

Climate Change Education at the University of Technology, Jamaica

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From learning of the green-house effect to global warming and now full blown 'Climate Change', in less than one generation the world has witnessed a transition from theory to reality. Even as we see the evidence of Climate Change impacts like flooding, droughts, increased occurrences of severe weather events like hurricanes, coastal erosion, loss of biodiversity, land degradation and food security challenges, there remain a disconnect between climate change impacts and education at the tertiary level in the Caribbean region. This is evidenced in the small number of focused courses which are offered on the subject. The opportunities however are vast as the subject can no longer be constrained to the domain of the environmental scientist since climate change affects the economic, social and political life of every country. While the poorer nations in the Caribbean are more likely to be more severely impacted, climate change does not respect GDP. Depletion of the natural resources stock impacts on dominant economic sectors like tourism.

Whether we focus on adaptation strategies or building resilience, there is a pressing need to broaden the education base on Climate Change. The University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech) is attempting to do so at two levels, through formal training of its students at the master's level and empowering students through volunteerism to share their knowledge with primary school students. Sustainable Land Management is offered in the School of the Built Environment and has a strong focus on climate change issues. A Post graduate module on Sustainable energy will focus on Climate change and renewable energy and Carbon Trading, a little understood concept even among trained climate specialists. There's still a long way to go but through collaboration there will be greater reach and success.