating a system where the most vulnerable learners are left behind. **Teacher preparedness must therefore extend to inclusion.** If we are serious about supporting students with special needs, then **all teachers must be trained in inclusive practices**, not just SEN specialists. Otherwise, inclusion remains a policy on paper, not a reality in classrooms.

Training in **Emotional Intelligence (EI)** should be a core component of professional development for all educators. Teachers are not just transmitters of knowledge—they are role models, mentors, and emotional anchors for their students. Building capacity in EI means equipping teachers with the ability to recognise, understand and manage their own emotions, while also responding empathetically to the emotions of others. EI is best learned through practice, not theory, and must reflect real-life Mauritian school contexts, including multi-lingual classrooms, religious diversity and the way emotional expression may differ culturally. Mauritius may need to solicit international trainers initially, but only to build internal capacity. Within 1–2 years, Mauritius could have its own national team of EI trainers capable of leading change across the system—culturally grounded, cost-effective and sustainable.

We also must address the glaring issue of **teacher shortages in Mauritius**. It is unacceptable that year after year, we face shortages of qualified teachers, especially in critical fields. By contrast, countries like **Kenya and other parts of East Africa have highly qualified, English-speaking teachers in excess supply**. We urge the authorities to explore structured international recruitment pathways to fill gaps in our system while upholding high standards.





8. PROMOTING FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The World Bank Report in 2021 noted that children in Mauritius had weak foundations in the English language at the preprimary level, thus impeding the accumulation of foundational skills throughout primary level because the language of instruction is in English. As previously mentioned, we propose that foundational learning at pre-primary level (3–5 years) include **phonics-based literacy** programmes to be adopted nationally from age 3 as well as **basic numeracy skills** integrated into everyday classroom play. Plenty of pedagogies are available worldwide (e.g. Montessori, Waldorf, EFYS in the UK, EYLF in Australia) and have been adapted by various private schools in Mauritius.

While the intention of the Ministry to give importance to the pre-primary sector (3-5) is welcome, **nurseries (for 0-3 years) are however currently excluded from both educational strategy and public investment.** This is the central issue. Nurseries currently sit under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender Equality and are treated as little more than holding spaces for working parents. As per the World Bank, *“Because of the limited coverage of well-structured services, many Mauritian children at a critical developmental stage miss out on important stimulation and learning opportunities”*

The reality is that foundational **education** begins **long before the age of 3.** Learning begins at birth, and the first three years of life are critical for brain development. Yet in Mauritius, this age group is **overlooked in the MOE’s education policy.**

Research around the world confirms that **early cognitive stimulation and emotional development between 0–3** dramatically shape later success in literacy, numeracy and emotional regulation. This means that nurseries are not simply care facilities—they are the **first classrooms** of a child’s life.

We urge the Ministry of Education to recognise that **education starts at 0,** not at 3, and to bring nurseries under its umbrella just like many countries worldwide.

The vast majority of nurseries in Mauritius are already attached to pre-primary schools and share the same physical infrastructure, administration and ownership. There is also significant overlap between the qualifications required for nursery carers and pre-primary teachers. Yet, institutions are required to duplicate documentation, procedures and compliance. **Duplication** also happens across Government. Both the CDU (Ministry of Gender Equality) and the ECCEA (Ministry of Education) hold separate files for and each sends its own inspectors to the same institutions - there were 770 preschools in 2023.

Given the overlap in structure, personnel and purpose, there is considerable **inefficiency** in having two separate ministries oversee the 0–5 age group. We recommend:

- **Child Day Care Centres** be combined with Pre-primary schools, formally linking nurseries to the educational agenda, not just to welfare, albeit recognising the age group needs and differences
- A national framework for **learning outcomes in children aged 0–3**, focusing on language exposure, early numeracy and emotional safety
- Ensuring that all **early educators, regardless of the age group they work with, are equipped** to support children’s development from the earliest stages

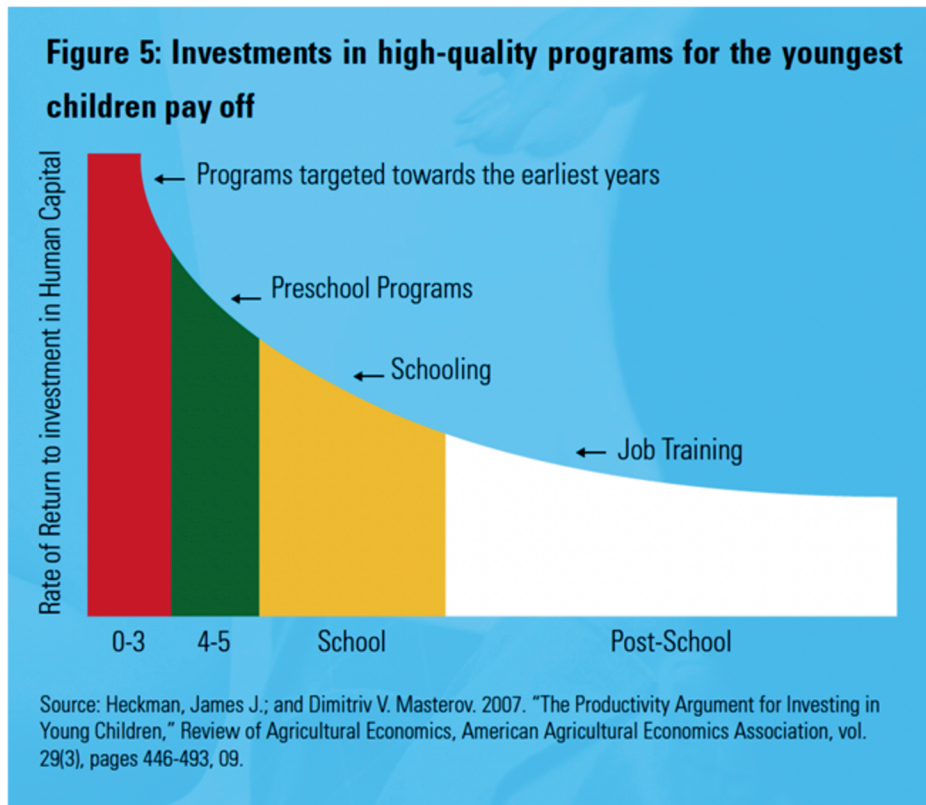
We also raise a serious concern about **the lack of public funding** in this sector. In nearly every developed education system, **childcare is substantially subsidised or fully funded**—not only because it supports working families, but because **caring for babies is more labour-intensive (hence costly) than for preschoolers**. In Mauritius, however, it is paradoxically the reverse that has been done. In the 2021 World Bank report on Mauritius, the issue of childcare was raised:

