

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS ON

**'INDIA CANADA COLLABORATION IN HIGHER
EDUCATION – THE ROAD AHEAD'**

February 17, 2013, India Habitat Centre New Delhi

For almost five decades now the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI) has played a significant and pioneering role in developing academic linkages between higher education institutions in India and Canada. In June, 2011, SICI in collaboration with Carleton University, Ottawa, organized an Education Summit at Carleton to discuss different aspects of educational cooperation between India and Canada, such as international credit transfer, degree recognition, co-direction of graduate students, and the facilitation of joint research projects, degrees and exchange programs. The event brought together a prominent group of stakeholders to discuss the way forward, including a delegation of twenty Indian university Vice Chancellors, twenty four Canadian university presidents and designates, as well as eminent speakers from the Canadian and Indian public and private sector.

On February 17, 2013, SICI organized a round-table at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi to take forward the collaborative initiatives that were forged during the Education Summit at Carleton in June 2011. The objective was also to identify areas of future collaboration and the modes of engagement between Indian and Canadian universities/research institutes keeping in view the priorities of both the Indian and Canadian governments. The round-table brought together Vice Chancellors of various universities in India that have research, faculty and student exchange links with Canadian institutions and Directors of the Canadian Studies Centers in India.

Welcoming the Vice-Chancellors and Directors of the Canadian Studies Centers in India to the roundtable discussions the President of SICI, Professor Ranbir Singh, said that it was an important event for SICI since it was part of a process to identify national priorities in both India and Canada and align SICI's programmes with them. Mr. Simon Cridland, Head, Advocacy Division of the High Commission of Canada in India talked about the importance that Canada attached to educational cooperation with India. He referred to the MoU signed by the two governments for educational collaboration which noted "with satisfaction the efforts of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute to promote bilateral education linkages since 1968". He mentioned a number of

initiatives that had been taken by Canadian universities and national organizations to develop links with India and said that this interest needs to be translated into collaborative programmes between institutions in both countries. Professor Shanthi Johnson, Professor & Associate Dean, University of Regina, and Vice President/President Elect of SICI spoke of the dimensions of SICI's work and its importance to India-Canada educational cooperation and Shastri Institute's niche in knowledge mobilization, youth engagement/development, institutional partnerships, government relations in higher education as well as promoting India Studies in Canada and Canada Studies in India as avenues for forging ahead. She stressed the fact that SICI has been responsive to national needs and priorities in both India and Canada and this is reflected in the nature of work done by Shastri Fellows and in the work done through its collaborative research projects.

The first technical session of the roundtable was on **'India-Canada Education Cooperation: Identifying Priorities for Collaboration'**. The session was chaired by Professor Chiranjib Sen, former President of SICI. The discussant for the session was Mr. Simon Cridland, Head, Advocacy Division of the High Commission of Canada, New Delhi. Professor Sen said that SICI has facilitated the creation of large and active formal and informal networks of scholars who work with tremendous dedication, loyalty and goodwill in both countries. It needs to leverage the network's potential in future programmes. He was of the view that SICI deserved continued support from the Indian and Canadian governments since it was fulfilling their mandate. Mr. Cridland said that SICI could play a significant role in fostering collaboration between institutions in both countries. He suggested that models followed by organizations with a mandate similar to SICI's could be examined to see how SICI's role as a facilitator could be strengthened.

Round-table participants made a number of suggestions during the discussion that followed. These included:

- Steps for brand building and dissemination of the work done by SICI
- Greater focus on reciprocal (two-way) mobility of students and faculty members.
- Developing new internship programmes taking into consideration, the fact that experience in India is now important for Canadian students from a career perspective.
- Enhanced website to host a dynamic database to include expressions of interest for research collaboration, lists of courses and programs taught/available, identify areas of research expertise.

- Joint development of innovative courses and training programmes that are relevant to national needs.

The second technical session of the roundtable was on **‘Regulatory Issues in International Educational Collaboration’**. The session was chaired by Professor B. S. Ghuman, Dean, Panjab University, Chandigarh, and a former Executive Council Member of SICI. The discussant was Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy, Vice Chancellor, University of Hyderabad. Professor Ghuman said that the regulatory environment was critical for any deepening of links between Indian and Canadian universities. Issues such as credit-transfer, mutual recognition of degrees and courses and twinning programmes would be possible only if a supportive regulatory environment was developed. Professor Ramaswamy talked about the problem of multiple regulatory agencies in the education sector in India and said that the passage of bills for regulatory reform by Parliament was essential if cooperation was to be strengthened.

Round-table participants made a number of suggestions during the discussion that followed. These included:

- Alignment of admission procedures and tests
- Joint placement programs
- Comparability of pedagogy – need for pedagogical innovation
- Joint curricula development – diversification of board of studies
- Standardized credit transfer.
- Development of mechanisms for twinning programs with Canadian member institutions
- Joint programs with institutions/universities in third countries
- Additional certification for faculty participating in SICI programmes.
- Recognition of programs and courses within Indian member institutions

The third and final technical session was on **‘Developing New Collaborative Programmes for Research and Teaching’**. The session was chaired by Professor A. S. Narang, former President of SICI. The discussants were Professor R. Venkata Rao, Vice Chancellor of the National Law School of India University, Bangalore and Professor Suchorita Chattopadhyay, Director, Centre for Canadian Studies, Jadavpur University. Professor Narang said that collaborative research was SICI’s core strength and there should be greater focus on collaborative research in future. Research facilitated by SICI needs to be input into national policy making in both India and Canada. Professor Venkata Rao suggested innovative collaborative programmes that could be undertaken in the field of legal studies. Professor

Chattopadhyay spoke of the importance of developing courses in Indian member institutions that could attract Canadian studies to spend a term/semester in Indian universities and research institutions.

Round-table participants made a number of suggestions for future programmes during the discussion that followed. These included:

- Focus on mid-level and young teachers in terms of research and faculty development programs
- Greater focus on disseminating collaborative research
- Funding of programmes similar to the Shastri Applied Research Programmes (SHARP) funded by CIDA.
- Development of the book program since it is critical for comparative research.
- Research on teaching methods
- A National 'Engaging Canada' conference in India on the lines of the 'Engaging India' conferences in Canada.

The concluding session was chaired by Professor Shanthi Johnson and Professor Biju Paul Abraham of IIM Calcutta, a member of SICI's Executive Council. Mr.Simon Cridland also spoke during the session. They briefed members regarding the future course of action that SICI would follow to ensure that suggestions made during the round table were taken note of by the two governments and to incorporate them in future programmes of SICI. Professor Shanthi Johnson proposed a vote of thanks at the end of the session.