The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I propose to make a statement on the implementation status of the Innovative Pedagogical Programmes initiated since 2017 in all Government and aided primary schools of the Republic.

The Nine-year Continuous Basic Education Programme is grounded in a philosophy that upholds a holistic development of learners. It thus aims at establishing a solid foundation on which they can build their future learning while also providing opportunities for all pupils to unlock their true potential.

Madam Speaker, I will address the following issues, namely –

- the Developmental Learner Profile at the Pre-primary;
- the Primary School Readiness Programme;
- the Early Support Programme, and
- the Diagnostic Assessment.

Through these programmes we have ensured that not only teaching strategies shift from directive to learner centred ones, but also that learning gaps are detected as early as possible so that remedial measures can be taken to circumvent the accumulation of learning deficits.

Madam Speaker, the Developmental Learner Profile is devised to record every child’s progress and development during the two-year pre-primary education. The learner profile subdivided into two documents serves three purposes. One document enables pre-primary teachers to closely monitor the developmental progress of each child at regular intervals during the school year and thus identify developmental gaps, if any, and plan for remediation action. The second acts as an exit document that summarises the child’s progress at the end of pre-school education. Finally, it acts as a transit document that parents can carry forward to Grade 1 teachers for the latter to have a better understanding of the learner’s competence in the various domains, namely cognitive, psychosocial, emotion and so forth.
Once a child enters Grade 1, the DLP (Developmental Learner Profile) is complemented by another mechanism, the Primary School Readiness (PSR). This latter gages the level of competencies acquired by the pupils and, hence, the level of preparedness to make the transition from the pre-school to primary school. This PSR tool provides teachers with the means to profile their pupils and identify those who are lagging behind or who are suspected of developmental delays for in time interventions.

Educators are trained for the effective conduct of the PSR and today the PSR is carried out in all Government and aided primary schools of the Republic and it is impacting positively on teaching and learning. Learning gaps, once identified through the Primary School Readiness Programme are then addressed through the Early Support Programme (ESP) designed to accompany the learners. The Early Support Programme thus aims at providing support for in time remediation.

The ESP covers children in Grades 1 and 2 who need support in the core subjects. They are coached in small groups and individualised attention as appropriate is tendered by the support teacher who, with the class teacher, puts in place a differentiated instruction. The idea is to catch them early and bring them back on track, allowing them to reintegrate their regular class. This avoids the accumulation of learning...

Madam Speaker: With respect to the Minister, can we have some silence in the House, please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: This avoids the accumulation of learning deficits which is one of the root causes of pupil disengagement. In 2018, a total of 1,830 pupils of Grade I and 1,801 of Grade II were identified as having learning deficits and were provided with support through a tailor-made approach. This figure represents around 10% of the cohort. If allowed to go and check, the figure would tend to grow on increasing the risk of pupils not attaining the required level of competency than the end of the primary cycle. Feedback received from both teaching staff and primary school inspectors demonstrate a keen and enhanced interest of those learners benefiting to the ESP.

Madam Speaker, to guarantee success of the early support programme, 290 support teachers have been recruited and trained by the Mauritius Institute of Education. Today, around 255 support teachers are posted full time in Government and Aided Schools in both mainland
Mauritius and Rodrigues. The remaining 35 are currently completing their training prior to be posted in a full time capacity in schools.

My Ministry will be proceeding with the recruitment of additional support teachers to provide for the extension of the remediation process to pupils of Grade III to VI. The aim is to ensure that pupils of all grades of primary education cycle benefit from the programme thus safeguarding against relapse.

Madam Speaker, an evaluation of this programme is being currently carried out by the World Bank in collaboration with my Ministry. Such an evaluation will be an opportunity to provide feedback to a wider set of stakeholders, especially teachers and parents to strengthen support for the programme. At the beginning of Grade III, a diagnostic assessment is carried out to give the level of literacy and numeracy attained by the pupils. The teachers use this assessment to develop relevant remedial measures for an effective continuation of the pupils’ learning.

Madam Speaker, all the different measures enunciated above are working in synchrony so as to ensure effective learning. Pupils not having attained the proper standard at the end of Grade III will be required to repeat the grade.

Madam Speaker, for the pedagogical measures being implemented to be successful, a close monitoring is fundamental. To that effect, the Primary Inspectorate cadre has been fully trained both to better support schools in the delivery of such programmes and help sustain these. Madam Speaker, I would like to reassure the House that these innovative pedagogical programmes are aimed at creating stimulating learning environments and consolidating the foundations for learning.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.