*“A large body of empirical work at the interface of neuroscience and social science has established that fundamental cognitive and noncognitive skills are produced in the early years of childhood, **long before children start kindergarten...**Schooling comes too late in the life cycle of the child to be the main locus of remediation for the disadvantaged.”*

*“While pre-primary education for children aged three to five years is compulsory and **free of charge**, there is a **lack of affordable day care centers** for younger children.”*



From our discussions with parents, the high cost of childcare is one of the major reasons why many mothers are unable to return to work and crucially why Mauritians are choosing not to have more children. **As a result, the country's birth rate is dropping at an alarming rate**, raising serious concerns about our future demographic and economic sustainability.



The World Bank's 2021 report on Mauritius included a chart from *The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children* (Heckman and Masterov, 2007). It shows that the **highest rate of return on human capital investment comes from programmes targeting children aged 0–3 years**. This was a clear policy signal: greater investment ought to be directed toward nurseries.

However, instead of addressing the accessibility issue for 0-3 years, the Government, in 2024, started to fully finance over **400 private pre-primary** schools for 3-5 years through the Grant-in-Aid (GIA) scheme. We fail to understand the logic because over 90% of children in this age group were already attending preschools and free preprimary education was already happening in State schools. Unsurprisingly, this move has shown signs of **inefficiency, misallocation of resources and unclear educational returns**. We respectfully submit that **redirecting even a portion of this budget** towards the crèches would have a **far greater long-term impact**. Investing in early development (0-3 years) **pays lifelong dividends**—academically, socially and economically.

Instead of maintaining the GIA that **solves no real problem** and introduces new inefficiencies, we propose a return to the previous model. Let private schools operate independently, as they did before, with appropriate regulatory oversight but without taxpayer subsidies. The released funds could then be **redirected to the 0–3 sector**, through:

- Subsidised childcare for working families
- Public investment in nursery infrastructure and staff training
- Support for crèches to meet quality benchmarks without collapsing under cost pressures

This approach would align public investment with **economic logic and social equity**. Foundational learning is not just a stage of schooling. It is the **bedrock of future learning, health, and resilience**. If we get this wrong, no amount of future reform will fully close the gap.

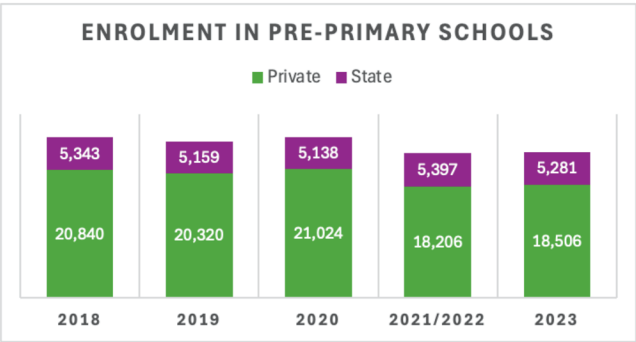
Why the 2024 Pre-Primary Grant-in-Aid Scheme Must Be Reconsidered

The Government’s 2024 initiative to fund over 400 private pre-primary schools was introduced with the stated aim of improving **access and equity** in early childhood education. However, this policy, while well-intentioned, is fundamentally flawed in both its design and its execution.

1

Does not fix any access crisis

As per the MOE’s published statistics, 92% of children were already in a preschool (2021-2023), a figure that exceeds both regional and global averages. There was therefore no issue of access in this segment. To claim that this policy has “*finally made pre-primary education free*” is misleading. **It was already free** for almost a quarter of students who chose State schools.



3

Creates market inefficiency

Under the GIA, owners receive no profit and managers are paid a fixed salary irrespective of student numbers. Owners have an incentive to reduce enrolment. This creates a fragmented market with hundreds of sub-scale or underutilised preschools, yet carrying significant overheads, all funded by taxpayers’ money.

2

Unfairly allocates public funds

Under the GIA, the State covers staffing and operating costs based on enrolment bands. Our analysis shows that the State spends Rs12,349 per child monthly in a school with 10 students, but just Rs4,352 per child in a school with 101 students.

No of students	Manager	Teachers	Assistants	Attendants	Wages (Rs)	Operating costs (Rs)	Funding per child (Rs)
10	1	1	1	1	103,492	20,000	12,349
26	1	2	2	1	145,542	25,000	6,559
51	1	4	4	2	250,667	30,000	5,503
76	1	6	6	2	334,767	35,000	4,865
101	1	7	7	3	397,842	41,667	4,352

This goes against the principle of equity, where every child should benefit from an equal share of public funds and support.

4

Reduces quality in education

The *invisible hand* in the private sector drives quality. But when the State pays for everything, schools feel less compelled to maintain standards, compete for enrolments or invest in teacher development. The added bureaucracy also delays repairs and maintenance. Over time, this leads to a decline in quality.

We recommend that the current GIA scheme be dismantled for the reasons outlined above. Instead, the **private sector should be left to manage its own revenue model**, with a monthly subsidy allocated directly to each child, increased from the current Rs400. We also propose a **consolidation strategy**, whereby underutilised preschools are merged, and resources redirected towards more efficiently run early childhood centres with at least 50 students aged 0-5.

