

PRESENTATION BY

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**“INVESTING IN PEOPLE: PUBLIC/PRIVATE SECTOR
PARTNERSHIP FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT”**

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The contribution being made will be contained by the time limit and, focus on tertiary education, but with emphasis on the Caribbean experience.

Tertiary Education institutions have been an integral part of human society for almost as many years as religious institutions.

The pursuit of scholarships, teaching, learning and research – the pillars of a University – has always been a significant activity of all civilizations. In many cases, such activities have had as their objective – the preparation of individuals for specific professions – in medieval time – clergy and law and in the early 19th Century – medicine, science and the arts joined the studies of law and religion.

With the growth of the industrial culture in the developed world – several other disciplines sought and obtained ‘academic status’ and the tendency to specialization took growth.

Specialties in Engineering – no longer only civil as opposed to military – the sciences, economics, social sciences, management etc. have today all achieved equal status with the traditional professional subjects and Universities and other tertiary education institutions have become closely related to economic development. As a recent quotation puts it:

“A highly educated citizenry trained to support the economic activity of a nation is essential, and numerous studies confirm the direct correlation between a highly educated workforce, economic competitiveness, and the wealth of a nation. The dynamic and volatile nature of the global economy requires a human resource pool with entrepreneurial skills that anticipate economic and technological changes and respond expeditiously.”

That quotation provides the starting point to treat with the question of:

*Investing in People: Public/Private Sector partnership for
Human Capital Development*

In most of the studies and publications that treat with tertiary education or higher education, the role and indeed responsibility of the private sector have received very little attention. The stakeholders of the tertiary education growth have continued to be the State, religious bodies and/or privately funded organizations.

Some private sector companies have accepted that situation and have established its own tertiary education facilities focusing on its own needs. While Universities continue to attract substantial funding from private sector corporations, principally for research and development activities, there has been no recognizable firm meeting of the “town and the gown”.

An excellent report entitled “Educating the Engineer of 2020 – Adapting Engineering Education to the New Century” was prepared by the National Academy of Engineering – one of the prestigious academies of the United States of America.

The authors of that report included representatives of several brand corporations of the private sector – IBM, DuPont, Microsoft, H&P, GE – yet and this was disappointing – of the fourteen (14) excellent recommendations – there was not a single reference to the need for a more pro-active role of the Private Sector in the shaping of the future engineers or its contribution to human capital investment.

It is likely that that role was taken for granted and did not warrant a comment. The industrial culture, the buoyancy and size of the United States economy, possibly take such private sector interests for granted.

However, in the developing world and here, I must restrict myself to the Caribbean – there are obvious reasons why tertiary education must seek an active role of the private sector.

The University of the West Indies (UWI) – now in its 60th year, was established for the English Speaking Caribbean countries, all of which at that time were colonies of the United Kingdom (UK). Clearly, its structure and character followed the model of the UK with minimum inputs from any indigenous organization. Since that time and without prejudice to the continuing role of UWI – Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago have established their own tertiary education institutions which have given full recognition to the culture, needs and aspirations of these individual countries.

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago the decisions by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, taken five years ago, included among others a firm mandate that the private sector participation in the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) – must be aggressively sought.

Prior to that, the establishment of the LNG Industry provided an opportunity for collaboration between the GORTT and the Energy Sector in the formation of the National Energy Skills Centre (NESC).

This initiative, while useful, focused almost entirely on the needs of the Energy Sector and did not embrace other elements of industrial activity.

It, however, for the first time, brought together private sector interests and the GORTT as key stakeholders in expanding the tertiary education system.

The formation of the UTT was influenced by that experience and the specific guidelines were provided by the Government to the Board of Governors of the UTT.

These included:

- *Relevant, technologically-based training that moulds qualified graduates who are cognizant of the need for innovation, entrepreneurship and continuous learning;*
- *Heightened focus on R&D and the promotion of a culture of innovation and invention that can spur manufacturing – and industrial-related expansion;*
- *Close partnership with industry, which informs policy decisions and facilitates operational aspects such as teaching, research, and industry attachment; and*
- *Establishment and/or enhancement of partnerships/alliances with world-renowned centres of excellence that allow for knowledge and technology acquisition related to the above.*

I will now quickly indicate how these guidelines have been translated into practice:

- Board of Governors eleven out of fifteen are drawn from the Private Sector.
- Advisory Councils have been established for each of the UTT Programme. The membership of these Councils is primarily private sector Senior Managers.
- A Cooperative programme has been introduced for the UTT students in Engineering and Technology – requiring the full cooperation of the Private Sector interests – regardless of size.
- The R&D projects funded by private sector interest are under the oversight of Joint Private Sector/UTT Steering Committees.
- There are private sector sponsored lectures which allows the University and the general public to benefit from the work of industry leaders in specific fields.

The influence of the private sector, exercised either through these identified and formal avenues or through direct but informal discussions has shown itself in a remarkable way in the Programme offerings of UTT.

These programmes are all:

- Multi-disciplinary
- Industry aligned – no silos of departments
- Responsive to the specific needs of the country – the Energy Sector, the Manufacturing Sector, the Industry of Fashion and the Performing Arts.

A new type of graduates and diplomates is emerging resulting from this innovative approach to Tertiary Education, influenced by the State and the Private Sector.

The quality of Human Capital will be the key to the realization of the aspirations of developing countries and emerging economies.

The economic growth and success can no longer rely on natural resources or indeed, even easy access to technologies – which can now be easily acquired. Brain power, Innovation and making full use of the tools that have become available through the continuing revolution in IT now hold the key to such successful growth.

The Universities and other Tertiary education institutions have a significant role to play but the pro-active involvement of the Private Sector is not only desirable but essential to creating a Win – Win environment.