Chapter 3

The Higher Education Connect

Every nation in this world underlines the role of higher education and research through universities, specialized centers and other organizations. Goranson and Claes state “the university was once described as an “ivory tower”…. Universities, governments, and industries are now described as the DNA strands of a “triple helix”, forming the dynamic building blocks of the knowledge economy. When the strands are healthy and interconnected, the helix produces the knowledge, know-how, and the technology of prosperous societies” (i). Educational interaction between Canada and India has been reinforced through collaborations between institutions, conferences, seminars, fellowships, research, student and faculty exchange. This has had implications on every sphere of education—language, literature, culture, economics, business, science and technology. An interesting phenomenon is the value attached to the exchange of students as well as personnel. Evidently, the beneficiaries are not only the people who spend time abroad but also the countries that send them there. How important it is to the process of bilateral association and what opportunities exist in this arena are the foci of this chapter.

Cultural and educational exchange between India and Canada has had a more or less pleasant record. Students and researchers from both countries have attempted to learn together and mutually. How to provide momentum to this already existing phenomenon of fortifying higher education which is seen as a “weapon of mass attraction” (Sarkar n.pag) is an important question. Education is a major factor that persuades people to consider
relocation to places where educational institutions are situated. In this context, areas of common research interests and the immigration system are critical for those wanting to travel for the purposes of learning. A survey of Canadian Universities suggests that higher education organizations in Canada are an “underleveraged resource…attracting only 2% of Indian students studying abroad” (Sarkar n.pag). On the other hand in India there has been a huge growth in the number of private universities in order to cater to higher education demands of a huge population, meaning to say that higher education is a sought after activity in India. The demand for it has been increasing every year. It is estimated that India had about 18,000 educational institutions and about 11 million students in the year 2006; and from the year 1991 the number of higher education institutions has been growing at the rate of 6% per year (qtd in Mukherjee 1). This clearly indicates that there is a huge demand for higher education in India. The growing population, rising competition and constantly increasing demand in the corporate and educational sectors have created a scenario where universities and colleges are absorbing more students. There are many Indian students who seek education overseas because of a rise in family incomes. At such a juncture, foreign investment in India in this sector has been an issue of discussion.

In the 2012 report by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the rationale behind higher education ties between India and Canada was studied. It states:

International students make an enormous economic contribution, above $5.5 billion annually, and sustain employment for more than 80,000 Canadians. The number of Indian students in Canada has nearly tripled since 2008 and the potential to attract more is still great. Having them in Canada provides them with
a window into Canada’s quality of life and its products. These experiences then trickle back creating goodwill and awareness of Canada in India, and connections with Indian alumni can cement business ties. (7)

Higher education therefore is seen not only as a means of acquiring higher skills but also as a channel to sustain long term relations between the students who study in Canada and India. Knowledge networking is important for channels of information exchange, development and also technology transfer. The resulting alumni networks can play a predominant role in contributing to research activities since such connections continue. Various other factors have also contributed to the attention towards higher education sector. One of them is the need for acquiring skilled labour. According to a report by Prof. Ryan Touhey “Spurred by Canada’s declining birthrate and aging population, Ottawa and the provinces are turning to immigration in order to supply needed skilled workers and to reverse declining enrollment rates” (1). Action plans in September 2010 and February 2011 took place when the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC) along with Ministers of Immigration (both territorial and provincial) planned investment and the marketing Canadian education (Council of the Federation 9). Foreign students can be attracted only if visa policies are reasonable and the process easy. This plan also intended to encourage more Indian students graduating in Canada to stay back in the country. These events show that intense efforts are being made by the Canadian government to increase the number of students and skilled workers in the country. Such efforts are also because internationalization of education is essential for students and faculty to have an edge over others in academics. Globalization trends have necessitated and created stiff competition in
the market. Therefore some amount of international experience helps acquire confidence, exchange of knowledge and technology, a comprehensive view of what is happening in other countries in terms of research and in the meanwhile definitely enables stronger and healthier bilateral association between countries.

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) emphasizes that internationalizing educational institutions is “a necessary, vital and deliberate transformation of how we teach and learn, and it is essential to the future quality of higher education in Canada, indeed to the future of Canada” (qtd in Wilkie 46). This is true not only of Canada but also of India since the advantages of such internationalization are palpable in contexts of education and research. The thrust of a bilateral association is people-to-people link and universities and other related organizations because they strengthen relationship while creating knowledge networks.

