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# Newsletter

National Productivity and Competitiveness Council

## COMPETITIVENESS FORESIGHT: A NEW ORIENTATION FOR A MORE COMPETITIVE MAURITIUS

Some 60 stakeholders of the local economy gathered on the 26 and 27 September at the Sofitel Mauritius L'Imperial Resort and Spa where they discussed about giving a new orientation for an increasingly competitive Mauritius in the coming years in the context of the Competitiveness Foresight Exercise. The workshop was conducted by Mr. Abdullah Verachia, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Strategists group, South Africa and had as theme:

*“Enhancing the competitive position of Mauritius: Laying the foundation for the next quantum leap”.*

The workshop aimed at crafting strategies to initiate the transformation of Mauritius into a more competitive and resilient economy. This is expected to promote inclusive growth and accelerate the country's transition into a high income economy.

One of the fundamental tasks of Mr. Verachia in the two-day workshop was to trigger thinking and provide the platform to key stakeholders from the public, private and other relevant sectors to reflect upon the current competitiveness status of the country.

The workshop also helped in identifying the critical areas that require an in-depth focus, namely digitization and innovation, tourism, country branding and culture, mindset, education and skills.

In his opening remarks at the workshop, Mr. Dev Appalswamy, the Officer in Charge of the NPCC, said that we are faced with many pressing questions about the best strategies and policies to adopt to withstand crisis and better the lives of our people...

*Continued P2*

## MR. DEEPAK BALGOBIN JOINS THE NPCC AS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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## COMPETITIVENESS FORESIGHT: A NEW ORIENTATION FOR A MORE COMPETITIVE MAURITIUS *(Continued)*



Mr. Verachia addressing the audience that was composed of the who's of corporate Mauritius and high officials of the public sector and trade unions as well as Non-Governmental Organisations.

*“Obviously, we do not always have all the answers. What we need is informed research and collective thinking with a multi-disciplinary, broad-picture perspective that is not confined to one area of activity. There is an urgency to abandon the silo mentality, pool our efforts and focus on shared objectives,”* he explained, adding that active participation and involvement from a wide array of participants is an essential component of foresight and of the development and implementation of policies.

The participants were divided into four distinct groups that concentrated on the four focus areas and were invited to perform a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis.

On the second day, each group presented their findings and discussions among the participants were moderated by Mr. Verachia. The findings and outcomes from the discussions will now be used as input to draft the competitiveness strategy.

In his concluding remarks, the chairman of the NPCC, Mr. Sanjiv Mulloo, laid emphasis on the importance of connectedness as an essential aspect linked to higher competitiveness. *“Connectedness is much deeper than connectivity and communications. Connectedness is when I reach your heart and I touch you there. And I touch your emotions and beliefs,”* he said, adding that we are a great little country, but we never tell our story.

A position paper will be shared soon among stakeholders for further discussion and additional input. A second workshop will be organised in March 2018 to finalise the strategy.

The strategy expert also conducted a public seminar on Friday 29 September at the R. Burrenchobay Lecture Theatre at the University of Mauritius on the theme “Disruption, disintermediation and digital. Crafting competitive strategy in a complex and rapidly evolving environment”. More than 60 participants attended the seminar and had the opportunity to learn about the importance of a national competitiveness strategy and the challenges that Mauritius faces presently on the global economic platform.

### About Abdullah Verachia

Abdullah Verachia is an admitted attorney and holds qualifications from leading academic institutions. He has also completed executive programmes on strategy and shared value and also on competitiveness with Professor Michael Porter’s Institute of Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard Business School.

Abdullah serves as the CEO of The Strategists where he plays an active role in assisting companies and organisations craft competitive future strategies. He has significant expertise in strategy, competitiveness and sector trends and facilitates a number of high level strategy

sessions and breakaways for companies and governments and also speaks globally in this area.

He has provided business strategy solutions on behalf of listed and multinational clients in Asia, Africa and Europe. Abdullah has also initiated and advised on some of the largest Asian investments into Africa. He also advised numerous South African companies on their internationalisation strategies with various Emerging Market economies.

### Competitiveness Foresight

It is to be recalled that a first edition of the Competitiveness Foresight Exercise was conducted in 2004 and followed the National Innovation Summit organised by the NPCC that was themed *“Finding new sources of competitiveness”*. The former Competitiveness Foresight Exercise had set the tone for the future orientations of the economy at that time and studied issues linked to the limits of production possibilities, innovation, competencies and resources.



