



GREETINGS BY

THE HONOURABLE CAROLYN SEEPERSAD-BACHAN

MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

MP FOR SAN FERNANDO WEST

OPENING CEREMONY OF COHORT 1 OF A 3-DAY
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR
RETURNING SCHOLARS

GOVERNMENT TRAINING CENTRE, CHAGUARAMAS

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 6TH, 2013



Ministry of
Public Administration

SALUTATIONS

- Mr. Chairman,
- Ms. Gillian Macintyre, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration,
- Ms. Jacqueline Johnson, Director – Scholarships and Advanced Training Division,
- Representatives of the Various Divisions of the Ministry of Public Administration,
- Representatives of the various Ministries
- Representatives from GHRS
- Scholars, Assessors and Mentors
- Members of the Media,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am indeed honoured to address you on this, the formal launch of our Professional Development Programme. As a professional myself, and as the Minister of Public Administration trying to create and maintain a professional working environment for public officers, and also trying to encourage a professional approach to their jobs by public officers, I welcome this opportunity to share my views with you.

Sometimes when we think of professional development we interpret this as only improving our competence in the field in which we have graduated or specialized. We see it as becoming more accomplished doctors, lawyers, engineers, administrators, HR specialists or whatever. In other words, we limit our definition of professional development to work-related activities in our field alone. This is obviously very important. The better you are at your job, the more expertise you develop, the higher the level you will reach, the more the rewards or benefits both material and

psychological you will acquire, and the greater the respect in which you will be held by your peers and clients.

But is this all? I believe that if we want to explore the meaning and purpose of professional development we have to start with agreeing on what a professional is, and what it means to be a professional.

Some people see being professional as being an expert in a field which requires considerable learning and which has its own body of literature. For them it also means being competent and skilful. However, professionalism has other dimensions, the second of which is the possession of a code of ethics which determines the way professionals behave towards their clients and the society as a whole.

We all have a sense of what is appropriate behavior for a doctor, a lawyer or any one deemed to be a professional. We even have

standards of dress and demeanor. But professionalism also means putting your clients first and acting in the best interests of the public or society. Being professional means being dedicated to your professional development both for yourself and for those people who are affected by your work. It is about being trustworthy, reliable and committed.

There are other requirements. Take a doctor as an example. When the doctor closes her office and leaves the building, she is still a doctor. At four-o'clock a typist can switch off the word processor or computer and is not a typist until he or she returns to work the next day. But not a professional – you are a professional twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This is the difference between a job and a profession. If you expect to be treated as a professional you have to see what you do as more than a job. It is a lifelong commitment to working, behaving and dealing with other people in a particular way.

What the literature on professional says is that you must have a positive work morale and motivation. You must have an interest and desire to do a job well and your attitude must be positive. If you are in a corporate setting it is different from if you have your own practice or you are a consultant. For young professionals like you who are working for and within Ministries or Departments it is different from being on your own.

One of the most important yardsticks or criteria for professionalism in the corporate setting is the way you treat relationships with your colleagues. You are part of a larger picture and not the star of the show. If you have an eight to four attitude to what is a twenty-four hour business then you cannot ever be considered a professional.

So, if that is what professional means, what do we mean when we talk about “professional development” and what is its purpose? What do we have in mind for you when we bring you together for a “professional development” workshop?

The term “development” generally implies growth, maturity, improvement and becoming better at who you are and what you do. This is the purpose of this workshop here today – to make you better suited, better equipped and better disposed to what you are doing now and what you intend or expect to do, and to be, in future.

However, what you get out of this training programme depends entirely on you and how you define your role and your expectations. We cannot teach you anything. We can, together

with you, and only if you participate fully, create an environment that will support learning.

From our point of view, we are committed to the sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago. We are increasingly providing scholarships in fields that are essential to our future as a nation among nations. We keep talking about our human resource capital and the importance of investing in the future but really this cannot happen unless there is in both financial and human terms “simple interest”.

Interest in what you do and how you do it. Interest in your country and what it stands for. Interest in developing yourself as a professional, employee and human being. Interest in transforming the public service so that it is citizen centric and provides the best quality service at the lowest cost in the shortest time to every citizen in this country regardless of colour, creed or geography.

We started this programme in 2009 and have continued it this year and will continue it in future because it is in our INTEREST not just to keep our commitment to you but to ensure that you are equipped with the tools, knowledge, skills and abilities to perform at the highest possible levels. We don't want you to merely function – come into the office and leave without adding value. The PDP programme is designed to provide feedback to you through a comprehensive combination of coaching, mentoring and encouragement.