Indian Students and their Preferred Destinations for Education—Canada Versus Other Developed Nations

The influx of foreign students into Canada has been growing in the recent years. The Council of Federation stated that in the year 2008 there were about “178,227 international students who stayed in Canada for at least six months (long-term), generating more than $6.5 billion…This included 42,154 Chinese and 27,440 South Korean citizens…. Nearly 40 per cent of revenue generated by international students came from two countries: China ($1,300,856,778) and South Korea ($846,788,205)” (qtd in Council of Federation 12). While students of other Asian countries have been going to Canada for higher education; students from India have been travelling to the UK, the US and Australia to earn foreign
degrees. In a very pertinent comparative research study—*Innovation in Higher Education Partnerships in India: Comparing Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States* (2007), Prof. Ryan Touhey depicts the type of associations that India has with educational organizations in the US, Australia, the UK and Canada. While Canada is doing well in offering courses to Indian students through ‘twinning’ educational partnerships, other countries like the UK and Australia with the help of their Central Governments have been promoting themselves strategically in India through publicity of their reputed institutes, world class universities and infrastructure.

Touhey underlines the manner in which the US uses its alumni and its top-notch universities to attract Indian students. Owing to the largeness of India’s young population, several countries have contemplated it as a destination to attract students. In spite of the ever increasing number of educational institutions of varying quality, India can continue opening many more colleges and universities and they will still be able to absorb students. The desire to earn a foreign degree among many Indian students has magnetically attracted several foreign countries to disseminate information about their educational infrastructure to Indians. This has produced results and we find that the number of Indian students going overseas to earn a foreign qualification is on the rise. This is also compounded by the fact that the middle class has seen a rise in their incomes. So, contemplating a foreign degree has become a considered option.

The *India Business Insights* reports that “The number of Indian students studying in the United States increased to 94,664 in 2008 from 85,687 in 2007; in UK to 58,903 from 53,714; in Australia-New Zealand to 36,040 from 29,426 and in other countries to 33,090
from 22,931” (n pag). However, it is also interesting to see the trends in this sector, that is, the pattern of student migration for higher education. While the aforementioned countries have been seeing an increase in the Indian students, some events in the recent years have resulted in a decline in the movement to these countries. For example, the racist attacks on Indian students in Australia have seriously affected the flow of Indian students there. Australia has reported a reduction of 20 percent since 2009 (Council of Confederation 17). The incident is also a lesson to countries that consider Indian students as potential recruits to their universities. Unless Indian students are offered security, they will not think of selecting their educational organizations. News of violence can seriously mar prospects of student and labour recruitment. Cost of living and immigration policies in the UK and US have also affected student preferences to those countries. It is evident that in the contemporary scenario, the number of Indian students aspiring for foreign education is on the rise but not at the cost of compromise on security or high expenses. However, at the moment Canada is not on the list of ‘first choice’ though there are several good universities in the country. The reason for this can be ascribed to marketing strategies.

While there is not much information on the Canadian educational system in India, at times marketing has also been seen as causing obstruction to better promotion of Canadian education. A research study mentions a hilarious episode where:

Ontario came through with a huge delegation. The newspaper campaign highlighted the province and advertisements in Indian newspapers carried images of the Ontario flag—not the Canadian one. The Ontario flag bears a
strong similarity to the British flag, so potential students and their parents came expecting to hear about the UK. (Scherf and Macpherson 5)

The aforementioned incident may seem funny but indicate the lack of serious research in marketing education. There is not much awareness of the educational sector of Canada in India. To a certain extent, educational partnerships and field work programs have spread information about the courses and universities of Canada. As Randall Martin points out that the Simon Fraser University of Canada “is now better known at schools such as Banaras Hindu University in Benares, Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, the University of Mumbai, and Whistling Woods International Institute in Mumbai” (qtd in Wilkie 49). The reason for this is the field work conducted by Canadian students in these institutions. The arrival of exchange students is instrumental in exchanging information about the universities they come from and the programs they undertake. What may begin and seem as exchanging pleasantries can eventually turn out to be an exercise in promotion and advertisement of courses and universities.

In this era where the virtual world makes it easy to formulate plans and communicate, it should have been easier to create connections between institutions of both the countries. The speed with which plans materialize is as slow as a snail. Perhaps, as mentioned already in the first chapter, strained political relations did amount to losses and educational ties are just one of them. Political indifference during the post nuclear-test years when ties between the two countries were severed could be one of the possible reasons but the present diplomatic situation seems to be conducive. With business and economic ties taking off, education and research can improve in the future.
Another dimension is that manpower in India has been instrumental in its economic success. In the case of higher education, there is a need for a greater number of educational institutions to cater to the academic requirements. While the education sector is growing continuously in India, on account of its growing population, the need for more institutions is correspondingly growing.

