



The University of the West Indies

TERTIARY LEVEL INSTITUTIONS UNIT



Assessing the Human Resource Needs of CARICOM Countries
Planning the Tertiary Education Sector Response

Kingston, Jamaica April 25 – 27, 2005

.....Planning for Caribbean Development

SUMMARY REPORT

OF THE

JAMAICA

FOCUS-GROUP WORKSHOP

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Background

The University of the West Indies, through the Tertiary Level Institutions Unit (TLIU), has embarked on a project to assess the Human Resource Needs of CARICOM countries. This project seeks to identify regional socio-economic development goals, assess current and projected demands for applicable tertiary education, determine the gaps and propose how they should be filled. The project, which emphasizes partnerships among development stakeholders, including the education, private and public sectors, should ultimately establish priorities and propose strategies to advance regional development through tertiary education.

Objective

The purpose of the project is to provide information that should inform policy and establish priorities in relation to the advancement of a fully integrated tertiary education sector and the formulation of a human resource development strategy for the region.

Specifically this activity will:

1. identify jobs and skills needed for the future national and regional development;
2. determine the tertiary education needs of individual countries and region;
3. determine the nature, scope and level of the region's tertiary education provision; and
4. establish the gaps between existing supply and demand in the tertiary education provision.

Phase I: Workshop I (Jamaica)

The first phase of the proposed Project was operationalised through a Workshop held on April 25-27, 2005 in Kingston, Jamaica. The workshop facilitated the participation of a wide representation of tertiary education stakeholders, including:

- o students (past, present and prospective),
- o employers (public and private sectors),
- o heads of tertiary level institutions and
- o government policy makers.

The central purpose of the Workshop was to identify regional development goals, assess current and projected demands and advance ideas for closing existent gaps. An adaptation of the "Delphi Technique" - which facilitates information-gathering for problem-solving, planning and decision-making from expert-groups - was used as a central research strategy. As a precursor to the workshop, questionnaires were sent to various stakeholder groups to gather information. This information was subsequently collated and summarized. At the workshop the participants were separated into small focus-groups and given the collated information for their perusal, comments and adjustments. Their final task was to prioritize and rank particular issues related to national needs.

Method

The Delphi Technique:

- (i) is an effective methodology and process for problem analysis and for determining priorities for improvement,
- (ii) originated at the Rand Corporation (Dalkey and Helmer) for the purposes of technological forecasting and futuristic opinion gathering (now an important) methodology in industrial decision making, educational planning, quality of life studies,
- (iii) entails forecasting, futurist opinion gathering, establishing importance, and strategies for action,
- (iv) uses Panel of Experts combined with participatory and focus group process (brainstorming),
- (v) is participatory and consensus seeking,
- (vi) enables sub-groups to arrive at descriptive/normative

- scenarios related to priorities for improvement,
- (vii) depends on anonymity (through use of questionnaires) and statistical group response, the systematic procedures are intended to ensure some level of objectivity in the outcomes of the exercise,
- (viii) is conducted as a sequence of rounds; the results of previous rounds feedback to participants; ensures summarized group results, enables flexibility (modification) in its execution.

The procedure entails the following: (1) participants generate a list based on initial questionnaires (2) responses are clustered, i.e., a master list prepared by TLIU (3) participants rank and rate items (4) results are ranked and rated again (i.e., a number of times until a consensus is reached). TLIU analyzes and reports results of findings.

JAMAICA CONSULTATION DELPHI / FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

COMPARISON OF GROUP RESPONSES: QUESTIONS 1-3 (Similar questions across all groups)

Table 1:
Jobs and skills which will drive national development as identified by various stakeholder-groups.

Rank	Students	Employers	TLI Heads
1 st	Medical professions (doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, etc.)	Agriculture	Human Resource Development
2 nd	Information Technology	Social Sciences	Research & Development
3 rd	Farming	Hospitality	Computer Technology/ Information Technology
4 th	Construction	Management	Hotel & Tourism
5 th	Communications	Information Technology	Entrepreneurship
6 th	Computer Analysis		
7 th	Legal Profession		

UWI Personnel:

Not ranked, but included:

- o Negotiation, mediation and conflict management (social, political and business)
- o Management:: entertainment, sports, small business, strategic,

- o quality service
- o Soft Skills: critical thinking, analytical skills, social skills, knowledge management
- o Communication skills: foreign language, intercultural competence
- o innovation in alternative sectors: alternative medicine, alternative energy, forensic science
- o culture as development : cultural studies: indigenous film making, art/craft design-development, graphics, restoration of heritage sites.