9. REVISITING THE **LEGAL FRAMEWORK** GOVERNING EDUCATION AND THE INFORMAL SECTOR

Section 14 of the Constitution guarantees the **freedom to establish and maintain educational institutions** as well as the **freedom of parents to choose a school** for their children. However, the current legal framework is still heavily geared towards **public or grant-aided schools**, with limited recognition of the **distinct pedagogies and operational models of private unaided and international schools** which account for 17% enrolment at primary level and 9% at secondary level (as at 2023). As a result, many policies either **fail to apply meaningfully** to private institutions, or are **enforced inconsistently**, creating confusion, disparity, and at times, legal grey zones. For example, the PSAC is a prerequisite for admission into any secondary school in Mauritius under s7(A)(1) of the Private Secondary Schools (Amendment) Regulations 2015. Yet this requirement is **not uniformly enforced**—particularly in international schools like French lycées, where students follow a different system. This inconsistency reflects a lack of legal clarity about how national requirements interact with alternative curricula. There is an urgent need to reframe the regulatory lens so that it is fit for a diversified education ecosystem while still ensuring appropriate standards and educational accountability.

Moreover, the Children's Act 2020 emphasises that policies and regulations must **prioritise the best interests of the child above all else**. In that context, we observe that the current tax system contravenes this principle as **some schools pay income tax before funds go towards their students' welfare while most schools in Mauritius are exempt**. This disparity violates not only the principle of equality but also undermines the constitutional rights of parents to freely choose a school without being penalised financially through unfair tax policies. We therefore **urge the Government to make all schools income-tax free** to correct this anomaly and put all schools on the same level playing field.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, **regulations must empower schools to uphold discipline and protect the learning environment**. Many school leaders today feel legally exposed or unsupported when they need to take action against bullying, violence or even disruptive parental conduct. The lack of clear legal authority means that necessary disciplinary action is often contested, and teachers are left feeling defenceless.

Finally, the informal education sector, particularly **private tutoring**, has experienced significant growth worldwide. We believe that children should **not** be prevented from seeking extra help where they genuinely need it. If schools provide adequate support and the system is not dominated by a relentless cycle of high-stakes exams, parents will only turn to tutoring in specific cases where a child is falling behind. We however see merit in a regulation that prohibits teachers from tutoring their own school students. This presents a clear conflict of interest, as it may disincentivise teachers from giving their full effort during regular school hours, knowing they can charge for tuitions after class.



10. INCLUSIVITY AND PROMOTING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) SECTOR

We acknowledge the significant efforts made by the Government to promote inclusion and support students with Special Education Needs (SEN). The establishment of SENA, the rollout of screening frameworks and the increased awareness across public schools are commendable and important steps forward. However, these initiatives must be implemented in a way that fully reflects the **constitutional and moral right of every child to inclusive, equitable education**, regardless of the school they attend.

Our main concern is that the current SEN support schemes come with **restrictive conditions that undermine the very principle of inclusion**. A key example is that **SENA will grant a 1:1 carer to a child with special needs only if he or she attends a Government school**. In practice, this means that parents who choose private schools—for reasons of curriculum, language exposure, or smaller group settings—are denied such support, even if their child's needs are greater than those in public schools.

We understand that some compare this to healthcare: that a patient cannot demand a Government doctor in a private hospital, and so parents should not expect a State-sponsored carer in a private school. But this analogy is **fundamentally flawed** for several reasons.

First, education is not merely a one-off service. Unlike hospital care, which is episodic, schooling is a child's **daily environment for over a decade**. A child with autism, ADHD, or another developmental condition cannot simply be transferred to a new setting without serious disruption to their learning, socialisation and mental health. The goal of inclusive education is to **support children where they are**, not to fit into a system for the convenience of State funding models or to fill SENA schools.

Second, the assumption that parents who choose private schools must also afford to finance the full-time salary of a support carer is misguided. A family may make considerable sacrifices to afford standard private school fees, but the additional burden of paying for a full-time carer often pushes it beyond their reach. It follows that denying a disabled child a State-financed carer restricts his access to opportunities available to his non-disabled peer. This is **disability discrimination** in its purest form.

Third, as previously mentioned, section 14 of the Constitution of Mauritius protects a parent’s right to choose their child’s school. However, because of the SENA policy, the parent of a disabled child may be effectively blocked from exercising that choice. Forcing a family to move their child to a public school in order to access the basic State support by way of a carer **undermines the spirit of the Constitution**.

Fourth, it is both **unreasonable and disproportionate** to insist that resources for a child with a disability be conditional upon attending a specific type of school. The support in question—a carer—is for the **child**, not the institution. The school derives no gain from the carer’s presence; the carer is assigned solely to assist that particular child. What difference does it make, then, whether the child is enrolled in a public or private institution? Would we tell a wheelchair user that they may only receive a State-provided wheelchair on the condition that they use it in a public school rather than a private one?

We therefore recommend that:

- **SEN support, particularly access to carers, be extended to children attending all schools—public and private**
- **A child-focused funding model** be introduced, ensuring support follows the student rather than being restricted by school type
- The Government fosters **stronger public-private partnerships** in the SEN sector, recognising that every contribution matters

For example, in 2022, we organised for the Mauritian Ombudsperson for Children to visit several SEN centres in Australia, encouraging international collaboration and cross-learning. These are the kinds of partnerships that should be nurtured to benefit the wider Mauritian community. Fundamentally, **inclusion must be child-centred, not system-driven**. If the national vision is truly one of equity and fairness, then **support must follow the child—not stop at the gates of a particular type of school**.



In 2021, I wrote a song called “Roy, the Special Boy” about my own son who is on the autistic spectrum. The song shares the daily challenges he faces—not just with communication or routines, but with something even more human: *the deep longing to be included*. I wrote this not just for my son, but for every child with special needs. My hope is that we move beyond awareness, and towards **true inclusion**. The current SENA legislation mandates schools to have a separate classroom for children with special needs, but true inclusion is about doing everything we can to **integrate them in mainstream classes**, unless their disability is so severe that requires them to be in dedicated facilities.

