

Technical education is the way forward, says teacher

By Tauria Raynor

A high school teacher presented his idea to start a private technical school to Hamilton Rotarians yesterday.

Colin Palmer, the operations manager for one of the Island's private schools, said that the future of Bermuda's young people could be fixed with an implementation of technical education.

Mr. Palmer reminded Rotarians about the Bermuda Technical Institute that closed for good 36 years ago and its success rate. He also mentioned the ills and empty promises of the current Government.

The former CedarBridge and Berkeley Institute teacher said: "That was a technical high school which not only changed students' lives but changed the standards and economy of Bermuda. The influence of this school and its students have lasted a very long time.

"Our present public education system is in shambles. We read and hear about the continuing saga each and everyday. We have been promised change but we must all understand that change does not happen from the top down it happens from the bottom up and that means without the inclusion of the teachers, head teachers and all stakeholders change will not happen."

He proposed a private technical high school to address the needs of students who are a product of the 'shambles' of education.

He mentioned that students who do not fall in the high academic range are being short-changed as the majority of the high school graduates are unable to read a blueprint or understand how their home water systems works – Mr. Palmer feels that with a technical school in place this statistic can change.

"I do not stand before you today on a whim," he said. "This has been the result of 14 years of researching and writing because I am passionate that the economic success of any community is the result of having a sound education system, in particular, a technical education system."

Referring to the surplus of guest workers brought into the Island at managerial levels he said: "We should have an educated community to reduce the numbers of guest workers required to make our companies 'world class', although we need some guest workers if we are to remain successful as the world class centre of the insurance business."

The school would be for students 14 to 18 years of age operating on five days a week, eight-week terms. In the first year, they would spend two afternoons per week in industry and the remainder of afternoons would be spent on soft skills, projects and team building. After five weeks they move to the next company.

"A technical education entails teaching mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering principles. It is not to specialise our students and it is not an apprenticeship. It is a technical education enabling our students to make educated first-hand choices about their career after high school."

Mr. Palmer said that at the time of graduation from the four-year course, students would graduate with international qualification, a career path and either a job or the education to continue to college.

He said that the degree they earn from the school will be on par with the City & Guilds qualification.

Mr. Palmer said that he has already started the process and has talked to top managers of larger technical companies who have agreed to support the school when it is up and running.

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