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Smart Talent Cities: Why Talent Makes A ‘Smart City’

Understanding the importance relevant ‘exposure and proximity’ has when choosing career-paths or in making decisions for a career-change, helps identify how best to navigate the global trends that are revolutionising the workforce. These changes are progressively impacting industries that have previously remained unaffected ^[38], this includes the disruptive effect of digital technology, which is reducing the barriers to shared use and therefore the need for physical products ^[12]. In addition there is the further impact of shorter production life cycles ^[12], as multifaceted infrastructure and technology driven innovations create synergies across disciplines ^[27]. It is these tectonic shifts that are shaping the prospects of smart cities ^[30]. The ‘Smart City’ concept defined by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills ^[13] is “a process in which increased citizen engagement, hard infrastructure, social capital and digital technologies make cities more liveable, resilient and better able to respond to challenges”. Whilst this is shaped by a complex mix of factors, all working definitions include ‘human infrastructure’, often referred to as the ‘talented city’ concept. This is also considered one of the 6 main ‘Smart City’ characteristics ^{[2][9][16]}. It is for this reason we created our ‘Smart Talent Cities’ approach.

What are ‘Smart Talent Cities’?

At Tokosi.com our ‘Smart Talent Cities’ concept has led to an approach that establishes an enhanced lifelong ‘Smart City’ learning mechanism ^{[38][32]}. This is dedicated to future proofing the ‘Smart City’ workforce, fuelling business competitiveness and city solutions ^{[24][5]}. Our stance is founded on the prediction that smart cities will continue to shape the world, with 68% of the global population residing in them by 2050 ^[45]. Therefore, smart cities will increasingly dominate the global economy ^[40], a forecast supported by 440 emerging cities set to contribute 47% of global growth by 2025 ^[30]. The result would therefore be a rapid transfer of knowledge and technologies, which will inevitably increase demand for a highly skilled ‘Smart City’ workforce.

This workforce would therefore be required to support the higher productivity of our evolving organisations and cities ^{[38][12]}. The importance of our approach is highlighted by Forbes Media LLC, ranking London - UK the Number 1 ‘Smart City’ in the world, partly due to its investment in human capital as well as international outreach ^[18]. The investment is demonstrated by London hosting more start-ups and programmers than almost any other city in the world ^[18]. The ‘Smart Talent Cities’ framework develops competencies through tailored lifelong learning ^[27], through creating inter-generational safe learning environments that enable participants to learn and apply higher-level problem-solving skills, in complex ‘Smart City’ environments. This is especially effective as initial growth is without the fear of negative consequences, which delay development of innovative mind-sets ^{[44][11]}.

Consequently every 'Smart City' would be actively developing the skills and competencies needed to use new disruptive technologies, as well as generate radical new solutions e.g. resolve emerging challenges of Data Privacy and Cyber Security ^[15]^[12]. This challenge requires finding innovative ways to protect smart cities and IOT (Internet of things) across the 3 main levels of 'Smart City' intelligence, namely Infrastructure; Fog computing and Cloud computing ^[32].

The need for planned coordinated change such as the 'One City Plan' in Bristol, demonstrates why future planning for sustainable talent is necessary for achieving its 2050 'Economy' and 'Learning & skills' Vision ^[4]. Subsequently the inclusion of a 'Smart Talent Cities' approach is vital for the continuous renewal of Bristol's economic infrastructure. This is achieved through the creative process of de-construction and innovative construction ^[12] set to be realised by e.g. Bristol's 'City Leap'. An £850M series of energy and infrastructure investment opportunities, committed to enabling the city to be carbon neutral city by 2050".

Relationship with Schools

In Bristol their 'Smart City' strategy has led to implementing energy efficiency technologies to reduce carbon footprint in schools. In recent years schools have introduced the concept of global warming in 'key stage 1', therefore a schema exists for pupils that can develop as they grow older. Similarly, the 'Smart Talent Cities' approach is shaped by Piaget's ^[35] 'development theory' which asserts that knowledge comes from concepts and their relation to schemas. In addition, 'career relevant concepts' consist of self attributes we personally consider 'vocationally relevant' ^[41], which develop in childhood and strengthen through adolescence. 'Smart Talent Cities' is developed as a framework that provides structured interaction with existing smart city environments. This helps inform 'career concepts' through growing and nurturing talent, whilst stimulating more information on smart cities ^[31]. This provides effective and efficient knowledge transfer, necessary for the scaling of innovative solutions within a city ^[21].

An important component of a 'Smart City' is creating sustainable city services. Nurturing and retaining a competitive workforce, is a critical enabler in achieving this, whilst resolving urbanisation issues ^[9]. Through Public, Private and Voluntary sector partnerships 'Smart Talent Cities' looks to build local capacity, through complementing existing school curriculums and influencing the development of local learning skills. Froiland ^[19] argues that the proximity of books in a home environment has a measurable effect on the development of children. Equally, structured exposure to 'thought leaders' ^[17] and 'Smart City' test bed environments' ^[3]^[20]^[47], are key resources for children in our digital age ^[20]. This is supported by Vygotskyian theory which states that development is a two-part process involving social and individual input ^[46]. Therefore, our goal is to support learning in 'Academies' and 'Maintained' schools, facilitating connection with local employers and our international network.