## SENSITISATION ON LEADERSHIP IN YOUTH CENTRES



Young people from the Helvetia Youth Centre showed great enthusiasm in the sensitisation session.

Young people between 14 and 35 years old have been sensitised on leadership during the months of August, September and October in the youth centres of the nine districts of the island.

The sensitisation sessions focused on sharing with youngsters the leadership engine project which consists of development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills among the youth.

It should be recalled that the initiative is a preparation for the National Leadership Engine project of the NPCC, which aims at developing leadership capabilities among youth in Mauritius and building leadership at all levels.

According to Mrs. Linda Salomon, the workshop has been highly beneficial to her as she could discover hidden talents that she was unaware of up to then.

*“Although the session was not a long one, it really helped us to learn about how we should nurture our leadership skills. As a woman, I think it is equally important that we are more empowered with these skills so that we can contribute in a better way in the advancement of society,”* says Mrs. Salomon.

The sensitisation on leadership was a joint initiative between the NPCC and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Under this initiative, young people gathered at the Youth Centres on Saturdays to participate in workshops where they had interactions with NPCC consultants and took part in games to better discover the traits of a leader.





Mr. Arshad Abdool explains how a great leader influences his team.

## ARSHAD ABDOOL SHOWS HOW TO HAVE MORE INFLUENCE ON TEAMS

*“How you can have more influence on your team?”*

This is what Mr. Arshad Abdool, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Innostra, a leadership and high performance training/coaching company, made the participants discover at the second session of the Knowledge Exchange: Feed Your Mind at lunchtime workshop in July.

The workshop focused on the work environment and the relationship between staff at different levels of an organisation.

According to Mr. Abdool, the key to leadership is the ability to influence.

*“Whether you want people to buy into your vision, be more engaged and motivated, change a behaviour or overcome interpersonal conflicts, your success will depend on your skills at influencing others,”* he said during the workshop.

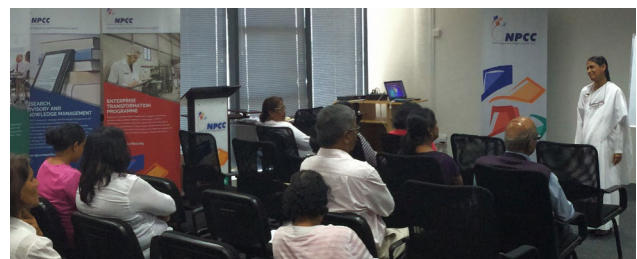
In the hour-long interactive session, the participants learned how to have more influence and to develop/refine some core influential skills. For an effective communication in the team, according to Mr. Abdool, there should be a balance between informing and influencing.

He explained further that information should be exchanged to promote understanding in the team. He also stressed on the ability to connect at a deep emotional level which is important to lead someone to change behaviour or take action.

## SISTER NITI LINKS PEACE WITH PRODUCTIVITY

Sister Niti, the coordinator of the Inner Space Meditation Centre, a branch of the Brahma Kumari World Spiritual University, conducted the fourth edition of the Knowledge Exchange – Feed Your Mind at Lunchtime workshop on 4 October. The workshop’s theme on that day was ‘Peace for Productivity’. How we should bring peace within ourselves and how important it is to be at peace in every situation formed the crux of her presentation, which was attended by members of the public and the staff of the NPCC.

*“Until and unless there is no peace within ourselves, it becomes a pointless effort to look for peace outside. It starts from our inner system, which then permeates in the atmosphere surrounding our being.”*



Sister Niti explains how we can link peace with productivity.

*Talking from a productivity point of view, I believe there is an intrinsic connection between productivity and peace because the latter is an essential attribute that effectively influences the ways we do things in our daily lives. This means the more we are at peace, the more we become productive,”* explained sister Niti.

The participants also had the opportunity to experience a moment of meditation to discover peace within themselves.



Dr. Oomesh Gokhool explains how IoT is going to transform the lives of people in the coming years.