The Promotion of Canadian Education in India

There have been several attempts to give impetus to development in this area via research studies and promotion through setting up of “Campus Canada” (Touhey 7) and “Brand Canada” in India (Touhey 6)—the idea being the promotion of Canadian Education in India through supplying information to Indian students. In the year 2007 about $2 million (Scherf and Macpherson 11), was allocated for two years to support the “Brand Canada” (Touhey 6) marketing strategy. In this context, it is interesting that the provincial debate involving language arose. Martha Crago—the Vice-Rector of Internationals and Institutional Relations from the University of Montreal stated: “We need to explain to people why it would be as interesting to study in French as it is to study in English and that at the graduate level students can write theses and interact with their professors and peers in English at the francophone universities” (qtd in Scherf and Macpherson 11). It is to be noted that Indian students prefer English-speaking environments and that is the reason why they opt for other foreign destinations like the US, the UK and Australia for higher studies. In such a case provincial marketing and that too in a region whose language is unfamiliar to Indians cannot be an appealing strategy atleast to begin with. Learning up a new language is a huge task. It is understandable that French
language and culture are extremely important and dear in the Canadian context and this ought to be respected but as a form of marketing, this plan falls rather flat in the Indian scenario. The primary task is to attract the Indian students. Introduction to a new language and culture can happen gradually.

In the process of entering into collaborations it is also essential to be able to properly evaluate not only India’s manpower but also their knowledge and innovative tendencies. It is not possible for any economy to advance and make a foray onto the business stage of the world without being innovative. While over-estimating a country’s resources are undesirable and can lead to misallocation of funds and assets, underestimating and stereotyping the capacity of a nation and its people can put a severe strain on bilateral relations causing irreparable and irreversible damage at the diplomatic level too. In this context, baseless and generic statements, made for instance by Dr. Randall Martin—Executive Director of the British Columbia Council for International Education, can raise doubts. His opinions have been quoted in a research report and he states:

One of the fundamental issues about … the Indian education system, is that, while they have more brain power than we can ever harness … one thing that the Indian education system doesn’t foster, is innovation. And that’s what our students can bring in spades. They might not get the same math and physics scores as the Indian students, but … they can think outside the box. … I’m convinced you still don’t have that in India. That’s the edge that our students have. (qtd in Scherf and Macpherson 17)
The opinion is at once supercilious, nonspecific, without adequate proof and tends to create and perpetuate stereotypical images. It also suggests that India is merely a vast group of people who cannot think for themselves and need beacons of light from foreigners. While Canadians visiting India or Indians visiting Canada is a sure way of gathering different views and perspectives, one preponderating over the other is unhealthy and unnecessary. What Dr. Randall admits is that Canadian students may not match Indian students when it comes to scoring in ‘math and physics’, yet he believes strongly that Canadians are better in thinking out of the box. One just has to take a look at the depth and breadth of innovation taking place in India, the number of entrepreneurs who are able to generate employment opportunities just because of their proclivity to innovate. A look at creativity in Indian literature and films that wed different cultures and appreciate them through innovative symbolism and aesthetics will enlighten the uninformed how innovation and originality abound in India.

Again, a look at Indian history in the political arena during the Indian Independence movement, namely the use of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and truth in the wake of imperial crisis shows that India did not depend on other nations to derive such philosophy and use it innovatively. Not only in ‘math and physics’, Indians have been carving a niche for themselves in literature, music, engineering, science and technology and in so many other various spheres, both cultural and economic. Imagining lacunae in India can be misleading. Without some amount of quality in the education system, it is not possible for anybody to be good at ‘math and physics’. The statement therefore is preposterous and more importantly unconvincing and unacceptable. It is also reminiscent of the imperial mentality
that underlines attitudes of condescension. Even stranger is the fact that such a statement is quoted and provided as critical evidence in a research report implying that there are problems in India which can be taken advantage of. Opinions of this kind are misleading and such views can exert a deleterious effect in promoting bilateral association since the basis of such a sensitive diplomatic relationship has to be necessarily founded on mutual respect. Interestingly, in one of his research studies (that he wrote with Mr. Ryan Touhey) he states “Government and institutional leaders in India are already dismayed at being treated as a ‘market;’ we must engage with India as equals and partners and not purely as destinations for their students and revenue or as simply the purveyors of some program they need” (9). Also that “In approaching India as a market, rather than as a source of partnerships and strategic alliances, Canada has risked alienating the directors, vice chancellors and rectors of the very institutions it needs” (10). The sensitivity and implications of a market approach are far-reaching. Nevertheless, India is open to higher-education collaborations with foreign countries and at the same time is increasing its own capacity and quality of educational infrastructure to cater to the demands of its people.