MUSIQUE

'Roy the Special Boy' : le combat du couple Nursimulu pour les enfants autistes

Il s'appelle Tristan Chase. Il a 8 ans et il est autiste. Ses parents, Shannon et Rishi Nursimulu, ont lancé une chanson 'Roy the Special Boy' et un clip vidéo dans le cadre de la Journée mondiale de sensibilisation à l'autisme, observée le 2 avril dernier. Un album a été également lancé et les fonds récoltés serviront à la mise en place d'un centre spécialisé pour venir en aide aux enfants atteints d'autisme.

It makes
everything
for me
worthwhile



Tristan, âgé de 8 ans, souffre d'autisme.

N.M-MUNGUR
n.mungur@defimedia.info

La chanson 'Roy the Special Boy' a été lancée par l'école Dukesbridge pour sensibiliser davantage les Mauriciens à l'autisme et aux enfants avec des besoins éducatifs spéciaux en général.

« Les gens n'aiment pas aborder ces questions délicates. J'ai pensé qu'écouter une chanson ou regarder une vidéo sur ce sujet serait le meilleur moyen de les toucher et de faire la lumière sur certaines des difficultés rencontrées par les enfants atteints des troubles du spectre autistique (TSA) », indique Rishi Nursimulu, le fondateur de l'école Dukesbridge. Selon lui, cette chanson est porteuse d'un message commun : les enfants avec des besoins spéciaux veulent être compris, acceptés et inclus dans la société.

« J'ai écrit la chanson du point de vue d'un enfant atteint de TSA. Elle fait mention de certains de ses problèmes, comme ne pas pouvoir s'exprimer, ne pas contrôler ses actions physiques et la difficulté de faire face au jugement des autres. Le message clé, qui se trouve dans le refrain final, dit ceci 'Incluez-moi dans votre clan, ne me laissez pas de côté à cause de qui je suis. Je serai votre ami le plus fidèle. Apprenez à me connaître,

alors vous comprendrez' », ajoute Rishi Nursimulu. Si ce dernier se sent si concerné par cette cause, c'est parce que son fils Tristan âgé de 8 ans, qu'on voit d'ailleurs dans le clip, est autiste. Malgré son très jeune âge, le petit garçon a dû déjà surmonter beaucoup d'épreuves. Auparavant, il lui était difficile de parler avec ses pairs, de lire, de gérer ses émotions et se sentait dérangé par le bruit. Mais au fil du temps, sa situation s'est améliorée grâce à ses parents qui n'ont jamais baissé la garde.

Pourtant, quand Rishi Nursimulu et sa femme, parents de trois garçons, ont pris connaissance du diagnostic, ils ont été dévastés. À cette époque, Tristan, le cadet de leurs enfants, avait 3 ans. « Nous l'avons emmené à Londres et c'est là-bas que les médecins lui ont diagnostiqué certains traits de TSA. Nous avons pleuré. Je ne peux pas expliquer les émotions qui nous ont traversé l'esprit. C'était peut-être une combinaison de tristesse, de peur, d'inquiétude pour ce que serait l'avenir de Tristan », se souvient Rishi Nursimulu.

À ce moment-là, Tristan ne parlait pas encore. Il avait aussi des accès de colère qui étaient extrêmement difficiles à gérer, surtout en public. « Personne ne pouvait dire avec certitude s'il grandirait



Tristan, entouré de ses deux frères.



Shannon et Rishi Nursimulu ont lancé la chanson 'Roy the Special Boy' pour leur fils et tous ceux qui souffrent d'autisme.



Rishi Nursimulu a écrit les 9 chansons de l'album.

au-delà de ces difficultés et dans quelle mesure il aurait besoin d'aide pour les tâches quotidiennes. Heureusement, nos parents nous ont soutenus et nous avons une foi solide en Dieu. Au fil du temps, nous avons ajusté nos attentes et construit de nouveaux rêves pour lui », fait ressortir le père. Cependant, il leur est difficile de faire l'impasse sur les regards et le jugement des autres.

« La scène du supermarché

dans le clip vidéo est réelle. Votre enfant fait une crise de colère et se jette au sol et les gens vous demandent de le contrôler ou vous lancent des regards, sans être au courant des problèmes. La pression de la société est énorme. Même si la plupart des personnes ne disent rien, elles jettent toujours un coup d'œil ou vous ignorent... Ce sont à travers de telles expériences qu'il faut apprendre à construire une résilience intérieure et devenir

patients », soutient Rishi.

Pour venir aux enfants atteints d'autisme non sévère, Rishi et Shannon Nursimulu, qui accueillent déjà quelques enfants à besoins spéciaux (autisme, dyslexie, syndrome de Down, etc.) à l'école Dukesbridge, souhaitent mettre en place un centre spécialisé.

PARENTS AFFOLÉS

« Nous recevons souvent des appels de parents affolés. C'est en pleurs qu'ils nous expliquent qu'ils ne savent pas où envoyer leur enfant qui a été diagnostiqué avec des besoins spéciaux. Nous essayons de les aider du mieux possible, mais nous ne sommes pas des experts. Il y a tellement plus que nous pourrions faire pour ces enfants. Heureusement, Autism Mauritius fait déjà un travail fantastique, principalement avec des enfants avec des besoins sévères. Mais en ce qui concerne, les cas les moins graves, il est nécessaire d'avoir une école pour les accueillir ».

D'où le lancement de l'album « Children of All Colours / Zanzan tou Kouler » en mars dernier qui contient neuf chansons. Les fonds récoltés serviront à ouvrir le centre.

« Nous rêvons d'avoir un centre à but non lucratif qui offre des diagnostics, des traitements, des thérapies et des conseils aux enfants ayant des besoins spéciaux. L'idée n'est pas de créer un centre qui remplace l'école, mais qui travaille en étroite collaboration avec cette dernière et qui puisse offrir un bon réseau de soutien aux parents. Avec un groupe de parents, nous avons commencé à explorer la possibilité de conclure un partenariat avec un centre international pour les besoins éducatifs spéciaux pour former le personnel local. Je voudrais remercier Rita Ventakasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children à Maurice, qui m'a encouragé à poursuivre ce projet », dit-il.



