
Students should be able to: examine the role of individual citizens, business organisations and government in the integration process;

The role of individual citizens in the integration process

Be Knowledgeable About the Integration Process

It is important that citizens are knowledgeable about the integration process – aims, objectives, areas involved – and about each country by accessing information presented in books, magazines, documentaries/films and on the Internet. It is believed that the different areas of integration, such as health, education and security, will impact on how participating governments operate and on the way of life of the citizens.

Support Regional Producers

With globalization, more citizens are able to buy goods and services from around the world. This is made possible as a result of travel and access to the Internet; individuals are now able to sit in the comfort of their homes and buy products. Citizens in the region, however, should make use of goods and services that are produced by regional enterprises. This move will help the businesses to grow, provide employment for the citizens and contribute revenue for the country/countries.

Invest in Businesses in the Region

Investment in regional businesses is facilitated by the rules governing the free movement of businesses. Citizens should invest in mutual funds and stock markets of local and regional organisations. This would see citizens being shareholders in both local and regional enterprises.

Show Solidarity with Countries in the Region

The regional integration process can move at a faster pace if individuals in government understand that regional integration is about recognising the benefits of having some decisions made on a regional basis, while at the same time maintaining control over national issues. Citizens should be more receptive to regional persons who decide to take advantage of the policy regarding the free movement of labour, capital and goods.

Become Entrepreneurs

Citizens can also start their own businesses. The free movement of goods, labour and capital has made it easier for citizens to become entrepreneurs both locally and regionally. (However, it is essential that individuals do market research before going into any business venture.)

Be Productive Employees

As workers, citizens have a vital role to play in the integration process. By utilising their skills and talents in the productive process, citizens are able to:

- develop new skills and experiences
- improve their standard of living
- contribute to the development of the region

The role of business organisations in the integration process

Reduce the Cost of Regional Travel

For many citizens in the region, the cost of travel to some other countries is not affordable. Airlines should make every effort to boost intra-regional tourism by having more affordable rates for people to attend regional events such as art exhibitions, festivals, conventions, sporting and musical activities.

Improve the Quality and Choices of their Products

Regional producers need to ensure that their products are affordable, available and of the highest quality. With globalisation, people have many options; therefore, goods and services must be comparable to similar offerings from 'first world' countries.

Increase Investment and Employment

Regulation governing the free movement of people and capital are aimed at helping people to invest in business within the region. For every business operator, growth is an important component. Growth helps the business operator and helps to:

- reduce unemployment
- provide revenue that is needed by the government
- demonstrate that the economic climate is favourable

Provide Employment

Businesses provide jobs for citizens which help to reduce unemployment levels. Businesses should not employ locals only; they should also employ persons from other member states to fill positions at any level for which they are qualified – from entry level to managerial/supervisory status. This will show that they too are supportive of the integration movement.

Improve Competitiveness

While regional governments can introduce policies that are favourable to business operators, it is the responsibility of the operators to ensure that their input cost does not exceed the cost of output. For businesses to remain competitive, they have to ensure that they increase production and reduce production cost. This will also help to reduce incidences of unavailability. The removal of tariffs among CARICOM member states is aimed at helping to reduce production costs. If productivity is low and input cost is high, the cost of final products or output will be high since the business intends to make a profit. This will result in the business being less competitive and/or eventually failing.

The role of government in the integration process

Some of the roles of regional governments are explained below. They have responsibility to:

Educate Citizens

For integration to be possible, governments need to use the electronic and print media to educate citizens about all aspects of the integration process and the benefits of regional integration.

The more aware the citizens are, the more receptive they will be towards the process.

Harmonise Trade Policies

Currently CARICOM aims at ensuring that there is a common external tariff as well as common policies when conducting regional and extra-regional trade. Governments in the region should ensure that these policies are adhered to as they seek to ensure that all countries within the region are treated fairly. Harmonising trade policies helps to create a favourable economic climate; it gives renewed trust and it promotes growth.

Honour Protocols

Governments work cooperatively to develop policies that impact their own countries as well as others in the region. They have the responsibility of honouring protocols or agreements to which they are signatories.

Pass Laws

Governments have the responsibility of passing laws and formulating policies that will help to stimulate growth and encourage private sector activity. Regional governments can facilitate legislation giving authority to a regional body such as CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government to act on the behalf of the member states.