A Bridge to Where? An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Bridging Programs for Internationally Trained Professionals in Toronto

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education Ontario Institute for Studies in Education University of Toronto

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Abstract
The biggest hurdle for new immigrants in Canada is their integration into the economic system. These immigrants have higher levels of education but their earnings have been lower and falling in comparison to the native-born Canadians (Akter et al., 2013; Block and Galabuzzi, 2011; Reitz, 2011). The issue of integrating Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) into the labour market in Canada is complex and multifaceted. In its effort to ease this gap of integration, the provincial government has invested millions of dollars to establish numerous “bridging programs” in Ontario. These bridging programs that are supposed to integrate IEPs quickly into the labour market vary depending on the profession, service providers, their length and structure.
Utilizing qualitative research and an interpretivist lens, with the help of IEPs (n=20) who have completed the bridging programs and service providers (n=8) for primary data, it has become apparent that although these programs were of benefit to some participants, they do not live up to expectations for many IEPs who continue to struggle to get employed in their profession. This thesis identifies neoliberalism, as not only an economic and political force but also a potent ideology that fosters self-blame. The bridging programs are short-term courses of varying lengths that are supposed to help IEPs address and overcome the challenges of economic integration. They may help in certain ways but are neither equipped to address, nor capable of addressing, the systemic issues of discrimination or racism, with issues of inconsistencies, instability and short sidedness surrounding them. An overall change in attitude to embrace social responsibility and renewed commitment to social justice is required by all stakeholders, if we are to address the ongoing plight of the so many IEPs who are qualified and skilled, but cannot practice in their professions.

Keywords: Immigrants, Internationally Educated Professionals (IEP), neoliberalism, racism, discrimination, bridging programs, labour market integration.
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Dedication

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Time to Remodel the ‘Bridge’

1.1 Introduction

Canadian immigration policy has been dominated largely by economic objectives with a commitment to long-term labour market goals and an aim to regulate social, cultural and symbolic boundaries of the nation (Li, 2003). While Canada welcomes new immigrants, research has shown that their education and skills remain underutilized. Recent immigrants to Canada have higher levels of education, but their earnings have remained lower in comparison to those who were born here (Akter et al., 2013; Reitz, 2011; Lee, 2010). Although the skill level of immigrants has risen significantly, this problem of immigrant under and un-employment has become more severe and profound than it was in the 1990’s (Reitz, 2011). The challenges are complex, multi-layered and multidimensional. To ease the gap of integration, the provincial government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars into various programs in Ontario. One such initiative has resulted in partnerships with educational institutions, community-based agencies and regulating bodies to establish numerous ‘bridging’ programs. By way of qualitative research and a theoretical lens that is interpretive, I hold to account some of the most widespread assertions about the bridging programs as a panacea to success for Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) and argue that such declarations do not hold true for many IEPs who continue to struggle to be economically integrated. While some participants identified benefits from attending these programs, I contend that these programs fail to live up to their expectations and do not prepare the participants to address the challenges such as discrimination and racism which the IEPs
experience in their effort to integrate into their profession. I also expose the subtle oppressive and discriminatory experiences of IEPs when taking these programs and underline neoliberalism as its guiding principle with the business sector as one of its main beneficiaries. Moreover, I assert that the neoliberal structure of funding of these programs with the significant emphasis on quantitative outcome measures only reduces them into an input output function devoid of the necessary help IEPs require to succeed in being integrated into the economic system.

1.2 Background

When I arrived in Canada one fall evening in the late 1980’s, just like many other immigrants who had come before me and have since arrived incessantly thereafter, my luggage included files stacked with credentials and years of experience. More importantly, I brought my lifelong savings filled with enthusiasm and tons of energy. My impression about Canada was that everyone was treated equally with the government making sure that all had equal opportunities. Ontario was “Yours to Discover,” with equal access for all to partake from its riches and opportunities. However, I learned very fast that it was neither as easy nor as rosy as it sounded. Finding an apartment, opening a bank account and purchasing groceries were not so difficult; however, trying to find employment and successfully integrating into the economy turned out to be a Herculean task. Despite my credentials, work experience, and confidence, a job commensurate to my education eluded me. At the interviews, the manager would want to know more about what the climate was like in my home country and where I mastered my English, only to be politely informed that although I had excellent credentials, I did not have the right “Canadian experience,” or in some cases was “over
qualified.” I was perplexed as to why someone would not hire a qualified or even better, a “more qualified” person. The difficulty of not getting a job relevant to my qualifications was not confined to me alone; it was the experience of many new immigrants I knew. What was available on the market for immigrants were labor-intensive jobs that required little use of the education or skills that they had acquired over the years. Good, progressive jobs were difficult to obtain. Even after the introduction of the bridging programs, research shows that the underutilization of immigrant education and skills continues even today (Akter et al., 2013; Block and Galabuzzi, 2011; Lee, 2010; Reitz, 2011). Having gone through the experience of labour market integration challenges myself, this thesis is a result of the drive and passion for helping assess the success of the interventions such as the bridging programs and find ways to address the predicament new immigrants continue to face.