However, understanding Super's (1953) 5 stages of 'career development' [42], has ensured we do not lose sight of nurturing 'career-path awareness' across the age spectrum. This is a key issue highlighted by our network who stated that, often development programs centred mainly on children and younger adults, negating prospects of developing the transferable skills of mature participants. To address this, 'Smart Talent Cities' incorporates bespoke re-training sets, as part of our lifelong learning, enabling participants to consciously identify functions that act as determinants of career maturity [28].

No Organisation Is An Island

In the UK with the challenges of Brexit, the choice for cities like Bristol to nurture the talent of its diverse citizens is key, as they "better understand how their local city businesses and social cultures can provide competitive advantage" [49], enabling the expansion into global market opportunities [38] through unexplored trade routes.

Furthermore, through understanding that the 'Smart City' eco -system is forecasted to increase in diversity [48], resulting in extension of team compositions, organisations, and customer bases [10]. Our 'Smart Talent Cities' public- private partnerships provide participants with necessary 'proximity and exposure' to 21st century 'advanced soft skills' [29]. This is essential for implementing small to large scale programmes that often hinge on the complex cross-sector dynamics of project partnerships, collaborations and funding regulations [21].

Smart Talent City Implementation

As part of our 'Smart talent Cities' approach Tokosi.com partners with New Learning Ventures (NLV) to deliver 'Global Parliament of Mayors - Talent city', facilitating development of 'vocational self-concepts' [34]. The Global Parliament of Mayors serves on six continents and its programme gives cities the opportunity to positively impact education transformation and talent leadership. This is achieved through bespoke plans that develop workforce capabilities in each city. Furthermore, the re-looping of career stages described in Super's (1953) 'career development theory' [41], has been adapted to address the barriers to 'career change' highlighted by our 'Stepping Up' network below:

1. The 'degree of exposure' to new business environments
2. Reflective practise [36] to correctly assess knowledge gaps against job specifications
3. Confidence in their employer's ability to recognise their transferable skills

The barriers articulated often lead to limitations in 'diversity of thought' [17] and instead result in 'groupthink' [22], this directly reduces the amount of new insights generated. Even with strong practical and theoretical transferable skills, many argued that subtle distinctions and nuances within certain business cultures had rendered experts to the domain of novice.

This often manifested as unnecessary bespoke processes akin to learning a new language, leading to communication hurdles of overused, vague and inconsistent concepts ^[23]. Furthermore ‘social representations’ ^[25] coupled with ‘systematic soldiering’ ^{[14][43][1]} was often used by colleagues who may have sought to protect themselves, by leveraging their ‘specialist knowledge’ thereby inhibiting innovation and succession ^[33]. Unsurprisingly, trust in such environments between diverse and disadvantaged groups was often low, leading fewer to apply for jobs perpetuating the cycle ^[7].

Thus ‘Smart Talent Cities’ focuses on people as the driver for innovation, creating a sustainable talent pipeline. This addresses the issue stated by Deloitte that “34% of organisations researched, lacked sufficient skills to execute their own digital strategy” ^[12]. Tokosi.com’s approach recognises the importance cognitive and creative ability has in bolstering ‘Smart City’ clusters and vice versa. Therefore, through cross sector secondments, apprenticeships, mentoring and international exchanges, we capacity build whilst enabling cities to have connected citizens that are also globally responsible ^[26].

Furthermore, we recognise that facilitating ‘connected global citizens’ requires use of; advances in technology, internet connectivity and a balance of agile working behaviours. These factors all contribute to the enabling of “clusters of highly skilled workers that are fuelling innovation”. It is unsurprising that supercharged innovative hubs attract more highly skilled workers because these environments feed innovative energies, triggering workers to relocate to live in the smart cities they reside. Each city therefore gains economic benefit from the subsequent investment in services, entertainment and more importantly jobs. This cyclical effect often attracts the relocation of company headquarters, with New York having 70 more than any other USA city and Washington gaining 17 additional company headquarters in 2017.

The importance of identifying and nurturing smart talent in cities as a driver for innovation is acknowledged by Amazon. Their former executive Matt Rutledge stated that Amazon was having “trouble finding a big talent pool of developers,” and that diversity was high on their lists of priorities for the re-location of its headquarters. Amazon was inadvertently highlighting the correlation between ‘diversity of thought’ and innovation with an emphasis on the importance of conducive environment ^{[37][6][8]}.

TOKOSI.COM’S ‘Smart Talent Cities’ Provides:

- Consistent exposure for participants where possible to ‘Smart City’: ‘Data and Analytics’, ‘Thought leaders’ and Project Information
- A citywide and international city to city collaborative framework, which includes access to cutting-edge international exchanges, apprenticeships and mentoring etc...
- Access to Global Parliament of Mayors - Talent cities

Our call to action is for organisations in each city to look to partner in implementing a ‘Smart Talent Cities’ framework, as an avenue to build capacity through public private and voluntary sector partnerships. In addition, Tokosi.com ensures best ethical practices are followed through the inclusion of positive action programmes like ‘Stepping Up’ and Bristol Works. This ensures all persons have equal access to career opportunities. Success is therefore defined as purposeful actions centred on future proofing the workforce, equipping them to provide ‘Smart City’ solutions, economic viability and a sustainable world.

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