

**INSTITUTIONALISING BEST PRACTICE IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
DEVELOPING CITIZENSHIP AND  
EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR THE TWENTY-  
FIRST CENTURY  
JUNE 24-26, 2015  
UWI ST AUGUSTINE**

presented by

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# Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- UWI Strategic Plan – SWOT
- The Ideal Graduate
- The Motivation Challenges
- Focus on the Real Starting Point
- Questions to Ponder
- Three Solutions Offered

# Introduction

**As a company seeks to grow and enhance its competitiveness there is the need to recruit young graduates who are thinkers and who can bring big bold ideas, innovative practices and passion into the work place.**

**In practice many employers report that the graduate, whilst he may produce based on instructions given, is not able to look at the bigger picture and offer possible solutions.**

## Introduction (cont'd)

- ① The challenges experienced are commonly perceived to be a consequence of deficiencies in higher education training.
- ② A significant amount of expenditure and time is dedicated to training and motivating young graduate staff
- ③ To go beyond the theory of the disciplines they have studied.

# UWI Strategic Plan – SWOT

- ◎ **The University has progressed significantly over the decades in its efforts to produce ‘work-ready’ graduates and I know continues to make this a priority. My focus here is how this can be improved.**

# UWI Strategic Plan – SWOT

- ◎ The UWI's Latest Strategic Plan 2012-2017 identifies in its SWOT analysis that:
  - “work-readiness” of graduates still a weakness;

# UWI Strategic Plan – SWOT

- Opportunity to enhance strategic partnerships; *The University acknowledges the need to partner for Research and Development.*
- *This is something I wholeheartedly endorse. There are definitely opportunities to enhance strategic partnerships in many areas and I will return it later in my presentation.*

# The Ideal Graduate

**Strat Plan identified 7 qualities of the Ideal Graduate. I will here focus on two of these:**

- ⦿ **At the top is “A critical and creative thinker”**
- ⦿ **“innovative and entrepreneurial” was also identified as a destructive attribute the graduate should have**

**Is this the typical model of the average graduate?**

# The motivation challenges

So, what do we see in the workplace?

- ◎ **Qualified but unable to “think” independently – e.g. low initiative,**

lack of practical problem-solving skills, requiring a high level of supervision that one would not expect of a tertiary-level graduate.

We all understand that a period of training and orientation is necessary when moving from being a student to worker. Still, in my experience it is not often that one can assign a task or project,

# The motivation challenges

## So, what do we see in the workplace?

- ⦿ *Go away and leave it to be completed.*
- ⦿ *Bar the fact that Murphy always shows up unannounced, the workplace is where one expects tertiary training to kick in.*
- ⦿ *The graduate's ability to retain presence of mind, engage in fact-finding and apply creative measures is what is often lacking.*

# The motivation challenges

So, what do we see in the workplace?

- ⦿ **Bright but not committed –**  
*The graduate of today I'll argue, is just as bright, if not brighter than in times past. Coming into a workplace though,*
- ⦿ *one senses there is a lack of commitment – to excel, to enquire,*
- ⦿ *to enhance the organisation. it is very easy to move on and there is an unwillingness to invest in learning all aspects of a job*

# The motivation challenges

So, what do we see in the workplace?

- ⦿ **Knowledgable but undependable** – e.g. easily distracted, spends a significant amount of work hours on personal pursuits like social media, not timely;
- ⦿ can be almost unwilling to put out anything beyond what is absolutely required and in a world of competing priorities,
- ⦿ the priority of social media can often be the winning choice!

# The motivation challenges

So, what do we see in the workplace?

- ◎ **Savvy but uninvolved** – by the same token I will say that the young graduates entering our workplaces are very savvy.
- ◎ They are surprisingly worldly with all kinds of instantaneous information at their fingertips.
- ◎ They are able, if you take the time to engage them, to intelligently discuss democracy, the war in the middle east or human rights.
- ◎ For all of this though, I'm not seeing increased volunteerism or activism.

# The Ideal Graduate - The big question

- **Can the Higher Education institutions do it alone?**
  - **Instead of starting at the point of ‘what can the University or higher education institutions do’ do we need to start at the point of ‘what can the Education System do starting with primary level’?**
  - ***This forum is about tertiary education, but the more one examines the current challenges, it begs the question, should we be focusing on all areas concurrently?***

# The Ideal Graduate - The big question

- I don't think we can examine the different stages in silos. At the primary level, both students and teachers complain about an overburdened syllabus that leaves no time for creative pursuits.
- The "lessons" are starting earlier and earlier.
- At the secondary school level, the competition is continued and this is where we are beginning to see the dropouts in large numbers by those who just can't integrate into the "system". Many of those who enter university all too often are the ones who have mastered the art of "studying" for exams.