## DR. OOMESH GOKHOO: IoT IS ALL SET TO REVOLUTIONISE BUSINESS

As the Internet takes the world by storm mostly on an hourly basis now, it goes without saying that we are witnessing an unprecedented evolution in the global business landscape. But for Dr. Oomesh Gokhool, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Software and Information Systems, Faculty of Information, Communication and Digital Technologies at the University of Mauritius, it would rather be the Internet of Things (IoT) which is pulling the eyeballs amid the entire Internet storm.

Dr. Gokhool's presentation in the third edition of the Knowledge Exchange - Feed Your Mind at Lunchtime session on 29 August focused on how businesses in many parts of the world are presently shaping their strategies around the IoT concept.

According to Dr. Gokhool, the four market drivers towards IoT comprise expanded Internet connectivity, high mobile adoption, low cost sensors and large IoT investments.

*“However, there are also four major barriers that we should take into account. They are security concerns, privacy concerns, implementation problems and technological fragmentation,”*

he says adding that business operators should also not ignore the rapid emergence of other Internet phenomenon such as cloud computing, Big Data and new analytic approaches.

According to the analysis of Dr. Gokhool, IoT allows consumers, with a handful of spoken phrases, to find and order exactly the product they are looking for since they will have access to new forms of research and purchasing, which will diminish the buying cycle. Dr. Gokhool gave an overview of major multinationals that have invested in IoT such as Daimler, Rolls-Royce, Virgin Atlantic, UPS, and Walt Disney World.

As per forecasts, there will be 34 billion devices connected to the Internet by 2020, up from 10 billion in 2015. IoT devices will account for 24 billion, while traditional computing devices (e.g. smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, etc.) will count to 10 billion.

## SMEs SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE AT THE KNOWLEDGE SHARING SEMINAR



From the left to right: Mr. Arvind Radhakrishna, the CEO of EM, Mr. Yousuf Salehmohamed, the chairman of EM, Mr. Sanjiv Mulloo, the chairman of the NPCC, Mr. Mohammad Shamad Ayoob Saab, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance and Mr. Dev Appalswamy, Officer in Charge of the NPCC.

A Knowledge Sharing seminar was organised on Thursday 30 August to gather some 20 owners and managers of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that had undergone the Productivity and Quality Improvement Programme (PQIP). The seminar was a culmination point of a joint initiative undertaken by the NPCC and Enterprise Mauritius (EM) to implement the PQIP in the 20 SMEs selected by EM.

The NPCC had signed an agreement in July 2016 with EM to implement this project. The 20 companies were shortlisted after an audit conducted in a total of 43 SMEs. The areas of improvement included productivity, quality, strategy, finance, 5S (good housekeeping) inventory management and marketing.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance, Mr. Mohammad Shamad Ayoob Saab, the chairman of the NPCC, Mr. Sanjiv Mulloo, council members of the NPCC and the Chief Executive of EM, Mr. Arvind Radhakrishna attended the seminar where the 20 SMEs were handed certificates for having participated in the project. A full report on the implementation of the project in the SMEs was submitted to Mr. Radhakrishna during the seminar.

The chairman of the NPCC, Mr. Sanjiv Mulloo, an entrepreneur himself, praised the SMEs for their contribution in the economy and for their dedication to performance and excellence.

*“SMEs have a bigger role to play in our economy and it is for this reason, they should not leave any stone unturned to make themselves more productive and competitive. Our project with EM goes in that very direction to accompany SMEs in their productivity journey and to help them compete beyond the Mauritian market,”* Sanjiv Mulloo, Chairman NPCC.



The following five companies shared their experience of the PQIP during the seminar:

## Pere Laval Enterprise Ltd: PQIP on Marketing and Finance



Mr. Désiré Laval Sansfaçon, Director: “We witnessed a drastic change in our operations with the implementation of the PQIP. Our foundry, workshop and the parking space all underwent a transformation, which gave us more space and movability in our workplace. The place became more organised, which meant we spend less time looking for materials and tools. The overall result was a better cashflow for the business.”

## Kanhye Health Products Ltd: PQIP on Strategic Planning



Mr. Vinay Kanhye, Director: “The implementation of the PQIP proved to be highly beneficial to our activities. We are witnessing a rapid expansion of the company and we registered an increase in our sales volume. Our goal is to develop a strategy to address the growing interest of Mauritian in our products.”