Table 2:
Types of education and training programmes that should be offered to students to meet the skills and jobs identified above.

Rank	Students	Employers	TLI Heads
1 st	Information Technology	Social Skills	Social Skills
2 nd	Entrepreneurial	Agriculture	Construction
3 rd	Research & Development	Work Experience	Information & Communication Technology
4 th	Skills Training	Human Resource/ Industrial Relations	Entrepreneurship
5 th	Management	Entrepreneurship	Farming Entertainment Literacy

UWI Personnel:

Question not completed.

Table 3:
Levels of education and training (e.g. degrees, certificates, diplomas, associate degrees, on the job training, short courses, workshops) that are needed to meet the jobs and skills required by the country.

Rank	Students	Employers	TLI Heads
1 st	Bachelors Degrees	Practical Information Technology Skills	Bachelor's Degree
2 nd	Doctorates	Job Training	Master's Degree
3 rd	Internships	Workshops	Diplomas & Certificates
4 th	Masters Degrees	Technical/ Professional Training	Associate Degrees
5 th	Associate Degrees	On-the-job training	Technical Training
6 th	College Diplomas & Certificates	Short courses / LSc.	On-the-job training
7 th	On the job training	Degrees including: Graduate programmes	Workshops

UWI Personnel:
Question not completed.

OTHER NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION ISSUES

Table 4:
Students' top five reasons for pursuing tertiary education:

Rank	Reasons to pursue tertiary education
1 st	Did not want to live in poverty
2 nd	To advance my personal development and skills
3 rd	To acquire the necessary qualifications to get a job or profession
4 th	To further studies in area of interest
5 th	To assist with the development of the country

Table 5:
Students' top five barriers to pursuing tertiary education:

Rank	Reasons for not pursuing tertiary education
1 st	Lack of funds or financial support
2 nd	Parents could not afford to send me
3 rd	Inability to repay loans
4 th	Competition from more qualified applicants / Lack of adequate qualifications (not as competitive as other applicants)
5 th	Physical distance

Table 6:
Employers' top five barriers to providing and/or facilitating education and training for employees:

Rank	Barriers
1 st	Fear of and lack of technology
2 nd	Potential to sustain competence, once trained
3 rd	Availability of customized learning experiences
4 th	Belief that things are the way they are (Apathy)
5 th	Identifying capable trainers

Table 7:
Employers' top five ways to reducing/removing these barriers:

Rank	Ways to lower barriers
1 st	Development of varied delivery modes
2 nd	Greater investment in HRD by employers
3 rd	Planning and budgeting
4 th	Improving education system
5 th	Improving the economy

Table 8:
Providers (TLIs) top five barriers to persons participating in tertiary education:

Rank	Barriers
1 st	Lack of foresight/vision within employment organisations
2 nd	Work schedules of employees
3 rd	Availability of funds
4 th	Delivery mode
5 th	Lack of replacement for studying staff

Table 9:
Providers (TLIs) top five ways to reducing/removing barriers:

Rank	Ways to lower barriers
1 st	Corporate envisioning & planning
2 nd	Job Market Research and Information access
3 rd	Increasing incentives and satisfaction
4 th	Regionally articulated education system
5 th	Creating modes of delivery that respond to diverse training needs

Discussion and Conclusion

The focus group sessions culminated in a final ranking of priority areas for development. This narrative provides a summary and a brief preliminary analysis of the responses and rankings. First, a comparison of the responses of the first three questions is made, as these questions are similar across all Delphi/focus-groups (students, employers, UWI and TLI heads), and is followed by commentaries on questions four and five as ranked by each group.

Jobs and Skills, Type and Level of Education and Training for Development

The rankings of the jobs and skills that will drive the country's development in the future yield some interesting results across the various Delphi/focus-groups. The results show, for example, a clear centrality of "information technology" (IT) across all groups. In fact, students rank two IT-related jobs and skills in their top seven at second and sixth. IT is ranked by the employers at fifth and at third by the TLI heads. Though not explicitly ranked in the strictest sense by the UWI personnel, IT is implicit in their category of "innovation in alternative sectors." Other frequently recurring jobs and skills over all the expert groups are management, tourism/hospitality and interpersonal communication skills. These are ranked, each by at least two groups.

Question two (2), which asks what types of education and training programmes are required to meet the jobs and skills identified, was considered by three groups: students, employers and TLI heads. "Entrepreneurship" comes out as the most frequently identified type of training required - occupying first, fifth and fourth spots on the rankings by students, employers and TLI Heads respectively. "Social skills" training and education is also very important and ranked number one by both employers and TLI heads. Education and training in information technology is also central according to the

students who rank it at number one and TLI heads who rank it at third. Education Training in agriculture is ranked by employers and TLI heads, but not by the younger student-group.

