

Conference Theme: Livelihoods

Title: The CEMBA/CEMPA as a Critical Training Opportunity for Human Capital Development for the Caribbean Region

The Case of the University College of the Caribbean (UCC)

Henley Morgan, University College of the Caribbean, 17 Worthington Ave, Kingston, 5, Jamaica, hmorgan@cwjamaica.com

Alison Cross, University College of the Caribbean, 17 Worthington Ave, Kingston, 5, Jamaica, across@uccjm.com

Background

The COL CEMBA/CEMPA degree offerings are timely and strategic for Jamaica and its sister CARICOM nations. There is no doubt that if a significant change in the investment of human capital is not explored then we will be compromised in our ability to enhance our economic competitiveness and move toward sustainable improvements in growth. In an age of globalized trade and business, when countries must compete as companies do, there is a strong and unmistakable trend for economic and financial investments to go where the knowledge, skills and abilities exist.

Although the countries of the Caribbean have had their fair share of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the conversion to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is low. For example, in 2005/6 Jamaica's FDI topped US\$800 million or approximately 20% of GDP (World Development Indicators database, April 2007). The annual GDP growth over the period 1995-2005 averaged 1.4 percent. The projected GDP growth for the current fiscal year is 2.8 percent compared with 3.5 percent for developed countries and 6.9 percent for emerging economies. Analysts are in agreement that the inability to convert FDI to GDP is rooted in the low level of investment in the human and social infrastructure.

Consequent on the stagnant economy and limited employment opportunities, the involuntary one-way export of skills continues to diminish the human resource stock and thus exacerbate the problem. It is estimated that for Jamaica upward of 55% of persons with tertiary educational qualifications reside in North America and OECD countries. For smaller less developed Caribbean states the figure can be as high as 70%.

The supply of tertiary level graduates coming out of the system is unlikely in the short term to increase at a pace that will lead to a higher level of retention in local economies or surpluses to support a deliberate strategy of exporting skills. The main campus of the University of the West Indies is located in Jamaica with campuses in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. Presently approximately 11-15 % of the age cohort from the secondary level go on to tertiary education (World Bank, 2005).

The ability of Jamaica and oil dependent CARICOM states to transition from an "old economy" based on export of raw or semi-processed minerals and quota protected agricultural products to a "new economy" characterized by high value-added products and services is hampered by the quality of leadership generally and human resource factors specifically. Jamaica ranked 63 among 178 countries in the World Bank's Doing Business Survey, which measures the ease of establishing and doing business According to the Global Competitiveness Index (2006-2007) published by the World Economic Forum, Jamaica

ranked 76 out of 125 countries in the area of growth competitiveness. Jamaica ranked 46 out of 125 on the technology index, which includes sub-indices for innovation, ICT and technology transfer; 45 out of 125 on the ICT index measuring access to computers in schools, quality of ISP sector, government ICT promotion, legislation, Internet access, personal computers and cell phone users and 74 out of 125 on the issue of innovation, including technological readiness, firm level technology absorption and R&D spending and collaboration.

In 2007 fourteen member states of the CARICOM sanctioned the fourteen protocols to bring into being the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). The CSME is intended to create a larger market space for trade and resource sharing such as in education and training, thereby catalyzing the conversion from the old to the new economy. The first protocol to be implemented addressed the free movement of skills; particularly persons with tertiary education and training. Within the liberalized environment created by the CSME and by the removal of some barriers under the World Trade Organization (WTO) regime, education has risen to be the fastest globalizing sector of the Jamaican economy. Most notably, a number of overseas universities have entered the market, and privately funded national and regional providers, of which the University College of the Caribbean (UCC) is one of the most prominent; have emerged to be major players in the sector.

With the CSME established, the drive now is to develop regional standards for training through certification and to replicate educational best practices offered in one location throughout the territories.

The demand for quality higher education, especially professionally related courses such as the CEMBA/CEMPA delivered in non-traditional modes is critical to the regions development and the forgoing establishes the need and rightness of the timing of high level courses of study to meet the demand in the private and public sectors in Jamaica and across the region. The UCC, which has been portrayed in the press as the most entrepreneurial institution among private and public providers, studied the regional development scenario and on the basis of the findings conducted a search for a strategic partner which led to the collaboration between COL and UCC and the exclusive License Agreement whereby UCC will act as a Partner University in Jamaica.

From its inception in introducing the COL CEMBA/CEMPA curriculum, the UCC has made some important observations of features that are in keeping with trends that are responsible for a reemergence of the MBA after a slump in prestige and demand in the first years of the new millennium.

