

## **TRADING WITH CHINA - THE ROLE OF LINGUISTIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL AWARENESS IN FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN**

### **ABSTRACT**

The emergence of global economies has presented businesses with unique challenges: an important one being employing personnel competent to work in today's multicultural environment (British Academy, 2013; British Council, 2013, Livermore, 2010). This is especially true for Small and Medium Enterprises whose human and financial resources may be limited in comparison to macro enterprises. Nevertheless, for today's global worker, linguistic and intercultural competencies are in high demand; as one recent UK study (British Academy, 2013: 9) argues, "language skills are needed at all levels in the workforce, not simply by an internationally mobile elite."

The need for such competencies is just as apparent in the Caribbean given the existing linguistic and cultural barriers between the Caribbean and one of the world's three largest outward investors, the People's Republic of China. A United Nations report (ECLAC, 2013) states that direct foreign investment from China to the Latin-American and Caribbean region has been averaging US\$ 10 billion annually since 2010, however occasionally, investment opportunities are not maximized due to intercultural misunderstandings. This reality begs the question whether increased linguistic and socio-cultural awareness will not contribute to stronger ties with potential/existing investors thereby fostering sustainable development in the region.

The presentation draws on the experiences of local enterprises so as to identify recommendations for establishing and/or strengthening economic ties with "high context cultures" such as the Chinese. The examples selected justify the need for institutions to expand language offerings so as to include training in languages for specific purposes, notably for trade and business.

### **REFERENCES:**

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