

# ENGINEERING ACCESS

*Integrating Internationally Educated Engineers into the Ontario  
Professional Workforce*

*A project of*

## CAPE

*THE COUNCIL FOR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING*

# PROCEEDINGS

*LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE  
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARAB COMMUNITY CENTER AND  
STREAMLINING OF OBJECTIVES FOR SERVING  
INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED ENGINEERING GRADUATES*

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555 Burnhamthorpe Road, Etobicoke, ON M9C 2Y3

## INTRODUCTION

This leadership training session, which brought together 15 ITEG's from the Arab Community Center had a twofold purpose:

1. To identify:
  - Obstacles to Employment facing engineering graduates from the Arab Community
  - Support available to them from the Canadian System
  - Expectation of support/changes from the system
  - Commonality of issues with other Internationally trained engineering graduates (ITEGs)
2. To bring together CAPE and the Arab engineering community to build synergy towards the common goal of integrating ITEGs into the Ontario professional workforce.

These proceedings aim to record and capture the discussions and outcome of this group meeting, which has opened up several windows of opportunity to work together in the future.

## PRESENTATION TWO: RESEARCH PRESENTATION

*By Gurmeet Bambrah, Project Coordinator, CAPE*

Dr Gurmeet Bambrah in her presentation on the Canadian Economic "Experiment" in diversity traced the trends in immigration to the origins of migration to the present day and its relationship to the Engineering Profession. She explained how CAPE had held a focus group of ethno-cultural organizations similar to CALAPTE in October 2003, which led to this research. The focus group identified two distinct clusters of such organizations - the Pre 1960 and the Post 1990 clusters having the characteristics shown in Table 1 below.

PRE 1960 Cluster	POST 1990 Cluster
Place of Origin, Culture, Religion connect	Place of Origin, Culture, Religion disconnect
High technical skills	High technological skills
Total Language disconnect	Partial language disconnect
Lacked newcomer assistance Worked with PEO to establish an	Newcomer assistance including Credential assessment, Employment Preparation and language training

accreditation process to integrate diversity	Uncertain economic and development paradigms
Community-based language learning	Canadian Experience requirements
Economic Boom times	High technological skills perceived to be required for shift to service/knowledge based economy.
Experience requirements unknown	

Based on the hypothesis of inter-connection between Ethnicity, Economic Development, Regulation and Integration of ITEGs and other Professionals (IEPs) into the Ontario workforce, a research was carried out. This revealed that at present ITEGs and IEPs are facing:

- Higher unemployment rates
- Less the 25% work in exact field of specialization
- 46.8% doing something irrelevant to their field
- More likely to have University Education
- Lack of Canadian experience as the most common barrier to employment
- Assessment of language skills rather than language learning.

In conclusion her research the findings were:

- Immigration tends to be based on economics/displacement factors
- Rate of diversity has increased rapidly after the Second World War leading to serious questions about the Canadian system's capacity to absorb this diversity.
- Diversity has three clearly identifiable ethnicity components - place of origin, race or visibility and religion, which need further investigation
- Immigrant links to mainstream are very important for integration
- The perceived shift to service and knowledge-based economies was inadequately defined - was this perception realistically developed given that the system is unable to assimilate the knowledge base of the ITEGs.
- Regulation of engineers has been amended regularly -however there is insufficient information at present to analyze completely:
- The accreditation capacity
- The basis upon which experience requirements are set - when for instance was Canadian Experience introduced into these requirements and how and what are the skills/knowledge acquired through this Canadian experience?

Based on this research, CAPE has set out the following as its objectives:

- To mobilize funding and resources based on ITEGs population ratio, for training opportunities focussing on bridging the cultural disconnect between ITEGs and the mainstream engineering fraternity;
- To facilitate effective dialogue between all stakeholders of the engineering community, including employers, educational institutions, professional associations, advocacy groups

and ITEGs to create a process and methodology for better recognition of international engineering experience.

- To become a collective voice and the premium engineering resource organization for ITEGs and the engineering industry in Ontario .

She also explained that CAPE started out in 1990 when a number of independent associations serving internationally trained engineers got together and the history of CAPE is available on their website [www.capeinfo.ca](http://www.capeinfo.ca).

