The Caribbean ‘Invisible’ Agent Market

When it comes to the delivery of educational services, the word 'agent' often conveys a negative connotation among potential students and even industry professionals. With higher education viewed as a highly valued commodity, the use of the term 'agent' was found, to detract rather than enhance. In the Caribbean, very few persons forge a dedicated career as an education agent. The process of preparing for college/university was often managed individually. Pockets of assistance exists, but would typically be provided informally via a relative, friend, a teacher or from time to time, assistance may be enhanced by a representative from a visiting institution. This often led to an individual deciding based on limited options: however, the last ten years saw the creation of a market of professionals in the region providing educational services, focusing primarily on college and university preparation.

From the mid-2000s, there has been an emergence of Caribbean professionals recruiting Caribbean students on behalf of overseas schools. Some individuals are resident in the Caribbean, while others reside abroad but maintain close links. Those working in the field were found to operate either as an educational agent or as a consultant or as a combination of both. (cont’d on page 2)
Opportunities

Call for Proposals
To deliver an event planning/management course for industry professionals in Barbados this summer. For more information visit www.studycaribbean.com

Become a sponsor of this year’s CUP summer series. Have your institution’s brand marketed during our workshop series. For more information contact admin@thestudentcentre.net

Traditional education agents comprise primarily of individuals working on a part-time basis to recruit local students. Often, the individual may be former alumni or a parent/relative of a former alumnus with a developed relationship with the institution’s recruitment personnel and in most cases, the individual has a full-time job. Therefore, the options provided to a potential student maybe limited and subject to the person’s availability. Some individuals were found to operate as consultants; providing individual or customized services to help potential students navigate the college preparation process. Consultants from time to time may also work with institutions on a fee basis, providing logistical and event planning support when conducting business in the region.

What has been observed is that full time agents typically provide complementary or supplementary services to enhance the overall experience for the student and their family. For example, some individuals may work primarily as immigration consultants who may offer college placement services to persons seeking to study abroad. Additionally, agents in the region are not limited

From our research, using the Caribbean Student Mobility Index, the presence of education agents/consultants varies across the region. The use of an agent to aid in the college preparation process is more common in some countries than in others. In countries measuring high on the Caribbean Student Mobility Index, the use of an agent or consultant may be greater than in countries measuring lower on the index.

COUNTRY GLANCE: Grenada

This multi-island nation forms part of the windward islands located in the Caribbean region. Grenada, a CARICOM member nation has been added to the CUP Fest Education Fair calendar. The island has a student mobility index of 14. For more information, visit www.studycaribbean.com
The Caribbean: Study Destination or Source Market?

When making global comparisons, the word ‘small’ is often attached to describe the Caribbean market. There is little discussion or scholarship on the region’s education market internationally; however, discussions typically focus on the region as a source market. This article seeks to provide an overview of the Caribbean’s international education market as both a source market and a study destination.

The Caribbean - Source Market

Every year, hundreds of students from the region pursue education studies in countries such as Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom, China etc. Recruiters from many institutions visit several Caribbean countries annually to market and promote education options from k-12 to university. Over the past five years, there has been a steady increase in the number of students from the region choosing to study abroad. During this time, Canada has emerged as a leading choice among Caribbean students, surpassing the United States and the United Kingdom. There has been an increased interest in the region, particularly over the past three years, as institutions seek to diversify their student population. Despite being considered a small market, there are key factors which makes the region a viable market for many institutions.

The Caribbean - Study Destination

Studying in the Caribbean is a top option for many students living in the region. It is the biggest rival for overseas institutions. Within the English-speaking Caribbean, thousands of students travel to pursue studies at one of the three campuses of the University of the West Indies located in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago annually. In addition to regional students, Caribbean institutions also attract international students from North America, the UK, Latin America etc. Students visit to primarily pursue: 1) exchanges, 2) full-time study, 3) volunteer/projects or 4) language training. For example, the region is home to many off-shore medical schools which deliver US based curriculum for persons seeking to become a doctor in North America. Additionally, persons also seek to pursue English-language training.

Over the last two decades the Caribbean has grown as a viable market for institutions seeking to recruit students. Additionally, the institutions across the region has received students both from inside and outside of the region seeking to pursue studies. In recent years, some Caribbean education institutions have launched more aggressive campaigns to attract international students to pursue studies on a full-time basis. This is evident in the participation of Caribbean institutions at agent conferences such as ICEF, and the creation of international marketing campaigns. The international education sector within the region is evolving to further the region’s presence globally as a viable market for business.

RECRUITMENT TIP:

Learn what are the priority areas for local government and industry in the country market, as there may be funding available to finance studies.
The Student Centre
Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre
Two Mile Hill
St. Michael

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