

An Educated Workforce

Education has long been determined to be a valued tool in the development of the people of a nation. It is for this purpose that there is the widely shared view that without a properly educated workforce, no country can prosper. Consistent with this, it can be argued that the success of business enterprises and organizations and their growth and development, is founded on the need to attract and maintain an educated workforce. In the changing economic transforming within our societies, it would be forward thinking to focus on what adjustments are to be made in order to meet the demands of the modern day workforce. It therefore becomes important to assess the shortcomings of the current educational and workforce development systems. This sparks the need for the upgrading of the educational and training needs of the workforce, if institutional flexibility, enhanced productivity and greater effectiveness and efficiency is to be achieved.

With the ongoing change out from traditional jobs to new forms of work, employers are faced with the task of recruiting and hiring of workers with new skills sets. This is of particularly importance to the development of a skilled and competitive workforce, which is linked to the sustaining of the growth of the economy. It becomes the responsibility of employers to ensure that the education of workforce is in response to the needs of the business community. The issue moves beyond the realm of that of supply and demand of labour, to include the quality of labour that is based on workers who possess the requisite knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of the job.

Towards achieving a **productive, effective and efficient workforce**, the assumption can be made that this is dependent on the prerequisites of good management. Based on this premise, investment in education and training of their employees by employers, must be seen as the key to productivity, prosperity and capacity building within respective enterprises and organizations. In a competitive work environment where qualifications matters, one's preparation and suitability for the job, underscores the importance which is now being attached to job certification which an individual has acquired. In a technological savvy age, employers are now tending to engaged workers who possess high skilled levels, are trainable and who are capable to respond to the demands of the globalized work environment. The

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emphasis which is being placed on an educated workforce going forward, is captured by the Lumina Foundation in the United States of America. According to the Foundation, it is projected that by 2025, 60 percent of Americans will need some form of academic qualification or industry certification. This represents an interesting development in the context that the vast majority of the working population in countries across the world, is comprised of persons from the lower social and economic backgrounds and who are engaged in menial forms of work.

With the already alarming levels of unemployment and underemployment that exist, coupled with the changing dynamics of the labour market, it is difficult not to see a greater level of marginalization of workers in the lower income strata of our societies. With job certification becoming a major employment prerequisite, the distinct possibility is that many will be left behind. It would seem that the changes which are being made in the employment sector will further add to the unemployment rate, exacerbate the level of poverty and widen the gap of income inequality.

While there are distinct drawbacks, the balance of the ever evolving situation may rest in the opportunities that are becoming available. There can be no excuse for those who live in societies which provide access to education and who fail to capitalize on these opportunities. Access to primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational training is meant to ensure that those who want to prepare and develop themselves for the job market, have every opportunity to do so. In countries where such a privilege is denied or access to education is not affordable, it raises the question of how a country can prosper in the absence of an educated workforce.

This underscores the point that employers should not pay lip service to the training and retaining of their employees. Retooling ought to be seen as an integral part of the building out and development of an enterprise or organization. In this digital age, employers need to provide ample opportunities for learning and training as this is critical to enhancing the knowledge base and the development of skills related to the career or profession. The observation is made that such worker empowerment can go a long way in building the work ethic, attitude, work habits and enhancing the value the employee attaches to the job. Least it is forgotten, the value of worker

education is often reflected in the use of initiative and the ability to identify with innovation as part of the progressive work environment.

Employers who understand the value of the education and training of the workforce and in particular their employees, will tend to have a greater appreciation for the investment they have chosen to make. They have the high hopes of seeing the maximizing of growth, business development and financial returns. On the other hand, they have the comfort of having satisfied employees and reduced fears of experiencing a turnover in staff.