Strategic Partnership – Innovation in Curriculum and Assessment/Networks and Resources for Learner Support

The UCC has formed strategic alliances with tertiary institutions as a means of building capacity for the delivery of programmes and for creating diversity in the educational experience. The COL Masters programmes have impacted positively in a number of ways. The Commonwealth of Learning aims to empower people with the kind of learning that empowers the benefactors of programmes of study to be agents of economic and social development through the delivery of high quality learning and professional development opportunities. This relationship between UCC and COL is driven predominantly by the goal of creating dynamic learning opportunities. The partnership university, UCC, is also afforded the authority and scope to adapt the programmes to local and regional perspectives, thereby achieving a higher level of relevance. Another important aspect of achieving cultural and location relevance is the selection of instructors. The UCC, subject to the standards is given the latitude to select faculty with the opportunity to seek supplemental resources through the COL – thus empowering the delivery in an even more meaningful way. The ultimate test of the partnership is the provision afforded the UCC to meaningfully participate in the revision of the curricula for the EMBA and EMPA as each of the faculty members involved in delivering each of the modules is invited to provide feedback/recommendations in order to further improve the course content. The impact of recognizing the need for revising and recommending changes in order to make the programme even more relevant is a powerful factor in building a curriculum that will lead to positive and meaningful change agents within a society.

Students participating in the programme have access to course materials developed by the COL in the form of DVD's and material online. In addition both faculty and students are encouraged to dialogue with

others immersed in COL CEMBA and CEMPA programmes globally in order to share experiences and material.

Internationalization – Global Development

The UCC acts out of a deep understanding and appreciation for the mantra: Think global and act local. Meeting the local and regional needs are paramount but as the global demand for management and leadership skills intensifies, adapting curricula to have an international focus is imperative. Issues relating to leading and managing cross-culturally and managing and leading diversity are especially important. The UCC have already begun to collect data and to monitor all areas of delivery and assessment of this programme in order to submit this programme to the local accrediting body, the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) for consideration for programme accreditation.

Internalization of curricula and the learning experience constitute an important trend in leading business schools. For example; Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business and Walsh School of Foreign Service recently collaborated with ESADE Business School in Barcelona, Spain to create and launch an International Executive Management programme. The Commonwealth of Learning brings these attributes to the relationship with UCC.

Applied Knowledge – Organizational Development and Leadership

The UCC elected to adopt the university college orientation and designation in order to brand itself as an institution emphasizing applied knowledge and positioned to the left of those priding themselves on being predominantly theoretical. The UCC certainly holds true many of the hands-on, practical principles embraced by COL whereby students are expected to read and apply content and skills learned to empower them to be even better pragmatists for empirical, systemic change.

With the open-university approach to admissions which acknowledges management and leadership experience of applicants in addition to traditional qualifications and attributes, amazingly the profile of students in the first intake of students in Jamaica shows a remarkable difference to what obtains in other UCC programmes or programmes offered by other universities. The average age in the CEMBA/ CEMPA is 12-15 years older than that for other Masters Degree courses. Approximately, 60% of those admitted to the programme are male. This is a stark difference from what generally obtains in similar programmes. Typically 70 % of the enrollment and graduates of university courses in Jamaica are females. Importantly, there is a higher percentage than the norm of managers, executives and business leaders enrolled in the programme.

One consequence of the profile of the student population is the demand to be practical and relevant. There is a strong trend toward business schools connecting how business is taught and how careers are evolving. This is achieved in many ways. The COL/UCC programme hired Dr. Henley Morgan, one of the regions' leading business consultants, social entrepreneur and academician with a doctorate in Educational administration, to the post of faculty Director.

General Leadership Competencies over Specialization - Research into Practice

The COL programme course selection and the supporting curricula place emphasis on developing broad leadership competencies, conceptual knowledge and thinking ability. This is in line with the UCC's own belief that Jamaica and the countries of the region suffer from an insufficiency of leadership (which shows up in poor planning, analysis and execution) and that closing this gap is the first priority.

The correctness of this position is confirmed by recent research. In the Upwardly global MBA (2004), a recent survey of more than 100 executives from more than 100 countries revealed an overwhelming preference for general leadership skills and thinking ability over technical competencies or narrow specializations. This article went further to expound that business schools will need to foster the development of "action oriented students" and must instill "the knowledge, skills and attributes to succeed in the global economy". Business schools are responding positively to this new trend in their course offerings and approaches. For example the Institute for Leadership at the University of Georgia's Terry

College of Business offers MBA and executive programmes that broaden the leadership knowledge of students, sharpens their personal and group leadership skills and improves their ability to manage systemic change.

Instructors in the COL/UCC programmes are being sensitized to this trend. The lecturer for the course, Management in Organizations, supplemented the basic curriculum by adding Power Point presentations and in-class discussions on varied topics such as: Inductive versus Deductive Thinking, Getting to the Big Idea, Problem Solving Tools and Techniques, Executing Strategy, Self Directed Work Teams, The learning Organization and Leadership Challenges for the Twenty First Century. The lecturer for the course Human Resource Management is the Human Resource Director of one of the largest hotel chains in the Caribbean and brings a wealth of hands-on knowledge and experience. He explicitly stated to the students in this first cohort that he must be able to hire them because of what they can do after this course – not what they can memorize from the materials.