It is critical to see India as a nation that is assertive about being treated as an equal partner and not as a country that is in dire need of enlightenment from somebody. This is a valuable insight and goes beyond economics but very necessary for stepping up business activities and for stronger diplomatic relations.

This is precisely what most Indo-Canadian writers emphasize subtly in their works. While multiculturalism is an accepted state policy it is not sufficient to merely pronounce it—it has to be practiced in spirit. Without implementation at a practical level,
multicultural education can lose its meaning and significance. Therefore, while writing reports and other such documents of significance, it is extremely important to exercise caution. Of course, the opinion of just one person or a few persons cannot spell doom but it is essential to be careful when evaluating a country’s capacity and misrepresenting its resources.

Paul Evans, the former Co-CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation makes a pertinent observation in the context of educational collaborations when he suggests that the faculty of universities and colleges can work diligently in this regard since they “can find the right counterparts and make the right connections” (qtd in Scherf and Macpherson 17). Without attempting to be or sound over-ambitious, the suggestion that Paul Evans makes can be successful and can gradually spread the word. Besides, if there is quality and something gainful to achieve from mutual collaborations, automatically there will be interest in exploring Canada. ‘Good wine needs no bush’. Shakespeare made this point long ago and this holds water even today. Of course, there is a need for marketing since there are several institutions to choose from. Many choices lead to dilemmas of selection and marketing does become important but the good ones are always recognized and promoted by those who have experienced them. If the setting is favourable for attaining objectives of quality higher education, naturally Canada can attract Indian students magnetically.

Of course, the various fellowships and scholarships that have been instituted through the Shastri-Indo Institute in New Delhi, the ICCS (The International Council of Canadian Studies) have allowed Indians a chance to understand the Canadian education system. On April 13, 2012, the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan signed a Memorandum of
Understanding with the Shastri- Indo Institute. This memorandum supports academic exchanges. Employment and Immigration Minister, Mr. Rob Norris stated “Saskatchewan is India's largest trading partner in Canada, but this MOU will broaden the scope of our relationship to include education and innovation. This MOU will facilitate and foster even closer ties between our two jurisdictions and continue to support the growth of our knowledge economy” (http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=d816b1d7-aed1-41e4-b2b3-83cc13f47661). The Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute was jointly created by the Canadian and the Indian Governments in the year 1968; and named after the Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri (1964-1966). The aim of this institute has been to promote Canadian and Indian studies and this has been happening successfully ever since its establishment. Its goals are captured in the following statement:

Our broad-based initiatives support the creation of binational links between academia, government, the business community and civil society organizations by funding research and hosting seminars. Our internships and fellowships provide opportunities for individuals to gain first-hand experience in India or Canada.
(http://sici.org/about/)

The areas in which the institute endeavours to dive into, underline the construction of a strong bilateral association between Canada and India since the chosen departments are strategic. It is a fact that fellowships and exchange programs have stimulated a lot of interest in Canadian and India studies. For instance, interest in Canadian and Indian literatures has been a direct consequence of such initiatives. Since, faculty and students get a chance to do field work in each other’s country, it provides them a close and authentic
academic experience in their subjects. Culturally and academically Canadian and Indian studies are essential for mutual understanding since literature reflects contemporary situations, though in a fictional mode.

Focus on India and Canadian Studies have enabled thoughtfulness and consideration to each other’s national issues. Brian Mulroney once gave a message to Canadianists stating that Canadian studies would generate positive effects on international relations. He mentioned “The role that Canadian studies scholars and organizations such as the International Council for Canadian Studies play in researching and dissemination information on Canada is immeasurable. The impact of study and research undertaken by these scholars has already been felt, and will continue to grow, as they return to become involved in the government, business and intellectual leadership of their countries” (qtd in Juneja 372). Research and scholarship have a tendency to circulate. They cannot be confined because specializations in specific areas are transmitted in the academic environment. Eventually it has far reaching consequences in that it is propagated to other spheres of the academia, political and economic organizations.

