



CHAMPIONING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN TECHNOLOGY FIELDS IN THE CARIBBEAN SIDS

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Despite the notable absence of an unclogged cultural leak, the Caribbean experiences a negatively impacting societal plumbing problem; the brain drain. Migrating from less developed countries with limited chances to more developed countries with opportunities is known as brain drain. According to Kapur and McHale (2005), the Caribbean has an estimated 41% emigration rate for tertiary educated persons, compared to 27% for Western Africa, 18.4% for Eastern Africa, and 16% for Central America, conveying the Caribbean's plague reality. This affects especially young people, one of the main drivers of social change and progress. Many young people, due to a lack of professional growth and opportunities are enticed to leave for greener pastures in professional fields. The technology industry in the area is heavily impacted by this problem, which is concerning. Youth face many challenges in Small Island Developing Countries, specifically in tech fields.

Tertiary education opportunities in technology fields are scarce

In Small Island Developing States (SIDS), tertiary education opportunities are scarce. This number is less impressive considering universities are spread across different countries and are even more dramatically insignificant as only 2 universities, in the English-Speaking Caribbean, with a combined 5 campuses are actively concerned with research, innovation, and youth empowerment.¹ The need for critical thinking skills grows yearly across the labor market, yet they are not being taught as fundamental components. In the upcoming years, as the demand for technological expertise rises, there will be a greater need for technology in education. It's true that physical technology, such as computers, tablets, and internet connectivity, is being used in education more and more.

¹University of the West Indies and St. Georges University

However, the emphasis of what is being taught is on how to use the technology rather than the implementation or maintenance. Many pursuing tertiary education generally gravitate towards business or law-focused degrees as technology is underrepresented professionally. Many young people interested in technology are only exposed to it in a limited form, such as web development and networking, and are not aware of more niche aspects such as penetrative testing, cyber security, and quality assurance testing. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)'s ongoing difficulties prevent the community from benefiting from educational possibilities (Pelletier, 2009). Maintaining capable education sectors ensures educational benefits. To encourage people with future earnings to invest their money in profitable ventures rather than solely on consumption, they may expand investing in workshops and small company sponsorship programs.

Hiring young people can contribute to expand the field of technology

Today's youth approach the most challenging job market in decades. On both moral and financial grounds, their energy, creativity, and technological prowess must be freed. This is again counterintuitive as other developed countries not only recruit persons with these specialties for diversifying and engaging ideal jobs but also pay a much higher and desired salary for the same or better jobs. The Caribbean region needs to invest in the fundamental components of digital technologies to give people and businesses the ability to keep up with new and evolving technology to realize the full potential of the digital economy. It is tough for young people to obtain acceptable employment after graduation in the technical industries. Young people are discouraged from joining the technological growth field due to poor wages and benefits. This creates a vicious cycle as there is less incentive for employers to hire young people into technology fields. Therefore, employers in the field of technology should also focus on supporting the career development of young employees.

Technology can foster Caribbean integration

Reluctance to integrate pre-existing technologies or implement new technologies leads to extensive inconveniences. We must be self-reliant in already existing technological fronts. Regional implementations like virtual reality and cryptocurrencies have crashed seemingly faster than they've taken off. Cloud computing and electronic databases are still scarce. Big data is almost non-existent. It is difficult to procure or even secure public data and information and physical deliveries are still used where electronic transfers would be more efficient. These technologies could increase productivity and employment. As combined countries are not landbound, separation and undeveloped attempts at regional integration make correspondence between countries ultimately unfruitful, leading to broken links in the region. This can be alleviated with a stronger technological field in the region making interaction efficient and cost friendly.

As technology transforms unimaginably, the field remains with untapped potential in the Caribbean. Technology is fundamental in our lives and a core part of young persons' upbringing. It is, therefore, paradoxical to stifle the region from engaging with it beyond the surface level. If we are to believe in the power of youth and profess their leadership of tomorrow, what good is it for tomorrow's leaders if we asphyxiate their burning passion today? We must unite and support young people in the Caribbean. In conclusion, young people drive creativity and innovation. Providing youths with internships and opportunities in the fields of technology will help prevent brain drain. Awareness of industry and modernization will greatly assist the cause. Without assistance and help translating concepts into practicality, progress declines. Until then, our tech fields continue losing skilled workers to other countries with better job prospects. In this rapidly changing society, no country will stand the test of time if it does not adapt technologically to it. The Caribbean region can deploy various methods and unite to fix the 'leaky' brain drain.



Many young people interested in technology are only exposed to it in a limited form, such as web development and networking



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