## Let's ponder!

- ⦿ In the pursuit of education for all, have we focused more on quantity of graduates than on the quality of graduates?
- ⦿ The numerical targets that have been set for the GATE programme have already been exceeded, but there remains a mis-alignment between the jobs available/the sectors that need labour and the disciplines from which persons are graduating.
- ⦿ In addition, with this rapid expansion of GATE, are the accreditation bodies have a rigorous quality assurance programme in place?
- ⦿ As Prof Cobley, PVC, recognised in his opening, “UWI has to produce graduates who are able to participate in the burgeoning economy.”

# Let's ponder!

- ⦿ **Are persons entering the university “material” for higher learning? –**
- ⦿ Again, UWI's strategic plan identified “intake quality” as a threat.
- ⦿ *Can the youths who are entering university think critically - know how to do research, are they mentally organised, able to grasp concepts?*
- ⦿ *I referred before to people who can “study”. We also need people who can “think”. Are those entering the university those with a thirst for knowledge, for wisdom and a desire to contribute?*

# Let's ponder!

- ⦿ **Are we creating an “over-educated” population?** *creating expectations that are too high, that education is a ticket to a ‘big job’?*
- ⦿ *Consider the consequences of having a great many graduates and not enough jobs to absorb them – at least not in the sectors for which they are trained.*
- ⦿ *As Sir Hilary noted on Wednesday, we need to look at the efficiency and effectiveness of tertiary education and ensure that our curriculum drives specialisation where needed, based on the region's demands if we are to improve regional competitiveness.*

## Let's ponder some more!

- ⦿ Are we stymieing the creativity and passion of our young people?
- ⦿ *in the highly competitive education system, we are very focused on purposeful activity;*
- ⦿ *children are left with very little free time to “do nothing”.*
- ⦿ *But the greatest creativty can happen when one is “doing nothing”, for example,*
- ⦿ *we are all familiar with the story of Issac Newton identified his ‘law of motion’ when he was just sitting under an apple tree and one fell on him.*

# Let's ponder some more!

- ⦿ **Are we putting too much into the syllabi? *there are more and more “courses” and “modules” being crammed into the syllabus.***
- ⦿ ***While this provides a magnificent amount of information, is it ultimately defeating the purpose of delivering education and producing a knowledgeable graduate?***
- ⦿ ***As the internationally renowned neuroscientist Baroness Susan Greenfield points out, information is not knowledge.***

# Let's ponder some more!

- ① *The expanding syllabi at primary and secondary level is making it increasingly difficult for teachers to complete the work in a meaningful way.*
- ② *Takes away from their ability to create a nurturing and integrated environment in schools;*
- ③ *These are persons entering tertiary institutions and these are the problems that are left to the tertiary institutions to solve.*

# Let's ponder some more!

- ⦿ Are we creating cynicism in youths?
- ⦿ *The combination of competition, limited family time, winner takes all systems and certification culture is undermining the idealism and enthusiasim of youths.*
- ⦿ *Cynics are being created from the time they enter school*

# Let's ponder some more!

- ◎ All of the foregoing I think comes down to these three questions, which must be examined at every strata of education.
- ◎ If we do not, if we do not present the opportunities for engagement, expressions of talent then we deny our young people the chance to truly achieve

# Finding Solutions

⦿ We expect our graduates to be the leaders of tomorrow, and if they are to be successful, that leadership should be dominated by the very qualities that the UWI has articulated in its strategic plan.

⦿ While the solutions need to go beyond the walls of the university and involve the education system holistically I close with three suggestions for tertiary institutions:

# Partnership Solutions

- ⦿ **More strategic and contractual partnerships between corporations and academia – *these have the power to make changes at a national level, eg.***
- ⦿ ***What about enhancing partnerships with the private sector to help develop the work ready graduate?***
- ⦿ ***And here I make a call to the corporate community to support academic development via internships, scholarships and mentoring through Corporate Social Responsibility programmes or other internal mechanisms.***