Michael Brecher in his inaugural address to the twentieth anniversary conference in New Delhi in 1988 on the origins of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute says that originally the idea of the institute was to focus on India studies. As he points out:

The Institute arose…from an awareness of the glaring lack of knowledge by Canadians about Indian civilization…It was natural therefore to envisage such an institute as an attempt to fill this enormous gap by stimulating Canadian
scholarship and teaching about India through fellowships for Canadians and
library materials to Canadian educational institutions. (9)

What started as an idea to focus on India studies gradually developed into an
important organization that became a two-way traffic with knowledge flows from both
sides. So far, the institute has been instrumental in stimulating research in both Canadian
and India studies. Young researchers and faculty have benefitted immensely through
visiting the countries and getting hands-on-experience. However, in 2012, the sudden
cancelling of funds by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)
for the continuation of such educational and research activities can hamper the prospects
of higher education network that both countries jointly ventured into. The flowering of the
institute occurred because of tremendous efforts from both countries and the cultivation of
people-to-people links. The conception and implementation of the numerous exchange
programmes was revolutionary and path-breaking. For instance, it led to the advent of
Canadian literature into India with the result that Canadian Study Centers were established
in many universities. Gradually, with diaspora literature assuming the shape of a serious
branch of study, Indo-Canadian literature also started gaining ground. Abolition of
fellowships or funding towards this area can adversely affect the networks that have
already been rolled. Letting such programmes vanish suddenly wouldn’t be desirable to
academicians and students who have already spent years on research that have been of
interest mutually. Other alternatives like reducing the duration of the fellowships can be
considered instead of completely terminating them. How to resolve this issue should
certainly be a concern to both countries and one solution that can be taken view of is the
idea of establishing a meta-university that has been discussed as a possible alternative in the later segments of this chapter.

Collaborations between educational institutions help to create stable and long term relationships. In the research study titled *Innovation in Higher Education Partnerships in India*, Ryan Touhey cites the instance of the University of Waterloo in Canada that has collaborated with higher education institutes in India like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT’s) in Delhi, Kanpur and Bombay and has created opportunities for collaborative research projects, student and faculty exchange programs (Touhey 5). IIT’s, IIM’s and Central Universities are some of the most revered educational and research institutions in India and collaborations between them and Canadian educational organizations can create strong knowledge networks.

**Use of Diaspora Networks to Propagate the Canadian Education Infrastructure**

The Indian diasporic community has never been utilized optimally in strengthening bilateral association between the two countries as is evident from the various research studies and reports. It is a matter of fact that people of Indian origin in Canada or in any other country for that matter continue interacting with their families and friends back home and share their experiences. Many a times, they inspire and encourage their acquaintances and members of family to migrate to Canada for educational or occupational purposes. This can also be evidenced in fictional works of Indo-Canadian writers. For instance in Anita Rau Badami’s *Can you Hear the Nightbird Call?* and *Tell It to the Trees*; in M G Vassanji’s *The Assassin’s Song* and in other writers, most characters travel to Canada to take up jobs, then circulate their experiences to their people at Home. So diaspora is a very
critical link in engaging India and Canada. In a policy dialogue published by the
Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, there is a reference to the India
Advisory Council formed by the Simon Fraser University in the year 2006. This council is
constituted of people from the Indo-Canadian community. They come from diverse fields
of specialization like health, business and education and they have been encouraged “to
push the BC-India relationship forward. Faculty involvement follows a 50-50 split
between diaspora faculty and non-diaspora faculty…. The SFU’s India Advisory Council
has already done some of its own fundraising to support awards and scholarships for
student internships in India, and Indian students studying at SFU” (26). This kind of
activity raises awareness of the type of infrastructure existing in Canada allowing Indian
students to consider it as a destination for the pursuit of higher education. Furthermore,
this creates alumni networks that can be harnessed to create opportunities of collaborative
projects. As mentioned in an India-Canada CEO roundtable “Students are our best
ambassadors and greatest promoters” (Canadian Council of Chief Executives 3).

India’s Over-Abundance in Labour Market and Canada’s Shortage of Skilled Labour

According to a recent study (2005) by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters
Management Issues Survey, “over 10% of manufacturers and exporters experienced
difficulties filling positions for entry-level employees, engineers, equipment operators,
sales and marketing personnel” (qtd in Touhey 3); also there will be a need for about
16,000 to 20,000 technology experts “every year over the next ten years” (qtd in Touhey
3). In such a scenario, it becomes inevitable to either train existing human capital or import
them. T. Majumdar used the term “semi-finished human capital” (qtd in Khadria 410), to suggest the movement of semi-educated Indians to foreign countries. Now, it is at this point of recruitment in occupational sectors that higher education plays a role in training and development for specific work environments. It is the demographic structure of India consisting youth that has resulted in a consideration of exploring collaborative possibilities between Canada and India. According to a report “The education services targeted at International students contributed to 64, 940 jobs in the Canadian labour market. Short-term and long-term international students spent over $291 million in government revenue” (Council of Confederation 14). The arrival of foreign students in Canada has had tremendous impact on job patterns in the country too. Clearly, there is scope in the department of higher education and exploring how bilateral ties can accrue benefits to both India and Canada. It is interesting to observe that in the past Indian immigrants were more into manual labour but:

Unlike the early 1980s, today the majority of Indian immigrants enter with a tertiary level education. In fact, Indian immigrants generally arrive with more education than the average Canadian-born person. Similarly, recent Indian immigrants enter more qualified and better trained than those who arrived a couple of decades before them. For example, in 2005, professionals comprised 61.2% of the Indian immigrant group, twice the number of professionals among all immigrants (33.7%). (Agrawal and Lovell 148)

The reason for highly qualified Indian professionals is also because there is emphasis on education in India and there is a surplus of graduates that can be employed
in sectors in Canada that require such skilled labour. There have been contradicting voices in this respect. For instance, William D Gairdner states:

Most Canadians have been led to believe that the majority of immigrants are brought into Canada for economic reasons. They have been sold the song that we need immigrants to “grow”. But the truth is that fewer than 20 percent come in as immediate family members—“family class” immigrants sponsored by “relatives” or for “humanitarian” reasons. None of these people are required to satisfy any criteria whatsoever under Canada’s point system for immigrant selection. They just have to be alive when they enter. (410)

This idea can be compared to the statistics of Agrawal and Lovell, that has been mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. In the first place, it is preposterous to expect isolated single members of families to consider Canada as an option to live forever or for a long time if they have to do so alone. They need their families as much as their families need them. Secondly, even if there are “sponsored” (410) immigrants as Gairdner states, they cannot be sitting idle. This is because their sponsorship will enable their coming and engaging in some economic or educational activity since human existence, naturally cannot be a static condition. Every individual has to work in some way for sustenance. So to suggest that immigrants merely come because they are living creatures and they have relatives sponsoring them for life is impractical and unbelievable. Along with the contradictory opinions it would be well to consider some of the ideas and statistics that follow.
In Canada, owing to a decline in population, there has been an acute shortage of qualified and skilled labour. This interferes with the smooth running of work adversely affecting growth. According to a research report:

As early as 2003 almost 50% of Canadian businesses surveyed experienced difficulties in filling positions for entry-level employees, engineers, equipment operators, and sales and marketing personnel and said “a shortage of qualified labour was one of the most important issues facing them”. (Touhey and Martin 5)

The kinds of personnel mentioned in this statement are central to the functioning of an economy and a shortage in these categories can put a severe strain on carrying out activities that are vital to keep work going. It is interesting that as early as 1852, Susanna Moodie in her autobiographical work Roughing it in the Bush, mentions what a farmer says “children are riches in this country” (487), implying that Canada is deficient in manpower and the more children people have, the better for the country.

It is here that India can work as a provider of qualified manpower relevant to the Canadian economic scenario. It is estimated that India produces about 100,000 engineering graduates and over 2 million non-engineering graduates annually (qtd in Touhey and Martin 6). This number is enormous. Obviously they cannot be absorbed immediately into the Indian job market but they are definitely a vital resource and can be accommodated elsewhere. Since manpower is irreplaceable, however advanced, super-technological and robotic a society maybe, it becomes imperative to resort to immigration as a solution to Canada’s demographic challenge.
Recent Developments in Foreign Investment in Higher Education in India

It would be enlightening to cast a glance at some of the developments in the higher education sector in India. Referring to twinning programmes in higher education, Shailaja Neelakantan opines that they are “the most popular form of partnership…because they involve the least risk for foreign institutions …. The partners share tuition revenue for the part of the program taught in India… faculty members from the Indian institutions teach a curriculum provided by the foreign partner (n pag.). Of course, the mode of partnership is different in different contexts since there is no proper or strict regulation in that matter. Foreign education partnerships are quite unregulated at the moment in India though there are plenty of opportunities if foreign institutions get a chance to enter India in times to come. Certainly, to merely have twinning programmes in the era of globalization seems strange but in the absence of other possibilities, at least in the present circumstances, this seems to be the most practical bargain.