## Pom d’Or: PQIP on Planning and 5S



Mr. Vivien Moutou, Director: “Earlier, there was no standardised production plan while there was also no buffer stock of products causing delays in delivery. With the implementation of the PQIP, we have set the goal to come up with a buffer stock to meet daily orders. We are now setting realistic weekly production targets and produce buffer stocks, which enabled us not to work on Saturday’s anymore.”

## Hampa Ltd: PQIP on Quality



Mr. Mevin Rajiah, Director: “The PQIP has allowed us to reduce unnecessary walking in the grinding department by one hour daily. We have seen a 96% improvement in the quality of gram flour. There is no waste on cinnamon. We are now making savings of Rs 48000 yearly by standardising the weighing method. Another benefit is we have a better team spirit and better communication through the meetings organised fortnightly.”

## AAH Upholstery Ltd: PQIP on Good Housekeeping through 5S



Mr. Anwar Himalalee, Director: After the implementation of the PQIP, we now have a clean, organised and more spacious office while the work stations are labelled and optimised. There is also no time lost in moving around and searching for tools. We also have a feedback system to evaluate customer satisfaction.

## BRANDING: THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE UNVEILED



The participants gave a highly positive feedback about the delivery of the course.

A brand not only gives a name to a business but endows it with a lifelong identity. And the participants of the course “Creating and Managing your Corporate Brand” could not agree more to it. The course, which was delivered by the in-house resource persons of the NPCC, namely Mrs. Vimi Ghoorah, Lead Innovation, Advocacy and Entrepreneurship and Mr. Thierry Marechal, Innovation, Design and Creativity Specialist, helped the participants from diverse professional fields discover the tools and methods through which they can develop and promote a brand.

The first day of the course covered the basics of branding, including how to develop a visual identity from start to finish. The participants were also exposed to graphic design tips to help them communicate their expectations to a professional designer. On the second day, the course focused on how to put their brand on the right track. The participants also learned how to keep their brand energized and alive with monitoring and evaluation tools.

*“The course really helped me discover the ground works before creating a brand and the tricks of the trade to nurture the existing brands that we are marketing. One might find endless information online about branding and related topics, but it is important to have a physical interaction with a coach and other professionals in the sector to really understand the subject,”* says Lindsay Pauvaday of Jet Solutions Provider Ltd, who participated in the course.

He adds that the sharing of experience with the other participants gave him a better insight into branding and how he can now further market his products and services by giving a better focus to the brands that he proposes to his clients. The “Creating and Managing your Corporate Brand” was delivered on 9 and 10 August in the training room of the NPCC and attracted some 11 participants.





## NPCC EMPOWERS WOMEN UNDER THE BAZ'ART KREASION SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PROJECT



Mr. Thierry Marechal, Innovation, Creativity and Design Specialist at the NPCC showed the participants how they can think about innovative products.

Some 17 women participated in a brainstorming session on the “Barriers to Innovation” facilitated by the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) on Wednesday 25 October at the Vivéa Business Park in Moka. The initiative is being held under the Baz’Art Kreasion Social Enterprise project initiated by the Espitalier Noel Limited (ENL) Foundation.



The project aims at empowering women in crafting, life and leadership skills as well as at developing a brand for their products and to foster a creative work environment.

Since its creation, Baz’Art has focused on women from deprived regions of Moka and helps those living in vulnerable regions to develop in craft production and creating a platform to make their products visible.

This specific project focuses on the development of soaps, candles and jewelry made out of recycled paper. It targets solely unemployed women.

A total of seven courses has been designed by the NPCC for women and will be delivered until April 2018 in areas such as recycled products and opportunities for innovation, innovation tools and the branding and marketing of recycled products, development of a creative work environment and sharing of achievements and future innovation plans.

## UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF EFFECTIVE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT



The participants learned how they can calculate risks and enhance their supply chain.

Heightening competition among companies to grab a larger part of their market share means that no one can afford to sit on their laurels no matter how successful their business is. Understanding what it takes to ensure a smooth production and considering every little risk affecting operations has become a critical must for everyone.

The course on “Boosting Your Productivity Through Supply Chain Management” responded effectively to the growing demand for knowledge in this area during a two-day training that was held at the NPCC on 24 and 25 October. The course focused on how to reduce supply chain costs and showed the participants how they can manage their supply chain risks. They were exposed to different management techniques and how they can move away from competition to collaboration.