Question three (3) seeks responses on the levels of education and training that are needed to meet the jobs and skills required. Student and TLI heads tend to put some emphasis on formal education, compared to the employers who seem to prefer types of work-related skills training which are less formal. The students, for example, have bachelor's degrees and doctorates as their top ranked levels of education, with masters and associate degrees following closely in fourth and fifth. Only internship, the sole non-qualifications-type training, is listed by students in the top five at third. This is somewhat similar to the rankings of the TLI heads, who list bachelor's and masters degrees as their top two, followed by diplomas/certificates, associate degrees in third and fourth with the professional-type technical training in fifth. The employers on the other hand list practical information technology training, job training and workshops as their top three. Positions one to six are occupied by this type of non-formal-qualification, but specific work related training. Formal degrees appear almost as after-thoughts in position seven on the employer rankings. An early analysis of this suggests a greater interest in sector-specific skills and training rather than general academic qualifications, or that these more formal types of qualifications do not sufficiently satisfy the work-specific skills desired by employers.

Students: Reasons for and Expectations of Tertiary Education

Questions four (4) and five (5) are different and specific to each group (student, employers, TLI heads). For students, question four is separated into three parts which seek information on: reasons for pursuing tertiary education; types of expectations being met by

tertiary education; and, types of expectations not being met by tertiary education. Primary reasons for pursuing tertiary education as ranked by students reflect an interest in personal advancement, primarily related to economic independence and personal and professional development. For example, "did not want to live in poverty" is ranked as the number one reason for pursuing tertiary education, while "to advance personal development and skills" is ranked at number two. National development and intellectual fulfillment were seen as more secondary, being ranked at numbers four and five on the list of five.

As it relates to the type of expectations being met by tertiary education, students' rankings reflect diversity, including issues of course content/structure, career counseling and services, and opportunities for socialization. However, the rankings of the types of expectations not being met center primarily around two main issues - course content and cost, with "lack of resources" listed as the number one issue.

The rankings of the reasons for not pursuing tertiary education clearly show economic reasons as the primary deterrent. For example, positions one to three on the list of five are all related to financial difficulties, with the other two related to level of qualification and physical distance of tertiary institutions from home.

Employers: Barriers to Tertiary Education and the Solutions

In question four, the employers are asked to identify the major barriers to them providing and/or facilitating tertiary education and training for their employees. Their responses and rankings reflect concerns primarily related to potential and motivation of their staff, availability of pragmatic training and trainers, and cost, in that order. Even at this stage, it is interesting that the barriers, from the

perspective of the employers, have more to do with employees than the employers themselves.

Question five (5) seeks suggestions for the ways in which these ranked barriers can be overcome. The rankings reflect a diversity of suggested approaches - including more flexible delivery modes and teaching methods, greater investment in HRD through better financial planning and economic incentives. However, developing varied delivery modes and greater investment by employers are ranked as the top two ways, in that order, to reduce the barriers to employers providing and or facilitating education and training of their employees.

TLI Heads: Barriers to Tertiary Education and the Solutions

The Heads of tertiary institutions were asked to identify and rank the major barriers to persons participating in education and programmes offered by their institutions. The rankings of responses suggest a major concern with the barriers related to the more mature working adult. For example, first and second positions are listed respectively, as "lack of foresight/vision within employment organization" and "work schedules of employees." Responses holding fourth and sixth, "lack of replacement for studying staff" and "staff turnover," respectively, support this assertion. However, barriers related to the younger student group may be covered under "availability of funds" and "cost", ranked third and seventh respectively. This of course is consistent with the barriers as suggested by students in their own rankings to be primarily financial in nature.

As it relates to the ways to lower these barriers, TLI heads put forward a varied set of proposals which would cover the major groups' interested in tertiary education. These include in this order, reorienting employers on HRD importance, better information access,

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increasing incentives, regionally articulated system and more flexible delivery modes.

Overall there is some convergence and similarity across the groups, especially as it relates to the types of jobs and skills to drive national development, the requisite education and training, and the barriers to greater participation in tertiary education. However, in such areas as the level and specificity of education and training, there is clearly some difference and distance between the groups, especially between employers on one hand and students and TLI heads on the other. This is indeed an issue of high significance, requiring further detailed research and analysis if the UWI and its partners are to adequately prepare students to work and live in a globally interdependent world.

**Produced by:
The University of the West Indies
Tertiary Level Institutions Unit (TLIU)
June 2005**

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