There is great demand for higher education in India today. Rising population is a major reason for this. Managing training and education activities is a challenge in India and so the UGC :

…has decided to promote the concept of establishing cluster college universities across the country during the 12th Five Year Plan period. This would minimise the burden of existing State-run universities in inspecting and affiliating colleges of the existing universities….. A UGC concept document submitted to the Union Planning Commission has mooted the creation of 400 such cluster college
universities in India between 2012 and 2017. Besides, 20 exclusive women's universities and 10 Meta universities would be established…. (Pragya Digital Learning n. pag)

This is just one of the several plans that the Indian government has ventured into. To cater to the growing interests of students in higher education and research, Kapil Sibbal, the present Human Resource Development (HRD) minister has endorsed interesting concepts in higher education. He has come up with the idea of networking several universities to create what he calls a ‘meta university’ that would offer students the flexibility to choose courses of their choice that can cut across disciplines. The term ‘Meta-University’ “has been so named (Meta is Greek for "going beyond") as it will "go beyond the conventional boundaries". There will be a network of institutions to allow a student at, say, a scientific institution in Bangalore to enroll for a history course at a liberal arts institution in New Delhi. The arrangement is expected to include face-to-face interaction and involve mentors for students” (The Hindustan Times n. pag.) and the government intends “to set up a National Innovation Fund of Rs 5,000 crore to support new ideas. The meta university will take advantage of the national knowledge network programme through high-speed broadband connectivity” (India Business Insight n. pag.). The setting aside of money for such activities clearly indicates willingness to change the face of the education sector in that it “attempts to breach institutional boundaries by creating a university in virtual space…. To begin with, four universities - Jawaharlal Nehru University, DU, Jamia Milia Islamia and IIT-Delhi will offer one-year diploma course in Public Health in which courses from all these institutions will be converged to allow transdisciplinary learning” (Pandey n. pag.). Clearly, meta-university is
being seen as a form of experimentation that is expected to transcend disciplinary restrictions in an attempt to cater to student interests. If this can happen at a national level, there is no reason why this cannot and shouldn’t be materialized in the global scenario.

Research today does stress the idea of crossing disciplinary boundaries which is an attempt to fuse disciplines and facilitate new modes of thinking. This becomes a possibility in the context of freedom to design and pursue subjects one is inclined to study. The present education system in India does not allow students to take up courses in different universities unless there is a preexisting exchange programme or partnership between universities. As an experiment, this possibility is being explored by educational institutions in West Bengal where “Three prominent institutes of higher studies in West Bengal- Jadavpur University, Calcutta University and the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta are reported to be testing the feasibility of collaboration for setting up Meta University—a concept mooted by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh—in the eastern region” (Kala n. pag). All these educational institutions are reputed and known for their specializations. Exchanging their knowledge networks would open up fresh areas of research. This testing of waters at the national level can be tried out at an international level too. India and Canada can certainly consider this opportunity. For instance, Canada has been promoting Canadian Studies in several universities in India. One major objective of researchers when travelling to each other’s country is collection of library material. Since, there is plenty of research material in digitized format it should be possible to implement exchange of such data through access to online material.
The concept of meta-university can add the dimension of human interaction to this arrangement. Such experiment if successful can revolutionize and replace older styles of pedagogy providing access to a wide variety of courses and research activities.

This idea is ambitious but possible since internet technologies facilitate such infrastructure. Students will have greater flexibility in choosing their disciplines without being compelled to select only from what is available or only in the place where they are physically located. Such a concept is revolutionary in its character since there will be a breakaway from the usual compartmentalization of disciplines. In a conference entitled “One Globe 2012: Uniting Knowledge Communities” organized by the US-India Business Council Mr. Kapil Sibbal stated:

The 21st century meta-university would be a network and an ecosystem rather than a single brick and mortar space. Though the internet and technology are fundamental to this conception of the meta-university, at the crux is not a new technology but a ‘new pedagogy’ that is more in tune with the requirements of the knowledge society of the 21st century. (qtd in TOI n. pag.)

Innovation of this kind can enable several students to get access to quality education since in a vastly populated nation like India, managing and training the resources is an enormous challenge. This is yet another aspect of globalization that is constantly shrinking space and equalizing opportunities that are currently the pride and privilege of limited elite. The proposal aims to provide students a chance to pursue research and degree that would be cross-disciplinary by nature. Innovation and out-of-the box thinking can take place only
if there is freedom in terms of designing individually what a student might perceive as educationally profitable.