<https://youtu.be/2DDCHTYz9WM>



Maths For L

A Differentiated Approach

11. FOUNDATION PROGRAMME ON LITERACY, NUMERACY, AND SKILLS (FPLNS)

We welcome the introduction of the Foundation Programme in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills (FPLNS) to replace the Extended Programme, and were particularly heartened to hear the Minister of Education affirm that the guiding principle of the reform is now “**flexibility.**” This marks a crucial and progressive shift. In education, there is no one-size-fits-all model—it is encouraging to see this recognition at the highest level of policymaking.

That said, our concern lies with the **entry point** into the FPLNS. Under the current framework, this alternative stream becomes available only **after a student fails the PSAC examination.** However, by the time a child is branded as having “failed” a national exam, the damage is already done—not just academically, but emotionally. Teachers, parents and students often know well before Grade 6 which learners are significantly struggling, based on formative assessments and day-to-day classroom performance.

So why must failure be a prerequisite for support?

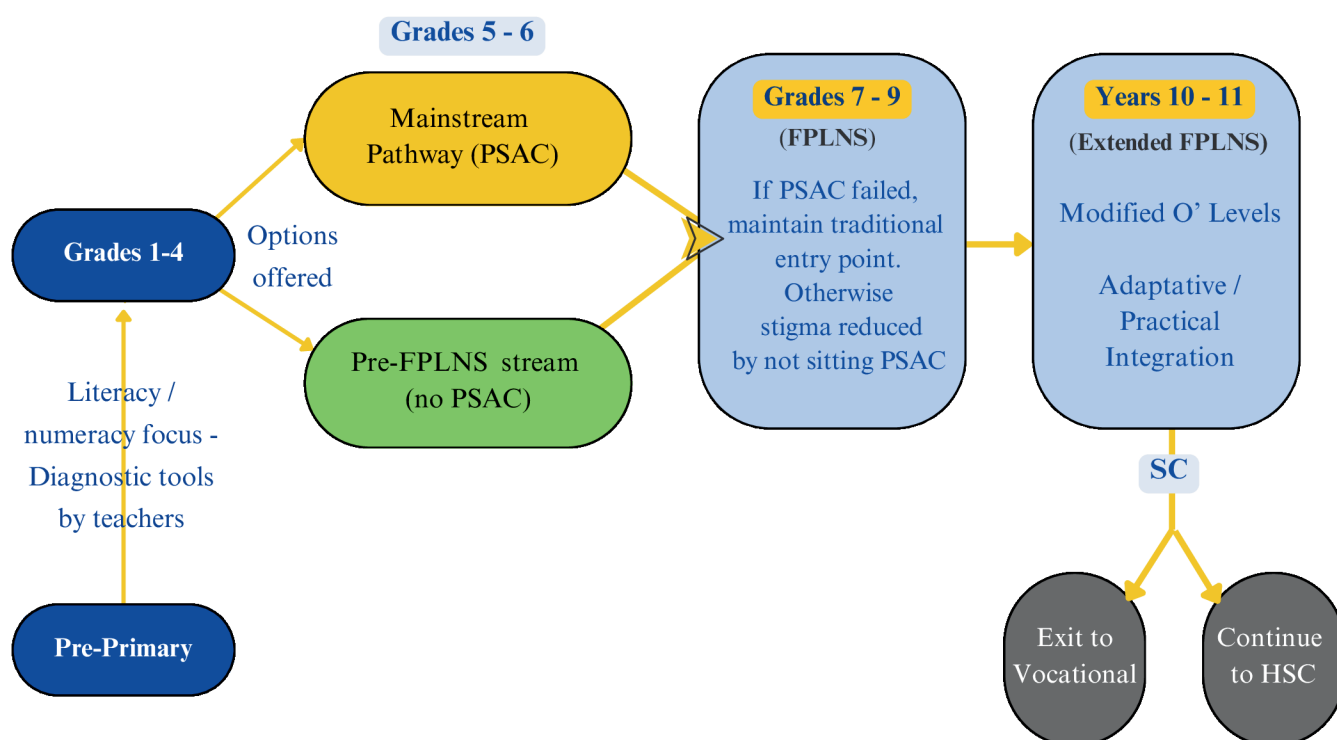
We believe the FPLNS should not just be about bringing struggling students up to speed after gaps appear at PSAC, but about creating a **system-wide foundation** of literacy and numeracy from the earliest stages of schooling. If students are identified as “falling behind” in Grade 3 or 4, it is already too late. These gaps begin in the early years and compound rapidly over time. We propose a model that allows for **early, proactive transition** into the FPLNS before the PSAC—perhaps as early as Grade 5. Participation in the PSAC exam should be **optional** for these students, not mandatory. This would remove the stigma of failure and allow for **customised, long-term planning** of their educational journey.

Equally important is what happens after the FPLNS. These students should not be diverted into a separate track forever. We recommend that they be supported through a five-year educational pathway, culminating in **modified O-Level qualifications.** These could include both academic subjects (with adapted content where needed) and vocational courses that are examined to O-Level standards. There is no reason why O-Level certification must be limited to academic disciplines only.

In a nutshell, we recommend the following enhancements to the FPLNS framework:

- **Focus on the foundations of literacy and numeracy in pre-primary and early primary** with structured and age-appropriate targets in reading fluency and problem-solving;
- **Teachers use diagnostic tools in Grades 1–4** to assess individual student readiness and tailor interventions like booster lessons based on real-time classroom feedback;
- Where significant gaps remain despite intervention by the end of Grade 4, students get the **option to enter the pre-FPLNS stream for Grades 5-6** without the pressure of having to sit the PSAC exams (no stigma);
- Those who choose to continue in the mainstream pathway join the **FPLNS stream at Grade 7**, maintaining the traditional entry point;
- The FPLNS pathway to be formally **extended in Grades 10-11** with subjects adapted for modified **O’Level SC exams**; and
- New subject options such as “**Maths for Life**,” “**English for Everyday Communication**,” “**Digital Basics**,” and “**Financial Literacy**” to be developed, as is done in countries like Australia and the UK.