# Partnership Solutions

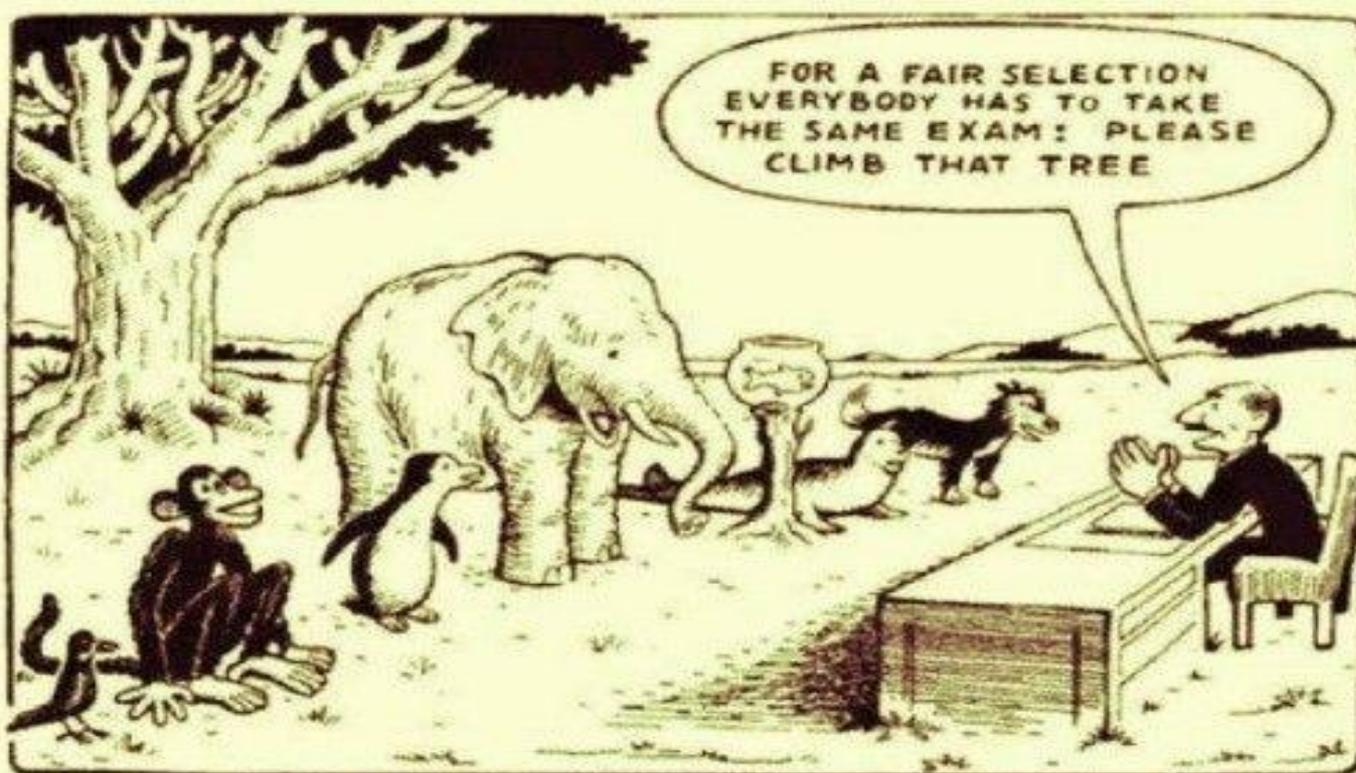
- ⦿ *For example, the T&T Chamber has, for the last 18 years, run an internship programme called Jumpstart, which matches students from selected secondary schools to member companies for internships during the August holidays.*
- ⦿ *In addition, we established a Corporate Social Responsibility Committee in 2008 which helps to educate and encourage member companies to develop CSR programmes.*

# Partnership Solutions

- ⦿ Encouraging creative pursuits, volunteering and activism –There is opportunity to create programmes that offer credits in these areas.
- ⦿ *This can be done for example via Competitions for innovations with a prize of corporate implementation in the private sector.*
- ⦿ *Or charitable/sustainability programmes at community level and lobbying on national issues such as legislative change (eg Building Codes). Of course there are opportunities for many other types of partnerships in civil society, the state and so on.*

# Partnership Solutions

- ⦿ **Student-to-student mentorships**
- ⦿ *this is already being used in some cases, where post-graduate students can provide mentoring to undergraduates*
- ⦿ *it also encourages a culture of knowledge-sharing that can benefit both parties*



## Our Education System

*"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."*

*- Albert Einstein*

LoveOfLifeQuotes.com



**Thank  
You!!!**