Prakash Chengee, purchasing manager at Azuri Radisson Blu at Haute Rive, explained that it is very crucial today to be able to calculate risks.

*“We have to recognize the time value of money and how to mitigate risks so that our businesses remain on profitable tracks,”*

he said, adding that he was impressed about how a simple ABC Analysis can help in an efficient inventory organisation.

The course on “Boosting Your Productivity Through Supply Chain Management” attracted participants from companies that were engaged in different manufacturing processes as well services.



## NPCC PARTNERS WITH JCI FOR HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS COURSE



The course focused on business goals and business models, leadership and developing capabilities.

The NPCC partnered with the Jeune Chambre Internationale (JCI) to help young and aspiring entrepreneurs in applying methods and techniques that could give a boost to their businesses and increase their productivity through the Higher Productivity for Young Entrepreneurs course.

Some eight participants have enrolled for the course which is held in the training room of the NPCC. The course focuses on different areas, namely business goals and business models, leadership and developing capabilities, managing workforce and teamwork, innovation and product development, creating a brand and marketing, improving business processes, managing cash flow and finance, change management and managing risks and expanding business.

*“As a young entrepreneur, I must admit there are many areas where we need to act diligently and effectively. And as the business landscape, both locally and globally, is constantly evolving, this means we have to keep ourselves abreast about all the modern techniques and competitive skills that give us an edge on the market where we operate,”*  
says Yannick Rivet, one of the participants.

The course on Higher Productivity for Young Entrepreneurs overall intends to accompany the young business people in their journey towards an increase level of productivity and success.



## JAPAN SHARES ITS EXPERTISE WITH MAURITIUS



From left to right: Mr. Takumi Imoto, Senior Project Officer, International Cooperation Department, JPC, Mr. Hajime Sasaki, Kaizen expert from the JPC, Mr. Dev Appalswamy, Officer in Charge of the NPCC, Mr. Yoshiharu Kato, ambassador of Japan in Mauritius, Mr. Sanjiv Mulloo, chairman of the NPCC and Mr. Yukitoshi Tanno, Kaizen expert from JPC.

Mauritian stakeholders had the opportunity to learn about the latest management and production techniques practiced in Japan at a seminar organised by the Japanese Embassy in collaboration with the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) and the Japan Productivity Centre (JPC).

The seminar entitled “Productivity Improvement Strategies in Japan: New Trends and Experiences of Management and Production Techniques” was held on 13 October at the Conference Hall of Cyber Tower 1 at Ebène and attracted participants from private sector bodies, governmental organisations and the public in general.

The seminar laid emphasis on strategies and techniques adopted by Japanese enterprises and recent developments in relation to management and productivity. The seminar also had as objective to strengthen the bilateral relations between Mauritius and Japan.

The two Japanese Kaizen experts, Mr. Hajime Sasaki and Mr. Yukitoshi Tanno,

were in Mauritius to host the seminar which saw more than 300 participants. They shared their knowledge and experience about how corporate Japan is continuously transforming itself on a daily basis through lean management techniques.

*“Japan and Mauritius have enjoyed cordial relations since 1969. Mauritius considers Japan as a reliable friend, and a development partner. At the NPCC, we have had the honour to be a recipient of Japanese expertise, since 2006, under the Technical Cooperation Project on Productivity Improvement to African Nations,”* said Mr.

Dev Appalswamy, the Officer in Charge of the NPCC. He added that though Mauritius has shown resilience during the global economic

crisis and continues to claim the top spot in Africa, in the Global Competitiveness report published by the World Economic Forum, the country still endeavors to grow stronger and join the league of high income economies.

The chairman of the NPCC, Mr. Sanjiv Mulloo, explained that the Japanese collaboration is a great opportunity for Mauritius and that local enterprises are bound to benefit significantly from this partnership. He thanked the Japanese embassy in Mauritius to have collaborated with the NPCC in this initiative, which he believes will bring enormous transformation to Mauritian businesses. He also laid strong emphasis on the national drive to inculcate positive habits among Mauritians amid the ambition of the island to become a high income nation in the years to come.

It is to be recalled that the NPCC is presently driving the Model Companies project in Mauritius along with the experts from the JPC who are involved in its implementation. The Japanese experts are engaged in the application of Kaizen and lean management techniques and conduct training for middle managers and supervisors of the Model Companies. Presently, three local companies have been selected under this project and are presently benefiting from the Japanese experts' training.