PROPOSED FPLNS PATHWAY



Fundamentally, we believe that **every child in Mauritius—regardless of academic ability—should have a pathway to a School Certificate (O Level) in Year 11**. This ought to be the minimum academic exit point. To deny this opportunity is to close the door to aspiration far too early, and to risk branding children as failures before they have even reached adolescence.

This reform has the potential to be transformative—but only if it is truly **flexible, inclusive and forward-looking** from the start.



12. ADDRESSING SKILLS MISMATCH AND PROMOTING CAREER GUIDANCE

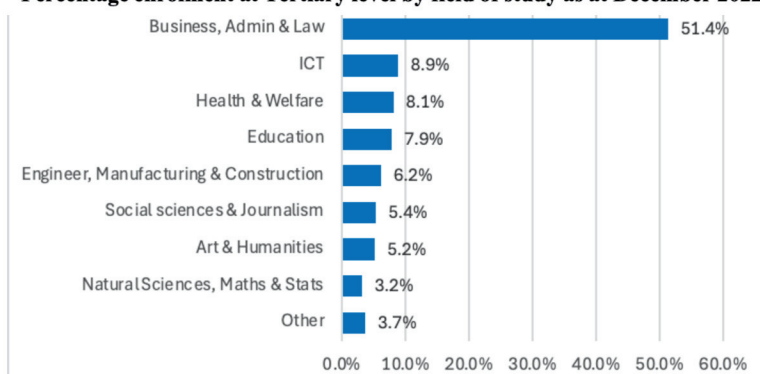
The situation is nothing short of a paradox. On the one hand, **youth unemployment is high** and on the other, we are forced to **import labour** because of a shortage of local candidates willing *or prepared* to take up existing vacancies.

What is needed is a **data-driven approach** to identify the sectors that are lacking skilled labour (now and in future) and then begin guiding our students towards those opportunities early. By the time students complete their A-Levels, it is too late sometimes as many are already entrenched in academic silos chosen since Grade 9. Career guidance must therefore stop being an afterthought and instead become an **integral part of the secondary school experience**—**starting as early as lower secondary**. We recommend that career exploration includes:

- Sector-based placements and internships from Grade 8 and 9
- Regular industry talks and workplace visits, facilitated by relevant ministries
- Exposure to non-traditional and emerging careers, such as marine, agritech and AI

We must also be realistic about the **value and market relevance of degrees**. Data about tertiary enrolments from the MOE suggests a disproportionately high take-up of degrees in fields like business management and law.

Percentage enrolment at Tertiary level by field of study as at December 2022

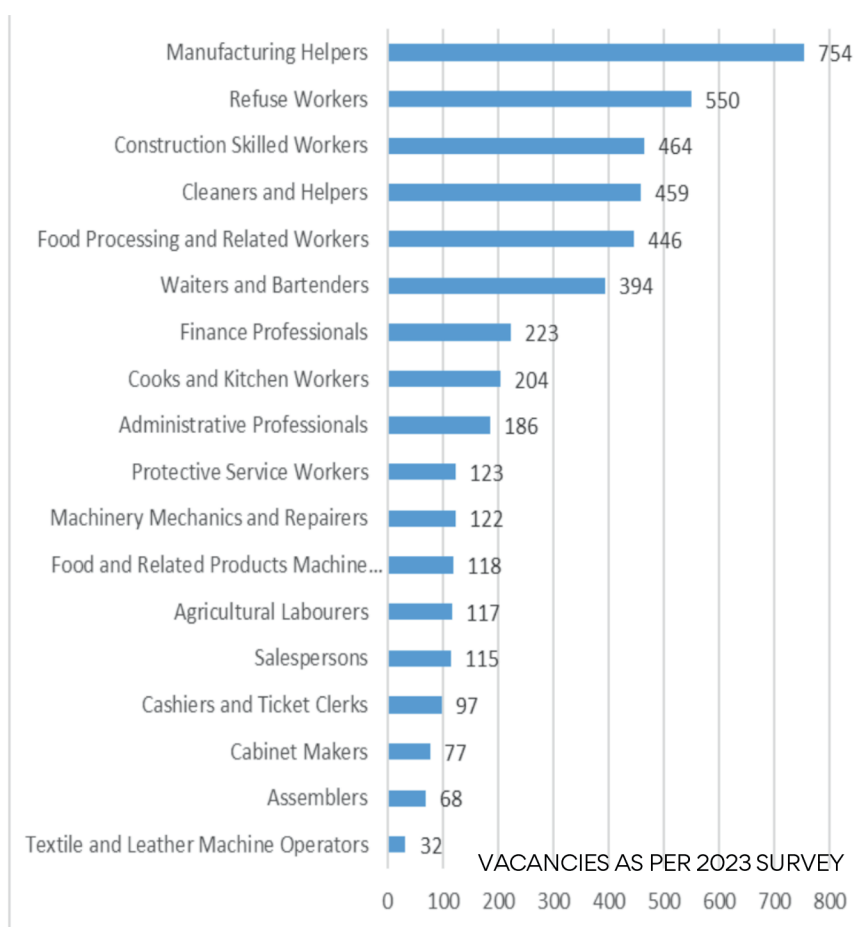


A degree in “Management” often creates a false expectation that one can immediately manage people or departments—without first gaining the necessary skills, experience and credibility. Such degrees should be **limited in number and reviewed regularly**, in line with national priorities.

But the **mismatch is not just academic—it is cultural**.

Mauritius today faces a deeper issue of **youth entitlement**. Too many young people feel no urgency to join the workforce. With free tertiary education and many still living at home well into their thirties, they are shielded from financial pressures.

They refuse mundane or manual tasks. Entry-level jobs are beneath them. If challenged at work, they walk away. This mindset is not sustainable.



