

JAMAICAN COMMUNITY TERTIARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME (J.C.T.E.P.)

...The new information and communications technologies are among the driving forces of globalization. They are bringing people together, and bringing decision makers unprecedented new tools for development. At the same time, however, the gap between information "haves" and "have-nots" is widening, and there is a real danger that the world's poor will be excluded from the emerging knowledge-based global economy.”

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary General

Although Jamaica has the highest per capita cellular phone usage in Latin America and the Caribbean¹ the use of the available technology to revolutionize Tertiary Education² for the rural people of Jamaica has not happened yet. One would of thought that by now, in the context of 21st century technology thinking, we would have moved away from the “BRICK AND MORTAR” thinking, whereby to acquire tertiary education one has to go to a University of the West Indies, University of Technology or Northern Caribbean University. There has been the opening up of the distance learning market by new entrants such as Nova-Southeastern, Barry University, Florida International University and the University of Manchester. These however have been primarily for the business executive who can afford high fees ranging from \$US10, 000-\$US22, 000.

In view of the fact that in the new triennium 2005-2008, students at tertiary institutions may have to pay up to as much as 50% of their economic costs; for the resources will be reallocated to Basic/Primary/Secondary, we must now look at distance education seriously. We are of the opinion if this education via the Internet was available to the common man in the rural areas, we would see an explosion of tertiary educated individuals to as high as 75%of the population over a 5- 7 year period in Jamaica. This paper will examine what we refer to as a **Community Tertiary Education Programme (CTEP)**, which we feel if implemented island wide will seriously enhance the level of skilled and

¹ JAMPRO/Ministry of Commerce & Technology Study 2002.

² Postsecondary, Certificates, Diplomas, BA, MA, PhD Etc...

trained people in Jamaica and make us seriously **Globally Labour Competitive (GLC)** to attract the best off shore industries and our ability to export these excess skilled and trained people to bring about not only economic growth but also strong economic development.

The 20th Century mindset

Historical Background

In the 20th century where access to knowledge was through libraries, those who had access to books were knowledgeable and controlled the thinking of individuals by impressing upon the ignorant (those who lacked knowledge) what they read in these books from the libraries which limited access to a minority in Jamaica. As such, certain people in Jamaica were considered bright and intelligent and others subjugated to a station in life as labours and cleaners for eternity, generally speaking, not so.

In 1992 the Hon. Mayer Matalon, The Chairman of Telecommunications of Jamaica (TOJ) the predecessor of Cable and Wireless gave free Internet access to students of the University Of The West Indies. This was a landmark decision. However only a few took up the opportunity and once again these were same people who controlled knowledge by having access to libraries previously.

In 1996, Computers came to the Halls of residence on the Mona Campus as a result of donations of computer labs. But the lack of education of this important policy shift even at the tertiary level was self-evident.

It is only now in 2003, 11 years after free Internet access was given to students at the University of The West Indies that some impact and use of the Internet is being appreciated.

The Search engine

Whether you accessing the Internet from your home or from an Internet Café, one can go to search engines such as Google.com which has over 3 billion pages of information as such, the information in the traditional libraries on the shelf are mostly outdated as information is updated real-time in internet libraries.

Brick and Mortar Thinking and Costs

If we have Internet access, through cafes or home computers why then has this **Rapid Information Revolution (RIR)** not translated into more tertiary educated people being trained and educated? the answer to this question is two-fold: 1) Brick and Mortar Thinking 2) Cost.

We have been socialised to believe that unless we attend physically a university we will not be properly tertiary educated. The rest of the world has long put this backward way of thinking behind them and have revolutionized tertiary education through rapid **Distance Learning Education (DLE)**. It is ironic that those from the Brick and mortar who still continue to down grade distance learning education, were educated, especially at the first degree level by correspondence courses from the University of London External Degree programme.

As an aside, there is a thinking in Jamaica that if you revolutionize distance education in Jamaica the so called bright will be become marginalized by everyone having full access as such those who have paid large sums for Tertiary Education in an attempt to secure and or acquire status in Jamaica will not be able to demand the large sums of remuneration they are now demanding.

The hidden secret that many adult Jamaicans do not know is that there are many Internet/Online Universities that are accredited and recognized by the United States Department of Education (DOE) and British Council on Education (BCE) at prices of \$US3, 000-\$US5,000 for the entire degree programme and offering payment plans suited for everyone.

Were we focussed and open-minded and in tune with the **“out of the box” thinking** associated with Globalization, Jamaica as a country would one one of the wealthiest in the world.