

EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE

by

[Dr. Basil Springer, GCM](#)

“The real secret, of course, is to increase the number of graduates per household, or to say it another way, increase the tertiary output per capita so that demand for the expertise matches the supply which is available locally. Singapore did it gradually, Ireland is doing it, OECD countries have done it, why can’t we do it in the Caribbean? The significant element of this strategy is that the ‘expertise is imported first’ and then followed by ‘high impact training’ of the nationals who after a while are competent to effectively lead the emerging organisations. This will then eventually lead to the repatriation of the imported expertise, if and when necessary” – (This column 2002 -12-23).

Monday, Oct. 20/2003 - On Friday evening I attended a Counterpart Caribbean Governor General Environmental Awards Ceremony for individuals and businesses who have demonstrated some commitment to holistic sustainable development. A discussion with Humphrey Metzgen, a member of the Environmental Awards Committee, led to CBET and its progress. When I intimated that we were making progress on several fronts, in terms of mounting innovative industries to contribute to growth in the Caribbean economy, he raised the very pertinent question ‘where are the resources going to come from to manage these projects?’ I agreed that this was a concern since the high level expertise, to the extent that it is available in the Caribbean, is already comfortably positioned in other institutions. One solution therefore is to seek resources from outside the Caribbean to keep pace with our projections for development. We agreed that this situation arose because the tertiary output per capita in the Caribbean i.e. the number of persons attending post secondary institutions was less than twenty per cent, which was significantly below the average level in OECD countries and even in emerging nations. Professor Hilary Beckles recognizes this and is assiduously working towards the enhancement of that statistic.

In my last two columns I addressed issues which have a bearing on the human capital resource which is a necessary element of sustainable business success. In response to the first of these two columns, which was on voluntarism, Sir Courtney Blackman called me to advise that voluntarism as a “resource” was even a much bigger opportunity than I made it out to be in my column. My focus was on quantifying the additional resource that we would have if the spirit of voluntarism among the workforce were alive and well. Sir Courtney pointed, among other things, that in addition to this there was a whole industry which could be developed from the so called ‘retired persons’. They could be strategically and specifically brought back into the workforce in a manner which would reflect the needs of society as well as the

needs of the individual. I agreed with him that this body of expertise coupled with their experience could help to solve some of the problems of the weak resource base.

In the second column referred to above, where we were addressing the outsourcing industry, i.e. the work done for a company by another company or people other than the original company's employees, there is the opportunity to mobilize an effective team of volunteers to constitute an outsourcing source.

I pointed out to the Caribbean Association of Consultants that outsourcing is one way in which they could mobilize their consulting resources effectively. This article also evoked a response from Dr Kwame Charles from Quality Consultants Ltd, Trinidad and Tobago. Kwame pointed out that his company has been contracted by the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) secretariat to assist with the establishment of a register of consultants in the Caribbean Member states of the ACP. The purpose of the Register is to facilitate the widest participation of registered consultants in invitations to tender for service contracts to the ACP. He advised that the eligibility criteria implied that individual consultants and consulting firms with majority shareholding by Caribbean nationals based in the Caribbean, must be legally registered. The concept of registration of consultants is not well developed in this region, even though in many countries in the Caribbean one is not permitted to practise one's profession, e.g. the legal, engineering and medical professions unless one is legally registered. I support this initiative as we embark on globalisation initiatives and would urge all consultants to contact Dr. Charles at email address qc@wow.net.

If one combines the concept of voluntarism, outsourcing and registration of consultants, then I think this will be a start towards alleviating, at least on a temporary basis, the paucity of high level resources to manage the innovative industries that arise in the interest of growth in the Caribbean. Of course there is no substitute for raising the tertiary output per capita and in such a way that the instruction offered is consistent with the manpower demand as driven by the innovative industries. We look forward to the success of Professor Beckles' initiative in this regard.

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