



Having just concluded the much lauded ‘Canada-China-India: Synergy in Education 2009’ event here is a quick update on the proceedings and an event snapshot.

We’ve been receiving commendations and congratulations for ‘Synergy’ from hundreds of people, not only from those who attended but also from those who couldn’t make it but heard about the stunning success of the event and the fabulous turnout besides the tremendous exposure the event generated. As of last count, *Synergy 09* had over 200 people + media in attendance, many of who stayed past 7pm!!

To be able to have that much power in one place and have virtually every stake holder present who may have value to add in Canada’s ‘Internationalization’ process was amazing and we are eternally grateful to those that generously lent their time, prepared presentations and make an effort to ensure a hugely successful event. As the organizer of this ‘independently funded and user supported’ event, the collection of such education icons and giants in one room is testament to the fact that education is truly a lynch pin, has reached a boiling point and the time to act is now. A clarion call has been made and various ‘Synergy’ speakers implored us to do more and it is up to us to accept their challenge.

ICE is proactively leading the charge by focusing on a multi pronged approach to assist Canadian Universities & Colleges make the most of opportunities overseas, particularly in the ‘Canada-India’ education corridor. ICE took the opportunity to announce several post ‘Synergy’ initiatives including leading a high level education delegation to India in February 2010 which many institutions already expressed an interest in joining. ‘Ed-Mission 2010’ will be led by Hon. Roy MacLaren, accompanied by reputed top ranking College/ University officials. ICE also announced the opening of a ‘rep-office’ in Ahmedabad besides New Delhi which was announced last month.

Some of the topics discussed at ‘Synergy’ were as follows: While the landscapes may be unique, China & India have many parallels and are actually not so different from each other and also have much to learn from each other. While Canada’s share as a host country is only 5%, in the top 10 Countries of origin in the world, China ranks 1<sup>st</sup> and India is 2<sup>nd</sup>

Towards realizing potentials: Given the present assessment that there are several under-utilized potentials, it is critical that concerted steps be undertaken, specially the following:

- a Quantum leap in Canada Brand Promotion
- Enrich Academia-Industry Cooperation
- Initiate a Major Trilateral Collaborative Project
- Establish Bilateral/Trilateral Consultative Mechanism
- Unequivocal Canadian Position on ‘Re-engagement’ with China and India

While DFAIT is doing its best to reinforce the Canadian Brand in India and China, they believe a stronger branding will lead to long term benefits.

Dr. Mansinha (U of Western Ontario) spoke about the exchange programs between Canada and India and the wide range of benefits to both countries, especially the Ontario-Maharashtra-Goa (OMG) partnership. Dr. Middleton spoke of the need to stop all the talk and start doing something. He believes the Canadian bureaucracy has been talking about the great potential in these countries for a very long time but has failed to act upon these opportunities. He once again challenged us to stop talking and start doing. Dr. Sunny Handa (Blakes Law Firm) and Dr. Gerald Ross (McGill) spoke about the legal challenges of doing business in outside countries and reiterated the need to have a local expert by your side. James Liebenburg’s main concern, speaking for Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute was the speed at which Canada was working towards activities in India. He spoke about the need to stop walking toward India and instead start flying. Jennifer Humphries from CBIE and Simon Williams, on behalf of ICE discussed trends in International Student mobility.

While the primary concern discussed was the visa issue, Brand Canada (or the lack of it) was the 2<sup>nd</sup> issue. Many College and University representatives complained that the Canadian visa offices in India & China are not as efficient as some of those in competing countries like the US & Australia. The turnaround time for a Canadian visa application is much longer than that for UK, US & Australia. This was defended by DFAIT who explained that since there have been many fraudulent applications, the visa officers need to be more vigilant. However, Canada insists on a medical checkup which is not compulsory for other countries, creating an unnecessary roadblock and delay. Another significant and much debated topic was the issue of Canada's Branding overseas and while DFAIT has a budget of \$1M to market Canadian education overseas, we rake in over \$6.5B in revenues (as per Min. Stockwell Day). While some may say that we aren't investing enough, others might argue that we are realizing a significant return on investment!

'Synergy' images as well as presentations have been posted on ICE's website ([www.ICEunlimited.com](http://www.ICEunlimited.com)) along with some attendee comments. Besides attracting 2 Consul Generals and 2 High Commissioners, the event drew ex-Ambassadors, current and former Ministers and several political dignitaries. 'Synergy' also witnessed a record number of College & University VP's in attendance as well as esteemed academic personalities besides receiving extraordinary media coverage via print and also was featured on TV. We received and read Min. Stockwell Day's greetings while a few other greetings were carried in the event brochure which was distributed at the event.

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- *Husain, just wanted to say that I thought that this years Synergy session was fantastic. The presentations were interesting and full of relevant information.... [Peter Gill, Memorial University of Newfoundland.](#)*
  - *Dear Husain, It was extremely timely, well-attended and had just the right set of speakers to create the urgency for action in this important sector. Naturally, IITAC is very much interested in contributing. You did a great job in organizing the seminar. Please accept my kudos for that effort....[Chander Dhawan, President, IIT Alumni of Canada, Toronto.](#)*
  - *Hi Husain, Congratulations....had a good event....[Kevin Kamal, World Education Service, Toronto](#)*
  - *I would like to thank you for providing a wonderful conference last Thursday. I thoroughly enjoyed the entire day and the speakers were wonderful....[Dan Holland, Loyalist College](#)*
  - *Dear Husain, Great success, Congrats! We know that Synergy'09 has further provoked welcome interest of a much larger group....[Dr. Balbir Sahni, Concordia University](#)*
  - *Your event was a big hit & everyone I spoke to was very pleased, CONGRATULATIONS! ... [Boqumila Anaya, ICEF Canada.](#)*
  - *Husain, Congratulations and thank you for facilitating and organising this terrific landmark event. Synergy 09 was truly an enriching experience.... [Carmen Jacques, Certified General Accountants of Ontario.](#)*