India has already started to materialize this idea of meta-university with Germany and has collaborated with their universities and Kapil Sibbal has emphasized “a consortia approach of twinning between universities…where two to three Indian Universities could partner with two to three German Universities for conducting degree level courses…. Two MoUs were signed between IIT Mandi and University of Stuttgart … University of Hyderabad and Westfalesehe Wilhelmms….”. (Digital Learning n. pag.). Exchanging knowledge and technologies can become a reality if such novel concepts are implemented. What has been visualized between India and Germany can be conceptualized between India and Canada as well. There is already the existence of such networks through Indo-Shastri programs. An extension of such prevailing connections would be the envisaging of the idea of a meta-university that would truly create a globalised educational programme. If there is a lack of funds, as is being suggested, through the abolition of fellowships to students and researchers in Canada and India, the concept of a meta-university can provide a viable alternative. Of course, field work involving the movement of researchers and students cannot really be substituted through the virtual world since hands-on-experience always give a better understanding of the subject. However, in the absence of funding it becomes imperative and sensible to continue educational programmes and partnerships through other ways which can be made possible through the use of internet technologies.

The recent announcement by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to allow foreign educational institutions to open their branches in India is most likely to throw open
new vistas in this area. Presently, the matter is being debated since this change can have serious implications on the higher education sector. Already there are several education partnerships and collaborations between Indian and foreign universities. In order to proffer quality education to students and to prevent fraudulent institutions to gain entry into the market, the UGC is still deliberating on the issue though it has made clear that the best 500 foreign universities can enter India. An article in *The Times of India* daily states:

> In an attempt to rein in fly-by-night operators who have set up shops in India, the Universities Grants Commission (UGC) has made its approval mandatory for all collaborations between foreign and Indian educational institutions. The new regulations approved by the …give existing institutions six months to get approval…. The guidelines come at a time when the Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations Bill) 2010 has been pending before Parliament for the past two years. There has been growing concern in recent years that fake foreign varsities were duping students. Now, over 600 foreign education institutions operate in the country. (Dhawan n. pag)

While it is clear that the path for foreign investment in higher education in India has been laid, it is as yet uncertain as to what the rules and stipulations for the whole process will be. Nevertheless, investment in the sector can take place given the fact that there is a huge youth population in the country that is interested in getting quality education. The advantage of staying back in India while at the same time getting the chance to avail of foreign education programmes is an interesting
possibility in the higher education sector. Give and take of knowledge can forge greater bonds between Canada and India. With the help of internet technologies it is not an impossible task to implement the concept of a meta-university. The virtual world therefore, can bring academicians and students together to work as a team and also individually, in the process making meaningful contribution to research and education. Tie-ups, collaborations and partnership programmes and twinning—all these can be further explored with India’s willingness to welcome foreign universities in the country.
Works Cited


Agrawal, Sandeep K and Alex Lovell. “High-income Indian Immigrants in Canada”. 

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Policy Dialogue on Fostering 
Effective Engagement of Canadian University Diaspora Faculty in International 
Research collaboration for Development: Summary of Outcomes. Association of 


Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Canada-India: The Way Forward. Ottawa: Canadian 

7.

Dhawan, Himanshi. “UGC to let only top 500 foreign universities enter India”. June 03 
03/news/32005183_1_foreign-institutions-foreign-universities-foreign-varsities>. 


http://go.galegroup.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA260049883&v=2.1&u=utoronto_main&it=r&p=GRGM&sw=w

Kala, Vijayraghavan. "Top Colleges in West Bengal Planning for Meta University [Education]." *The Economic Times (Online)*: n/a. ABI/INFORM Global; *The Advocate (Stamford); Baltimore Sun; Greenwich Time; Hartford Courant; Los Angeles Times; Morning Call; Newsday; Orlando Sentinel; ProQuest Newsstand; Sun Sentinel*. May 30 2012. Web. 7 June 2012.

"Meta University to Help Students Pursue Two Courses in Different Institutes (the Government intends to set up a National Innovation Fund of Rs5,000 crore)." India Business Insight 16 Nov. 2011. General OneFile. Web. 7 June 2012.

http://go.galegroup.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA272798417&v=2.1&u=utoronto_main&it=r&p=ITOF&sw=w.


Pandey, Vineeta. "A College Where the Course is Tailor-made for You." DNA.Sunday: n/a. The Advocate (Stamford); Baltimore Sun; Greenwich Time; Hartford Courant; Los Angeles Times; Morning Call; Newsday; Orlando Sentinel; ProQuest Newsstand; Sun Sentinel. Apr 01 2012. Web. 7 June 2012.


---. *Innovation in Higher Education Partnerships with India: Comparing Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.* Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada: Vancouver, BC, Canada. 2007. 5. Print.

"Want to Study at a Meta University?" *The Hindustan Times:* n/a. *The Advocate (Stamford); Baltimore Sun; Greenwich Time; Hartford Courant; Los Angeles Times; Morning Call; Newsday; Orlando Sentinel; ProQuest Newsstand; Sun Sentinel.* Nov 30 2011. Web. 7 June 2012.