In addition to the face-to-face delivery of programme content, UCC will offer electives via a blended or mixed approach. UCC launched its Distance Education and Global Learning (DEGL) pilot project in early 2006. In the first phase of the pilot, lessons were distributed via wireless cable, free-to-air television as well as to instructor-led live classes. In the second phase of the pilot, instruction continued to be delivered to a live class as with synchronously and asynchronously delivery via cable television and G-mail. In the third phase, lessons are being distributed via the aforementioned modalities with the addition of lessons on DVD's and testing has already begun to include another dimension of content distribution - video streaming. This pilot project has provided UCC with a wealth of information as to the pros and cons of a blended approach of delivery. Armed with this comprehensive understanding of a number of distance education models, UCC will provide some of the elective courses to this cohort via this blended or mixed approach.

Androgogy over Pedagogy – Innovation in Curriculum and Assessment

Pedagogy, teaching children, is the standard approach utilized by most educational institutions including those at the tertiary level. In keeping with its philosophy, which sees each student as a customer i.e. someone to whom a service is owed, the UCC is emphasizing a different paradigm – androgogy – the art of teaching adults. This is an involved process but a few examples will illustrate how the UCC has infused the COL programmes with the general principle and approaches.

A deliberately crafted orientation session is designed and executed for new students joining the programme. At these sessions the traditional information relating to programme requirements is shared. Significantly, the sharing goes beyond the basics to elicit ideas of a programme design nature. For example, at the outset it was important to learn from students their preferences surrounding a number of issues such as class times, teaching modalities, examination and grading formats and even how to schedule breaks and snacks in the lengthy face-to-face classes. This interactive approach, which says to adult learners “we respect your views” continued well beyond the orientation exercise and into the regular class sessions.

From the instructional perspective, the desire and ability of adult learners to be self instructing is acknowledged. A course requirement is that each student develops a portfolio, compiling material taught in class, shared by other students and gleaned through personal research and reading. To this end the use of the internet and central data bases to support textual information supplied by COL is very important.

Additionally, the concept of teamwork and peer review is applied. Students are placed in small teams which will be maintained throughout the course of study. For each course, a major project is a requirement. For the class presentation of the project, a peer review system is applied with the lecturer's assessment carrying 70% of the weight. From its early application, this system promises to be an important incentive for students to hone their presentation skills and to enrich the experience of students learning from their peers.

Technology is an important medium for communication and a tool for adding customer value. Students are routinely sent (emailed) the lecturer's presentation ahead of time and a 24/7 rule for access by any student via e-mail, voice mail, telephone or visitation is maintained.

Possibly the most important pedagogical feature of the CEMBA/CEMPA programme is the respect for the many experiences, life skills and knowledge the adult learner brings to the learning experience. This runs throughout all aspects, starting with the admissions criteria and carrying through to the classroom instruction.

At the end of each module, structured surveys are and will continue to be conducted to measure the level of satisfaction among the programme's customers. Anecdotal feedback indicates and supporting data such as class attendance suggest that there is a high level of satisfaction. Especially pleasing, is the response to the question: Why did you choose this CEMBA/CEMPA programme over other offerings? The common responses included: less bureaucratic; more user friendly; greater respect shown to the applicant; respect for what I have learned in the university of life; flexible arrangement; good value for money; and affordability.

Conclusion

In launching the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes there are several areas that UCC will continue to focus on in order to further strengthen and empower the student learning outcomes. These include, but are not limited to: getting the design and implementation even more relevant; creating early successes among students and other stakeholders; benchmarking the best within and outside the COL system; developing a distinctive culture and distinctive competencies (branding); harmonizing even more closely with UCC's philosophy, aims, goals and strategies; establishing Jamaica/UCC central campus as a centre of excellence for roll-out nationally and regionally and for the registration and certification by local and regional accrediting bodies.

The early indications are that the philosophy, methodology and approach employed are having the desired effect on student learning and retention. The grades from the first course offered fit the normal bell curve, confirming the efficacy of the selection process and the learning process.

References

Document of the World Bank. (2005). *A time to choose: Caribbean development in the 21st Century*. Retrieved March 26, 2008 from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/0,,contentMDK:20469369~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258554,00.html>

The Upwardly Global MBA. (2004). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from <http://www.strategy-business.com/press/16635507/04306>

World Economic Forum. (2006) *The global competitiveness index: Identifying the key elements of sustainable growth*. Retrieved March 26, 2008 from http://weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/gcr_2006/chapter_1_.pdf