Entrepreneurship as a Path to Economic Diversification in Trinidad and Tobago: Insights from the GEM Study.

Henry Bailey¹,²
¹Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business,
²HEU, Centre for Health Economics,
The University of the West Indies.

Background
Entrepreneurship is considered to be a key element in the diversification of the Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) economy. Emphasis on entrepreneurship is increasing as the need for diversification becomes more urgent.

Methods
This study evaluates the current status of entrepreneurship in T&T as a path to economic diversification. Using data from the recently concluded Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Study in T&T, this paper compares entrepreneurial perceptions and aspirations obtained in a survey of a representative sample of 2000 adults with the perceptions obtained from a survey of 45 ‘experts’ drawn from various fields related to entrepreneurship in T&T. The paper then goes on to look at the ‘entrepreneurship pipeline’ and to evaluate current entrepreneurial performance along 3 dimensions that are relevant to entrepreneurship as a path to diversification.

Results
T&T is shown to perform reasonably well in terms of the quantum of entrepreneurial activity when compared to other countries. However, the nature of entrepreneurial activity needs to change if this sector is to play a significant role in economic diversification. Entrepreneurial activity in T&T performs poorly along the dimensions of growth, job creation, export competitiveness and innovation.

Conclusion
This study concludes with some recommendations to improve entrepreneurial outcomes.