During the Labour Market Survey 2023 carried out by the Ministry of Labour, Manufacturing Helpers (12%), Refuse Workers (8%) Construction Skilled Workers (7%), Cleaners and Helpers (7%), Food Processing and Related Workers (7%) and Waiters and Bartenders (6%) were the most available jobs. It is *unlikely* that our youth necessarily want to be redirected to these fields.

We need a **cultural reset**. Young Mauritians must be taught that work is a privilege, not a punishment. Countries like Australia have introduced models that tie university funding to post-graduate employment through **income-contingent student loan systems**. Mauritius should explore similar mechanisms, shifting from unconditional free university access to **interest-free loans repayable only upon entering the workforce**.

Parents too must play their part—by encouraging resilience, humility and purpose in their children. It does not matter if a graduate starts out as a clerk or receptionist. What matters is the drive to **learn, grow and contribute**. We must cultivate a generation that aspires not just to get a job—but to build experience and one day **create jobs** themselves.

Finally, as services and industries evolve, so too must education. We cannot prepare students solely for the jobs of today—because many of those jobs will not exist tomorrow. With AI, automation, and rapid globalisation, our children will enter a world we can barely imagine. That is why we must focus on **transferable life skills** like critical thinking, emotional intelligence, digital fluency, communication and entrepreneurship and initiative. These are the skills that will empower them to adapt, lead and thrive—no matter what the future holds.

Education is not just about making our youth employable. It is about making them visionaries—builders, problem-solvers and creators of the future.

13. EMBEDDING TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION



If we are to prepare children for the world they will live in—not the one we grew up in—then **technology, innovation and creativity must become pillars of our education system**, not occasional supplements. These are not luxuries or extras; they are the drivers of future economies, personal growth and societal resilience.

The pandemic accelerated the conversation around digital learning, but most of the progress has been **patchy, reactive and uneven**. The MOE Annual Report 2024 notes that only 35% of educators have been trained in online teaching (60% was the target) - *how hard is it really?* Meanwhile, outside of school, their students are immersed in a digital world that profoundly shapes their thinking, relationships and identity.

In many schools, technology is still limited to a weekly visit to the computer lab, with little integration into everyday learning. The MIE textbook for ICT in Grade 6 is a clear example of how outdated the current approach is— 6 pages on the chronology of Microsoft Windows and 7 pages on how to use the Thesaurus in Word. This results in surface-level engagement with technology, offering little in the way of digital fluency, creativity or real-world problem-solving. We recommend that Mauritius moves beyond simply “teaching computers” and instead embeds technology within every subject as a **tool for problem-solving, inquiry and exploration**.

We also recommend changing the ICT curriculum to include **coding, robotics and AI** from the primary level, laying the foundation for future-ready skills. The investment will be a strategic and necessary step to remain relevant and competitive. Fortunately, this transition does not have to be costly or complex. There are already extensive open-source resources, international partnerships and proven models that Mauritius can adapt to suit its local context.

Start small

Introduce basic coding logic like Scratch in lower primary, then gradually progress to Python, robotics kits, basic AI principles in upper primary and secondary.

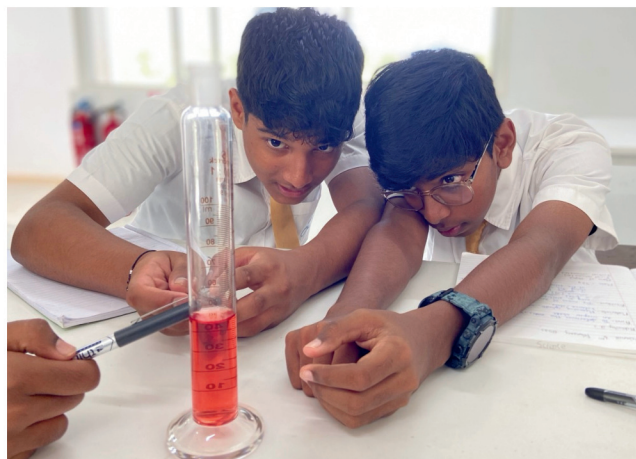
Map progression

Have age-appropriate learning outcomes:
Grade 3: logic blocks,
Grade 5: programmable robots,
Grade 7: simple AI projects.

Use existing global tools

- Scratch, Tynker, Kodable (for coding)
- LEGO Education,
- Micro:bit (for robotics)
- Teachable Machine by Google (for beginner AI)

Similarly, innovation must not be confined to science labs or after-school coding clubs. **Innovation is a mindset**—a way of thinking that encourages students to ask questions, test ideas, collaborate, iterate and create. It is about adopting new pedagogies, rethinking the traditional, teacher-led methods and exploring **student-centred, inquiry-driven and experiential models**. Innovation is what allows a science class to become a design lab, or a geography lesson to be conducted outdoors via a GPS mapping project. We recommend fostering a **culture of pedagogical experimentation**, where teachers are empowered to move away from one-size-fits-all lessons and explore unconventional teaching methods suited to their learners.



Creativity in education means giving teachers and students the freedom to explore, imagine and express...



...not just in the arts, but in **how learning happens across all subjects**. It is about using drama and storytelling to teach languages, hands-on experiments to bring science to life, or music to uncover mathematical patterns (a link well-supported by research). When the Australian inspectors came to visit Dukesbridge a few years ago, they insisted that at least one of the lessons everyday be conducted outdoors. These approaches promote deeper understanding, emotional connection and critical thinking far more effectively than traditional methods ever could.

When teaching becomes dynamic, student-centred and inventive, schools shift from being places of passive instruction to spaces of discovery and engagement. In such environments, students are not only better prepared for exams—they are better prepared for life.

We therefore recommend that the Ministry actively champions and scales up innovative teaching practices through **teacher-led showcases, inter-school idea exchanges and Government recognition schemes** that highlight and reward teachers who dare to create and innovate in and out of the classroom.

