

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
MALAYEE ENGINEERING GRADUATES ASSOCIATION
(MEGA) AND STREAMLINING OF OBJECTIVES FOR
SERVING INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED ENGINEERING
GRADUATES*

*13 MARCH 2004
791 ST CLAIR WEST, TORONTO, ONTARIO*

INTRODUCTION

This leadership training session, which brought together 27 members of MEGA including their present President and several past Presidents, had a twofold purpose:

1. To identify:
 - Obstacles to Employment facing Malayalee engineering graduates
 - 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 MEGA 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 ONE: MALAYALEE ENGINEERING GRADUATES ASSOCIATION *By Suresh Nair, Past President , MEGA*

The present President of Malayalee Engineering Graduates Association, MEGA (Mr. Manu Abraham) introduced the Past president (Mr. Suresh Nair) who briefly introduced MEGA and the idea of a partnership between MEGA and CAPE to the participants.

Mr. Suresh Nair stated that MEGA is a professional organization of Engineering Graduates originating from Kerala, India. MEGA's objective is to promote professional development and social activities for its members and their families. It is a not-for-profit organization providing a forum to meet and network with other engineers and their families.

Within MEGA, the Engineering Graduate Assistance Cell (ENGRACE) is a wing whose members are volunteers nominated by MEGA working under its guidelines. The objective of ENGRACE is to assist Malayalee engineering graduates in the field of employment, career growth, licensing, professional development, continuing education and other facets which are related to the Engineering profession. The roles, responsibilities and functions assigned to ENGRACE include provision of the following assistance to new immigrant Malayalee engineering graduates:

- Information on current employment needs, labor market trends and other issues.
- Information about Engineering degree assessments and/or equivalency
- Providing links to other governmental or non-governmental agencies, to enhance their resume/cover letter writing, interview and job searching skills and marketability.
- Coordinating and helping new immigrants to get acclimatized with the new milieu and to connect them with employment sources.

ENGRACE tries to fulfill these roles and responsibilities by:

- Creating a database of MEGA members focusing on their job specialization.
- Facilitating networking between members and with other organizations such as the local chapters of Professional Engineers of Ontario, ASME sections etc.,
- Providing a job board
- Helping Malayalee engineering students to find summer jobs and assisting them to secure a full-time job after their graduation.
- Providing tips and advice to applicants applying for Professional Licensing.

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 MEGA 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacked newcomer assistance • Worked with PEO to establish an accreditation process to integrate diversity • Community-based language learning • Economic Boom times • Experience requirements unknown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer assistance including Credential assessment, Employment Preparation and language training • Uncertain economic and development paradigms • Canadian Experience requirements- • High technological skills perceived to be required for shift to service/knowledge based economy.

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.

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:

- Misinformation as regards over and under qualification for employment in the Immigration policy.
- As for language they felt that there was insufficient recognition of skills they already possessed.
- On the subject of work experience the group felt that the experience recognized in the Immigration policy through the point system was not recognized in the profession once in the country.
- The group questioned the regulation on need to work under a P.Eng. in Canada.

- The province in their opinion did not help to assimilate the international experience and knowledge of ITEGs or help them to gain local experience. The question was also raised as to why the employers require Canadian experience and the need to identify clearly what was achieved by the ITEGs through this experience.
- On the subject of Information the group pointed out that there was a big disconnect between federal and provincial levels and also a mismatch between pre and post immigration information made available. They also pointed out that there is lack of Information and guidance on when and where licensing is required and which province and regions have opportunities.
- They also pointed out the need to clearly identify which evaluation of qualifications is relevant for which purpose.
- Finally the issue was raised about the feedback mechanisms regarding the Progress of ITEG integration into the profession of engineering in Ontario and Canada.

Group 2

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

- They had qualified for the points for immigration based on their qualifications and credentials which had been evaluated by CCPE.
- Some had trade certificates, at the pre-immigration stage
- Those from Kerala usually have English training and some have done ELTs although they speak with an Indian accent
- On arrival some upgraded their English and business skills
- They arrived with international engineering experience
- On arrival they acquired Canadian experience often as volunteers or in under-employed positions but were still looking for engineering jobs at the end of the first year
- They had information on education and skills and on arrival started networking and learning about getting a job and at the end of one year were into information research and increased networking.
- They had not heard of CAPE

Group 3

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

- There was no significant support at the pre-immigration stage as regards qualification
- On arrival they were directed and had a WES evaluation done, which had no use to the licensing or employment process.
- Employers only showed interest in experience and not the qualifications
- They felt underutilized and saw no hope of being properly integrated as the system in no way supports them
- The group felt the language support by the Canadian system was not particularly relevant, as they were already educated in English so they are not using any of the support provided
- On the subject of work experience there was no significant support at the pre-immigration point and the group felt the Government should provide some sort of bridging program on arrival. Programs offered are very rudimentary and not really useful for engineers. Yorkdale adult learning center has a somewhat more useful model of a co-op course to which the City of Toronto has been very receptive
- On the information side there was misleading information and no significant support at the pre-immigration point
- ITEGs felt more misled by HRDC on arrival when there was a need to have a more realistic picture put out.

- The type of co-op programs as well as the type and size of corporation needs to be looked into when employing ITEGs as in some workplaces they are underutilized and asked to gain hands on experience rather than using their knowledge, which is different to the professional culture in Karala and India, and this is difficult to digest.
- The group felt the need for Cross communication for a collective voice as well as facilitate 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 16 yrs of schooling including 4 year accredited university degrees
- Upon arrival the system suddenly becomes blind to this.
- The ITEGs felt that MEGA should give guidance on resumes, work experience and presentation skill, evaluation process and P.Eng registration at the pre and post immigration levels.
- MEGA should also help to provide support for networking and making contacts, Job postings and links to other websites by having Seminars
- They requested the help of CAPE in assistance to removal of barriers, coordination with federal, provincial and other stake holders on the subject of employment, 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
- On the subject of language the ELTs be the standard for proficiency of language
- They also requested CAPE support in removing barriers, evaluation of individual work experience, and teaming up with other organizations to open up any access to employment.

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

- MEGA identified well with the objectives and aims of CAPE as regards addressing of the cultural disconnect, recognition of international experience and building a collective voice for ITEGs
- Both MEGA and CAPE agreed that it is a good idea to partner to build a collective voice for ITEGs
- MEGA agreed to an information exchange as well as some degree of sharing databases with CAPE
- MEGA 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
- MEGA and CAPE agreed to share websites
- MEGA also strongly endorsed the skill set and employer database to be set up by CAPE
- CAPE supported the strengthening of MEGA to include Job Search Resources and volunteering information and promotion of this and other timely information to new immigrants

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF MEGA

	FirstName	LastName
1	Abdul	Salam
2	Abraham	Thundathil
3	Abraham	Jacob
4	Bala	Nair
5	Bino	Varghese
6	George	Jacob
7	Jai	Thomas
8	Jerry	George
9	Johnson	Thomas
10	Joseph	Chirayath
11	Manu	Abraham
12	Mohammed Salim	Thottathikulam
13	Mohan	Joseph
14	Mohan	Srinivasan
15	Oommachan	Mathew
16	Praveen	Nair
17	Sam	Thomas
18	Santhosh	Fernandez
19	Santhosh	Mathew
20	Sheeba	Paul
21	Srinath	Iyer
22	Stephen	Mathew
23	Suja	John
24	Susan	Samuel
25	Tissy	Thomas
26	Veeramany	Harihara Iyer