According to the newly appointed Japanese ambassador in Mauritius, Mr. Yoshiharu Kato, the two countries boast a long history of cooperation in many fields and also share common interests such as human rights, rule of law and democracy.

*“Japan will continue to support Mauritius on measures for environment protection, climate change and also provide scholarships in various fields of study. I hope the cordial and friendly relations will strengthen even more through further cooperation. The technology and innovation fields in economic activities for example, will be a good case for our new partnership,”* he said.

*“Today, we are at a point in our life where technological revolution has fundamentally altered our way of living and working. We are somehow forced to adapt to changes given the cut throat competition prevailing, therefore through this seminar, we aim at bringing a plus value to your life to keep up with the fast pace of technology and revolution. We should not forget that the only constant thing in life is change and change occurs continuously,”* Mr. Kato pointed out.

## Training of top and middle managers



Members of the middle management of the three Model Companies

Members of the top and middle management of the Model Companies, namely Axess, Scomat and Rey & Lenferna, had the opportunity to participate in training sessions led by the two Japanese experts.



Members of top management of the model companies

The sessions for both the top and middle managers were held at the NPCC on 10 and 12 October. The top management members were exposed to the lean practices adopted by Japanese companies and were inspired to take the lead to transform their own work places.

It was a similar inspiration for the middle managers who had gathered to learn about how they can better contribute to the productivity journey of their companies.



## INTERVIEW WITH MR. HAJIME SASAKI



Mr. Hajime Sasaki

*“African countries  
can learn from  
Mauritius”*

### About Mr. Hajime Sasaki

Mr. Sasaki has spent more than three decades at IBM. After IBM, he joined a Chinese manufacturing company as director of quality management. In 2016, he conducted projects on productivity improvement with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) of Japan as an expert in Kaizen and 5S. Mr. Sasaki has since led more than 350 projects, with key focus on Kaizen, productivity and lean management in companies in South Africa and Kenya.

**Kaizen expert, Mr. Hajime Sasaki, from the Japan Productivity Centre (JPC) sheds light on the importance of the Model Companies project in the following interview. He was in Mauritius in the context of a follow up of the project and the training for middle and top managers of the Model Companies.**

### Tell us a bit about the Model Companies project.

The model companies project is presently being driving by the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) along with the JPC experts. We are involved in the application of Kaizen and lean management techniques. We also conduct training for top and middle managers of the Model Companies. This project aims at setting the examples for other companies to follow in terms of Kaizen and lean management.

### How have you found the performance of the Model Companies since the inception of the project?

The three model companies are really excellent examples and they have been performing

beyond our expectations. I must say that the performance of the Model Companies in Mauritius is totally different from the Model Companies in other African countries that we visited. Here the companies have shown high motivation, especially the top management. This high motivation is also very visible among the middle managers whom we have trained in Kaizen and 5S. They have learned the new culture and quickly accepted it. Now they have to find Opportunities For Improvement (OFIs). I would also like to stress on the fact that we don't like to use the word 'problem'. Instead, we prefer to use the word OFI.

### Concerning specifically your role as Kaizen expert, in which areas are you laying more emphasis?

We are focusing on the 5S, which involves setting everything in order, systematic cleaning and standardising. Our role is to show the members of the top and middle management how they can identify OFIs in their operations. And I must point here that our interventions are not meant for the production areas only but also in the office spaces where files are kept.

### Are you satisfied with the work that has been done so far?

Of course, we are very satisfied. We have been able to work together with the management teams of the companies and it has always been encouraging. But what is important is that they must maintain the momentum and always keep on improving. I would also point here that in Japan, if a company has not adopted the 5S culture, this means that you can't expect any good job from that company.

### How would you compare the performance of Mauritius with other African countries in terms of the adoption of Kaizen techniques?

The country is definitely doing well as we have seen a difference in the mindset of the people here. And I can even say that African countries have many things to learn from Mauritius. There must be a change in the mindset of African countries.

## ALEX ZHANG: “MAURITIUS SHOULD SPEARHEAD EFFORTS TO LEAPFROG OVER THE MIDDLE INCOME TRAP”



At a moment when smart devices have invaded our lives across the planet and has become a new normal, we cannot afford to lag behind amid this relentless revolution. According to Mr. Alex Zhang, who spoke on the theme “What we can learn from mobile app industry in China and the West” at the fifth session of the Knowledge Exchange – Feed your mind at lunchtime, the apps industry will continue to grow and there are huge opportunities for Mauritius to capture a share in the global apps industry.

