



**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
(UWI)**

TERTIARY LEVEL INSTITUTIONS UNIT



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

**BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS
MARCH 23, 2006**

.....Planning for Caribbean Development

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INTRODUCTION

The University of the West Indies, through the Tertiary Level Institutions Unit (TLIU), has developed and implemented a project to assess the Human Resource Needs of CARICOM countries. This project was conceptualized to identify regional socio-economic development goals, identify jobs and skills needed for the future development of CARICOM countries; assess current and projected demands for tertiary education and training; determine the gaps between current education programmes and future programme needs and propose how they should be addressed. The project also emphasizes partnerships among development stakeholders: education providers (private and public), employers (public and private), government policy makers, students (potential/prospective and present), labour organizations (Trade Unions and Workers Associations) and professional associations. Ultimately, the project will establish priorities and propose strategies to advance regional development through tertiary education.

The project has two major components: Focus Groups and a survey. This is the report of the sixth Focus-Group activity conducted in The British Virgin Islands, March 23, 2006. The Focus Group provides a forum for knowledgeable experts from among the major stakeholders (education providers, employers, policy makers, students, labour organizations, professional associations) to prioritize identified needs and the tertiary education response using an adaptation of the “*Delphi Technique*”.

THE 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

- the 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.

THE DELPHI TECHNIQUE

The Delphi Technique (modified) was the method used in the Focus Groups. This technique originated at the Rand Corporation (Dalkey and Helmer) for the purposes of technological forecasting and futuristic opinion gathering. It is now an important methodology in industrial decision making, educational planning and quality of life studies. The technique uses a panel of experts to analyze situations and issues with a view to proposing prioritized alternative scenarios to address and improve the issues and situations. Further, it is used in forecasting, futurist opinion gathering, establishing importance, and strategies for action.

The technique is predicated on anonymity, through the use of questionnaires and statistical group response. The systematic procedures are intended to ensure some level of objectivity in the outcomes of the exercise. Further, the procedure is conducted as a sequence of rounds with the results of previous rounds being fed back to participants; it also summarized group results and enabled flexibility in its execution.

THE PROJECT OUTPUTS

- Data from Secondary sources to give information on the Socio-economic and tertiary education environment.
- Country Surveys to elicit views on development imperatives and the required tertiary education response.

- ❑ Focus Group Reports will document the independent views of students, employers and providers about the program priorities which should be pursued to prepare students with the appropriate skills for the jobs which will drive the countries' economies.
- ❑ Overall comparative report.

THE PROCEDURE

The procedural steps used in conducting the Focus Groups were as follows:

1. A stakeholder specific questionnaire, comprising of five open-ended questions, was administered to a purposive sample of stakeholders (employers, tertiary education providers, students, labour organizations and professional Associations).
2. Completed questionnaires were returned to the TLI Unit where the responses were analyzed and master lists of responses prepared.
3. At the Focus Group sessions, the master lists of responses were given to the participants to determine the major needs, issues and concerns and to rank/prioritize them.
4. The ranking of the responses was conducted a number of times until consensus was reached.
5. The TLI Unit analyzed and is reporting the findings of the Focus Groups.



**THE FINDINGS
OF
THE BRITISH
VIRGIN ISLANDS
FOCUS GROUPS**

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

Rank	Students	Employers	Providers
1 st	Medical Sciences	Education	Medical Sciences / Allied Health
2 nd	Marine Biologists / Natural Sciences	Medical Sciences / Allied Health	Educator
3 rd	Finance / Banking	Engineering / ICT	Engineer / Technology Trades / Maritime Operator
4 th	Agriculture	Hospitality / Tourism	ICT
5 th	Economist	Tradesmen	Management

There were some surprises and observations. It was noted that:

- Students did not mention ICT.
- Only students listed Agriculture in their top 5.
- The Financial Sector did not make the top 5 for employers or providers.
- All groups listed Medical Sciences in their top 2 but there was debate about whether it was a driver or sustainer of the economy.
- Engineering, ICT workers and Tradesmen were identified by both employers and providers.
- Maritime/Marine services were identified by both students and providers.

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

Rank	Students	Employers	Providers
1 st	Medical Sciences / Allied Health	Education	Medicine/Allied Health
2 nd	Education	Medical Sciences / Allied Health	Education
3 rd	Finance / Banking	Engineering / Skills Training	Skills Training / Engineering
4 th	International Relations	Hospitality	HRD / Management
5 th	Agriculture	Management	Hospitality / Tourism

The table shows that:

- All three groups included Medical Sciences/Allied Health and Education in their top 2.
- Employers and Providers identified Engineering/Skills Training, Hospitality and Management in their top 5.
- Students only listed International Relations and Agriculture.

Table 3:
Major barriers to pursuing tertiary education:

Rank	Students	Employers	Providers
1 st	Finance	Attitude/lack of interest	Distance (Islands other than Tortola)
2 nd	Job Demands / Time Constraint	Lack of Motivation	Entry Requirements
3 rd	Family Obligations	Finance	Finance
4 th	Entry Requirements	Job Demands / Time Constraint	Job Demands / Time Constraint
5 th	Inflexible Delivery	Entry Requirements	Benefits / Rewards

The comparison shows that:

- Entry Requirements, Job demands and Finance are listed by all 3 groups.
- Finance was seen as an issue only by students who plan to study overseas.
- Lack of interest/motivation may relate to preference for immediate lucrative employment.
- Providers saw good potential for distance education but limited programmes, enthusiasm and expertise.

Table 4:
Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

Rank	Students	Employers	Providers
1 st	Financial Assistance	Education and Training	Financial Assistance
2 nd	Relevant Programming	Effective Communication	Incentives / Rewards
3 rd	Flexible Delivery	Incentives	Access Programmes
4 th	Public Awareness	Ownership in Organisation	Publicity
5 th	Access Programmes	Financial Assistance	Flexible Delivery

It can be observed that:

- All 3 groups agreed on financial assistance and public awareness as enablers.
- Flexible delivery and access programmes were cited by both students and providers.
- Incentives was identified as a motivator only by employers.

Table 5:
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
1 st	Certificates / Diplomas	Postgraduate Degrees
2 nd	Associate Degrees	Associate Degrees
3 rd	Bachelor's Degree	Certificates / Diplomas
4 th	Professional Qualifications	Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates
5 th	Postgraduate Certificates / Diplomas	Bachelor's Degrees

It can be seen from the table that:

- Students ranked the qualifications required from the lowest to the highest level.
- The employers saw the Bachelor's degree as the basic qualification and identified a need for more postgraduate qualifications.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The eight areas identified for tertiary education focus include:

- Medical Sciences/Allied Health
- Education
- Finance/Banking
- Engineering/ICT
- Hospitality/Tourism
- Skills and Trades
- Management
- Maritime Studies

The major enablers of tertiary education are seen as:

- Financial assistance
- Public Awareness
- Flexible Programming, and
- Incentives and Rewards

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