Currently CAPE is undertaking the Engineering Access Project funded jointly by Canadian Heritage and Human Resources Development, Canada under the trusteeship of the Council of Agencies serving South Asians (CASSA). Gurmeet explained that Engineering Access is a three year, Ontario wide project that will seek to:

- Build a collective voice for IEs
- Engage employers in increasing IE access to the engineering workplace
- Facilitate multi-stakeholder consultation through a Roundtable
- Create an extensive searchable database of IEs, employers and relevant labour market trends.

## **SESSION TWO**

The session two was devoted to building partnership through group discussion in identifying obstacles, self-help, and support available/required in respect of Qualification, Language, Work Experience, Information and other barriers which have already been identified. Breaking into four groups did this and each group presented their views at which time the commonality of issues were tabulated. The groups and the issues they discussed were:

Group 1 - Obstacles to employment

Group 2 - What have the ITEGs done to overcome the obstacles

Group 3 - What support the Canadian System provided

Group 4 - What Support/Changes ITEGs expect from the system

### **Group 1**

Group one in its presentation of obstacles to employment, expressed that there was:

- No correlation as regards qualification between employment requirements and the Immigration policy.
- The group identified the accent as the main issue with language. They also felt that there were good language upgrading programs in place.
- On the subject of work experience the group was of the opinion that there was no access to work and as such they are not given any chance at proving the value of their work experience.

- The group pointed out that there is lack of information on regulation and employment issues.

## **Group 2**

Group 2 in its presentation on "What ITEGs have done to overcome Obstacles" stated that

- Their qualifications and credentials, which had been evaluated by CCPE and accepted at the Immigration stage, were not accepted on arrival.
- They were in the process of upgrading their language skills even though it was accepted at pre immigration.
- They arrived with international engineering experience and are trying to acquire Canadian experience.
- They are working in survival jobs and were still working towards jobs in their engineering field at the end of the first year.
- They had not heard of CAPE.

## **Group 3**

Group 3 in its presentation on "What support the Canadian System provided" said:

- There was no relevant support at the pre-immigration stage as regards qualification except for the assessment of their qualification which was not accepted.
- They requested that their work experience be recognized and be given the opportunity to prove themselves.
- They felt underutilized and felt totally disconnected with the mainstream.
- The group felt the language support by the Canadian system to be particularly useful.
- On the information side there was misleading information and no significant support at the pre-immigration point and
- They felt the need of assistance to network with the Canadian mainstream and the job market
- The group felt the need for a collective voice and facilitation of accurate information dissemination through the CAPE Platform.

## **Group 4**

Group 4 in its presentation on "What Support/Changes ITEGs expect from the system" stated:

- At the pre-immigration the point system recognizes qualification and experience.
- Upon arrival the system does not recognise this.
- They requested the help of CAPE's assistance in creating access to jobs, coordination with federal, provincial and other stake holders on the subject of employment, recognition of international experience, accreditation and licensing.

- In terms of Language training they wanted CAPE to assist with developing their presentation skills.
- CAPE should also assist in creating the awareness of the issue of ITEG integration into the professional workplace among all stakeholders.

### **PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION**

- The Group Identified well with the objectives and aims of CAPE as regards addressing of the recognition of international experience and building a collective voice for ITEGs.
- The Group and CAPE agreed that it is a good idea to partner to build a collective voice for ITEGs.
- The Group Supports the CAPE idea of Appropriate Labour Market Information for ITEGs, developing cross-cultural tools for employment and promoting fair Regulation & Licensing practices in Canada.

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

First Name	Last Name
1. Habib	Asmar
2. Mohamed	Labani
3. Rashid	Jenkal
4. Hesham	Mohamed
5. Junaid	Ameen
6. Hassan	Baghal
7. Ryadh	Salih
8. Nada	Al Madani
9. Hashmat	Shah
10. Abdellah	Benkhalti

11. Sahar	Al Jazrawi
12. Sahar	Al Jazrawi
13. Razaw	Nadir
14. Hakam	Jarrad
15. Hashim	Hilan