Mr. Zhang spoke about the latest mobile app trends abroad from which we can learn how to introduce innovation in Mauritius. He considers China and the USA as the two super centres of the mobile app revolution owing to their unprecedented adoption of mobile technology. Mr. Zhang says China has presently 720 million mobile internet users and this figure is still growing.

*“There are lots of business opportunities that can be tapped in the global apps industry. Before, we could say that Mauritius has a small population but now the apps industry gives us an opportunity to propose our services in a global market,”* said Mr. Zhang.

*“The Chinese have evolved with the mobile first paradigm shift and cannot live anymore without their mobile internet today: finance, commerce, social media, entertainment, logistics, education, health, travel, etc. Mauritius, as a developing country with a small population and limited resources, needs to spearhead efforts to leapfrog over the middle income trap,”* he pointed out.

Mr. Zhang is the director of Haohan Education Ltd, a startup founded to make higher education and training affordable for every Mauritian family. He graduated from Yale University in the USA and has several years of experience in 6-Sigma and Lean Management.

## NPCC ORGANISES SHORT COURSES FOR YOUNG STUDENTS



How to make the best and most productive use of vacations? The best answer would certainly come from more than 200 secondary students who participated in the NPCC's December short courses which were: "Ignite Your Brain with Augmented Reality", "Plug Your Brain" and "Today's Teens Tomorrow's Leaders".

A total of three batches totalling some 150 young participants completed the "Ignite Your Brain with Augmented Reality" two-day course dispensed by the staff of the NPCC and EON Reality Ltd. The course, which was delivered in EON Reality's training room in Ebène, proved to be really exciting for the participants who discovered the tricks of Augmented Reality. They were also encouraged to opt for this area in their higher studies. "Ignite Your Brain with Augmented Reality" was delivered to the three batches on 4-5, 6-7 and 11-12 December.

Another set of 30 students participated in the "Today's Teens Tomorrow's Leaders" workshop on 5 and 6 December. The training room of the NPCC had turned into a real beehive on these two days. The young students tried to give their best in the workshop during which they discovered how they could put into use the decision matrix and a host of other tools to get the best outcome in every situation.

Furthermore, some 30 young students completed the two-day "Plug Your Brain" course in which they learned about creativity and innovation. The course was held on 15 and 16 December and attracted a highly enthusiastic group of students who discovered leadership skills. They were also introduced to the world of productivity and exposed to ideas as to how they could better contribute in society through different projects.





## MR. DEEPAK BALGOBIN JOINS THE NPCC AS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Mr. Deepak Balgobin was appointed as the new Executive Director of the NPCC on 24 January 2018.

He reckons a long and enriching experience in the field of Tourism and Hospitality, with solid background of Human Resources and Training. He has worked for major hospitality groups, with both local and international exposures, holding top positions in Human Resources, Training and Talent Development.

Mr. Balgobin is currently the Chairman of the Mauritius Housing Company Ltd (MHC) and a Board member of the Mauritius Tourism Authority (TA). He is also a Member of the Advisory Board of Amity Institute of Higher Education, a degree awarding body. In a recent past, he has been a Director on the board of the State Lands Development Company (SLDC), a Council member of the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC) and Member in the Board of Governors of the University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM).

Mr Balgobin has received numerous awards in his career. The World HRD Congress held in Mumbai, India (2015) had conferred him “100 Most Talented HR Global Leaders” and he was bestowed the “Africa HR Professional of the Year” by the Employer Branding Awards (2015). In 2014, the Africa Leadership Award presented him the “HR Leadership Award”.

He graduated from SHATec, Singapore, University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM) and Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK.



## LEADERSHIP RESEARCH FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

As Mauritius transforms into a high-income, inclusive and modern economy, it is undeniable that talent and leadership development are crucial. Following the development of the Mauritius Leadership Brand in 2014 which espouses the unique identity of the Mauritian leader, the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) collaborated with the Strathclyde Business School (SBS), Glasgow and the Civil Service College to conduct a study on leadership in the public sector to advise on a leadership development programme tailored specifically for the public service.