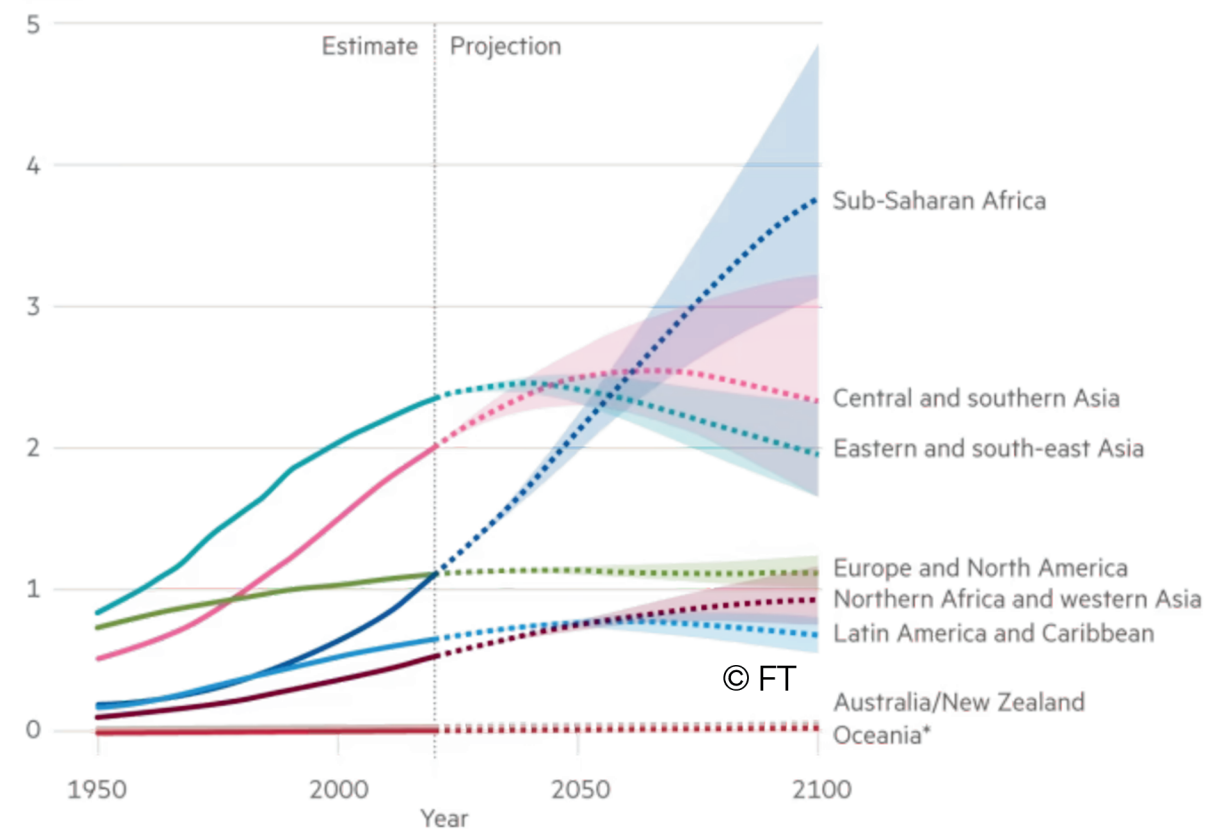
14. OTHER STRATEGIC ISSUES PERTAINING TO EDUCATION

The idea of making Mauritius an **Education Hub in Africa** has been around for some time. While most of the discussions have focused on universities, there is a rapidly growing demand for quality **schooling** across Africa, and Mauritius is uniquely positioned for it. This could be an emerging sector of economic growth much like Mauritius has done with tourism and financial services, positioning education as a national asset with global reach.

UNESCO data shows that Africa's school-age population is the fastest growing in the world. By 2030, it is estimated that over 750 million children across the continent will require access to primary and secondary schooling.

Only Sub-Saharan Africa set to sustain rapid population growth

Total population by sustainable development goal region (bn)



*Excluding Australia and New Zealand
Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Many countries in the region struggle to provide quality, stable, internationally recognised schooling—especially for the growing middle class. Families in Kenya, Nigeria, Madagascar, Tanzania and South Africa are already paying premium fees to send children to onshore international or boarding schools abroad. Although some countries like South Africa, Kenya are Nigeria are already ahead of the curve through partnerships with international schools, we have political stability, good infrastructure, national security and a bilingual-speaking environment—factors that make our island attractive to families from Africa.

In What Ways can Mauritius Export its Education?

1

Establish World-Class Boarding Options

- Purpose-built boarding schools catering to international students from the region.
- Attract students aged 10–18 from families looking for quality, proximity, and safety.

2

License Mauritian School Brands Abroad

High-performing Mauritian schools could franchise or license their model in neighbouring African countries (e.g. Dukesbridge has already expanded into Nairobi, Kenya)

3

Develop Short-Term International Programmes

- Holiday learning camps, exchange programmes, cultural immersion or STEAM camps.
- Hosted in Mauritius with tourism crossover.

4

Use EdTech to Scale Mauritian Content

Export locally developed curricula, platforms or teaching expertise through digital channels to Francophone and Anglophone Africa.

How to Make it Happen?

This vision cannot be achieved through isolated school efforts. It requires a country strategy that brings together Government, private schools, accreditation bodies and investment authorities under a unified national goal. Key priorities would include:

- Establishing **Mauritius as an international education brand**, backed by a national quality assurance and school rating framework
- Streamlining **student visa policies** for non-citizens to enrol in boarding schools
- Supporting the establishment of **boarding school facilities** to host international students
- Encouraging **partnerships** between Mauritian schools and education providers abroad
- **Promoting Mauritius** as an education destination in diplomatic and trade missions

Can it Really Happen?

Education has always been deeply valued in Mauritian society. For generations, our families made sacrifices to ensure we receive the best education among developing nations. Today, we have the potential to turn education into a true national pride—one that not only raises the standards for Mauritians, but also generates foreign revenue, creates jobs and elevates our global standing. International schools are already in talks with local partners on boarding ventures. With proper vision and cross-sector collaboration, Mauritius can become a true Education hub in Africa. This is a **bold yet achievable ambition**. And the time to act is now.

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