However, what we add is what is known as a “Team” environment. Too many professionals lose themselves in their own personal space, competencies and ambitions. This is not something that corporate professionals can do. You work in and among teams of people, some similar, some varied depending on the purpose of the team. You may work with different teams in the same period or at different times. The research shows that a group of people working on a problem generally come up with better solutions than

any individual regardless of how talented that person is. If we are to reach from the Gold to the Diamond standard in ten years, to make sure it is both institutionalized and internalized, we have to work in teams. In fact, as the Starlift band once used as their motto, it is “WE NOT I”. Hopefully, you will further develop this sense of being in this journey together, this feeling of being part of a movement going forward into the future, at this workshop.

As the Minister of Public Administration, the Ministry that manages the scholarship process by helping to ease you into the workplace, develop your potential and improve your on-the-job performance, I want to thank the Scholarships and Training Division of my Ministry and all the other contributors to this ongoing programme. There is much still to be done but the platform is in place and more, the interest in your welfare is evident. We have put the entire scholarship process online through SATIS and have sought to work with all of you at the face-to-face,

person-to-person level. I think it is evident that we do care for you and what you do both at University and later on the job.

I am informed that this training programme will demand your full commitment and will employ a two (2) pronged approach:

1. Firstly top down mentoring, primarily aimed at the realization of the organisation's goals, by promoting the required competencies and behaviour to achieve such goals; and
2. A bottom up approach offering individual development options so that the scholar's individual talent can be further developed.

Competency mapping will be utilized to define the competencies that are crucial to one's job and the mandatory processes of the organization to which you are assigned. It will also be used to help define your individual competency map will then be utilized mapping your competencies under the following areas:

- Managerial
- Behavioural
- Technological

- Technical and
- Skills.

This training can help you to improve your career prospects and overtime, assist you to achieve your career goals.

During the next three days, you will participate in group exercises, role-plays, competency development and Individual Development Plans. You will also be exposed to business protocol as well as the rules and regulations of the Public Service. Following these three days you will continue to be monitored and assessed for a period of six months and you will be supported all the way through check-in sessions.

Additionally, your line managers back at your workplaces, your mentors and assessors will continue to provide you with meaningful work and project experience to help you fully achieve your competency goals.

There is one area I want to touch on now. It is the management of professionals, a field that is becoming extremely important to the management of the HR function in modern businesses. While I am

committed to developing the professionals, especially the young professionals in our Ministry, we in the Public Service must also develop the capacity to manage professionals. Professionals, and I can say that from my own experience, professionals don't like to be managed. When I entered the world of work, bosses bossed and workers worked. Bosses told the workers what to do and if the workers wanted to keep their jobs, they did as they were told. This is part of the problem we face in the transformation process.

I believe that we cannot transform you young professionals, upgrade your skills and abilities, make you committed, dedicated, diligent and disciplined truly professional public officers without transforming the environment in which you work and the attitudes that prevail in that environment.

You should be working in an area free of what is called "administrivia" - endless and pointless meetings, insane initiatives, relentless reporting in triplicate and all the other things that keep

you from delivering on time and on budget. We have to reduce the red-tape and the mentality that creates and perpetuates it. I want us to produce leaders who protect and earn the respect of their young professionals. Leaders who get the best out of their professionals, who can facilitate the creativity and innovation in our young professionals. I don't want professionals who tell us what we want to hear. I want professionals who tell us what they think and can justify their opinions.

Be part of the new era of Evidence based decision making and policy formulation, adhering at all times to our core values and principles.

You can become the change agents and create this type of environment for future returning Associate Professionals and Scholars.

This is my challenge to all of you here today – resource persons and young professionals, public servants and facilitators. I want us to start working together to improve the environment in which our professionals work. This is the on-the-job part of the training. This is where we have to walk the talk and live the example. It is one thing to develop people. But development does not take place in a vacuum.

Our young professionals come on the job or come back to the job and find themselves stunted and stultified. Many of our promises and their promises remain unfulfilled. Their dreams of contributing significantly to our sustainable national development become nightmares of on-the-job horrors, of being smothered and strangled by red tape. Every day is Friday 13th – a full horror story.

This must change and you young professionals must play a part in that change. You have to be able to stand up and speak out but you will only have the credibility and the opportunity if you excel and

if you seek perfection. You will only be able to speak out if you add value, if you deliver and if you care. You will only be able to be catalysts for change if you have the courage of your convictions, the confidence of professional competence and integrity as an ethical base.

Let me wish you all a successful journey to the centre of yourselves and your profession and hope that you will emerge willing to take on the challenges that you will surely and inevitably meet in the public service. Be part of the transformation process both within yourselves and outside of yourselves. Be part of the journey from Gold to Diamond but internally and externally.

I thank you.