Professor Barbara Simpson, leadership expert was deputed to Mauritius from 5-17 November for this research. During her visit, Professor Simpson conducted interviews and appreciative inquiry circle conversations involving high cadre from the public and private sector, trade unions and new recruits to the public service. These interventions were designed specifically to tap deeper into current leadership practices in the public sector and identify gaps.

The research report will be submitted to the NPCC in the coming month after which a roadmap will be established to design the entire leadership programme for the public service.

### Public seminar – New Leadership for Interesting times

*“In an increasingly globalised and fast-moving world, we seem to roll almost continuously from one crisis to the next, confronting ambiguity and uncertainty at every turn while at the same time having to prepare for futures that are as yet unknown. These are precisely the conditions that call out new thinking about leadership, thinking that emphasises fluidity and flexibility, and the capacity to change with the times.”*

Professor B. Simpson.

Professor Simpson also conducted a public seminar jointly organised by the NPCC and the University of Mauritius at the R. Burrenchobay Lecture Theatre, Réduit, on Thursday 16 November. In the seminar entitled “New Leadership for Interesting Times”, she focused on the conventional models of top-down leadership. During her intervention, she stressed on how leadership should be more social and relational and why it should engage collaboratively with all available talents and skills.

The officer in charge of the NPCC, Mr. Dev Appalswamy, in his opening speech at the seminar, spoke about the crucial need for leadership across all socioeconomic spheres.

*“We want to enliven the Mauritius Leadership Brand. Leaders must have a wonderful vision so that they can consider all the opportunities of the future,”* he said.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Mauritius, Mr. Dhanjay Jhurry, praised the partnership between the NPCC and the UoM and to organise the workshop. He explained that the workshop should offer more insights about the qualities of a good leader in the present era and context.

According to the Vice Chancellor, the quest for leadership at all levels is becoming increasingly important.

*“It is always crucial to stress on what we say, but it is equally important on how we say it,”* he said.



### About Professor Barbara Simpson

Besides being an expert in the processes of creativity, innovation and change in organisations, Professor Simpson is also an expert in leadership-as-Practice and the performativity of leadership. She has extensively mastered the methods of inquiry for process research and the pragmatic processes in process research. She joined the Strathclyde Business School in 2004 where her research activities focused primarily on the processes of technological learning and small manufacturing businesses. She also maintained an interest in scientific and hi-tech innovation and the management of professionals, especially scientists.

## GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS INDEX: MAURITIUS RETAINS TOP SPOT IN AFRICA



Mauritius is the 45th most competitive economy in the world.

Mauritius preserved its first position as the most competitive economy in Africa in the latest edition of the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) released on 26 September. According to the report, which is produced by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Mauritius also managed to maintain its 45<sup>th</sup> place (2016/2017: 45<sup>th</sup>) on the global ranking.

*“Mauritius is again the most competitive country in Africa, at 45th in the overall GCI, with its main rivals falling back: South Africa drops 14 places to 61<sup>st</sup> and Rwanda drops seven places to 58<sup>th</sup>. The most improved African countries year-on-year are Madagascar (121<sup>st</sup>, up seven), Gambia (117<sup>th</sup>, up six), Kenya (91<sup>st</sup>, up five), and Senegal (106<sup>th</sup>, up six), thanks either to an improved macroeconomic environment (Madagascar and Senegal) or to the efficiency of goods, labor, and financial markets (Gambia, and to a lesser extent Kenya),”*

the report highlights.

Asked about his views regarding the ranking of Mauritius and the trend in global competitiveness, strategy expert Abdullah Verachia, who was in Mauritius in the context of the Competitiveness Foresight exercise at the end of September, explained that every country is doing its efforts to climb the ladder of competitiveness.

*“But we should not ignore that the task remains uphill owing to the constant evolution in the global economy. That is why the WEF has decided to revise its methods of calculating the competitiveness of countries while the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) alliance is apparently also working on its own competitiveness index,”*

he explained.

The GCI tracks the performance of close to 140 countries on 12 pillars of competitiveness. Switzerland, USA and Singapore have retained their first, second and third spot respectively in the latest ranking.

### CHALLENGE YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

What new food products could we bring to the market using our existing expertise? Can we for instance think about a new type of “dhol purri” which Mauritians and foreigners can relish?

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