1.3 Time to Remodel the ‘Bridge’

Among the Group of Seven countries, Canada has done remarkably well in creating jobs, however, there continues to be an imbalance between unemployment and job vacancies that persists in certain regions and occupation groups (Government of Canada, 2014). The labour market outlook in Canada as described by David Livingstone in an extensive text on lifelong learning and work, states, “in recent decades, the concentration of large corporations, extensive automation and declining unionization have lead to significant changes in employment conditions… (with) those in part-time jobs appear to be working longer hours as well, without increasing benefits” (Livingstone, et al. 2008. p. 13). There is less stability of employment, increased downsizing of employees, and more dependence on part-time and temporary workers. Such conditions lead to lower quality of jobs with an overall situation of precarious and
unstable employment opportunities for all but affects some groups more than others. The Government of Canada (2014) report titled Jobs Report: The State of the Canadian Labour Market identifies that among those who are not reaching their full potential in the labour market include recent immigrants. When internationally trained professionals come to Canada, the impression they get is that their qualifications accepted by the Canadian government will have a similar standing without having reliable information on what to expect (Hathiyani, 2006). Few participants in the study got employment in their profession of training, but a majority of them had no choice but to take low-end jobs to make ends meet or were unemployed at the time of the interview. Chronicling the story of Rijhwani’s over a decade ago, Mirchandani (2004) had identified how Canada’s social agenda could be designed to integrate the internationally trained professionals to prevent new skilled immigrants from facing exclusion, frustration, exploitation and deskilling. Such issues however, continue to dodge new immigrants, as it is not uncommon to see those who are highly trained as engineers, doctors, scientists, etc. end up underemployed in jobs that are different from their training (Akter et al.; Hathiyani, 2006; 2013; Reitz, 2011). These are not jobs that utilize their full potential but are seen mostly as a last resort intended to earn a living and bring food to the table. While gender has not been identified separately in this thesis, I find it to play a critical role. It however warrants a separate study that examines how immigrant women experience the limited opportunities that come their way, the impacts of which are manifold (Sethi, 2014). The issue of underutilization of immigrant skills has garnered a lot of attention, and different levels of government have responded by initiating various programs and spending hundreds of millions of dollars on them. Among the many, one
such intervention by the Ontario Government is the bridge training programs, referred to as 'bridging programs', throughout this thesis.

Since 2003, the Government of Ontario has invested over $183 million in more than 240 bridge training programs across the province to help qualified, internationally trained individuals integrate quickly into the labour market (Gordon, 2011). The government, in partnership with educational institutions and regulating bodies, has initiated a large number of bridging programs that are broad and varied, encompassing a variety of regulated and unregulated professions. The service providers are also diverse from universities to professional bodies to community-based agencies. The length of the programs are similarly varied, with some that last a few weeks while others extend beyond a year. Such a wide variety of programs raises concerns around consistency and stability that are essential ingredients for any program to achieve successful, reliable and positive outcomes in the long run.

The approach used in this research is qualitative, utilizing an interpretive lens for primary data, including in-depth interviews with those who had completed the bridging programs. There may be broad interpretive approaches within the ontological and epistemological positions, but the most important factor in using this method is that it helps us achieve a meaningful understanding of the participants’ frame of reference (Heracleous et al., 2004). Interpretivism is “centrally motivated by a concern to understand – and indeed to ‘explain’ – actions, practices and, if perhaps to a somewhat lesser extent, institutions” (Hay, 2011, p. 168). I use this approach to discourse, with an understanding that the IEPs who have completed the bridging programs are the best source to give us an insight into their encounters as they have ‘lived it’. The reality of these programs can be constructed through the experiences of IEPs and the
interpretation of their narrative, giving us a unique awareness of their experience. The focus therefore of this thesis, is from the standpoint of the IEPs for whom these programs have been created. I have explored the experiential perspective of twenty IEP participants and eight service providers of the bridging programs on the effectiveness of such programs as a solution to overcome the challenges faced by foreign-trained immigrants.

Although there has been some bridging for immigrants in the past, the bridging programs for IEPs in their current format are relatively a new phenomenon with the first one established in 2003; hence, there is limited research and comparatively few papers on this topic. With a review of the available literature, I recognize the contribution of past research and highlight the gaps that exist, but most importantly, I identify that barring a few, the findings are to a large extent from the perspective of the service providers. The focus of this thesis therefore, has been to give voice to the IEPs who have completed a bridging program and assess the effectiveness from the perspective of those for whom the programs have been created. This ‘bottom up’ approach brings the voice of those who utilize these programs to the fore for policy formulation and decision-making processes. This thesis also highlights that attention should be given to the impact these programs can have, whether directly or indirectly, to other spheres of the IEPs’ lives such as in the socio-economic-cultural world. The research question was focused on the challenges IEPs faced in their integration into the labour market, their experience of completing the bridging programs and an evaluation of who the beneficiaries of these programs were. The interview responses help us to understand the intricacies of these programs better, shed light on both the positive and adverse effects that have not been
documented before and provide ways to improve such programs so that funds could be utilized more efficiently.

A key finding of those who participated in the research was the disappointment of many who were not able to obtain employment in their profession of training – essentially the main objective for enrolling in such programs. They benefited from the programs in other regards. Some found that the networks they formed and the guidance they received while looking for work taught them beneficial skills such as resume writing. Others felt that exposure to local profession-related jargon and Canadian culture exposure helped them get a sense of the Canadian workplace. However, these ‘benefits’ could have been acquired through other community-based programs that are available at no cost to the participants; therefore, without widening actual employment options, it is difficult to determine the unique contribution of bridging programs. I would like to qualify that there are programs with direct placement components that claim to produce positive employment outcomes in their profession, but measurable numbers were not available and were not a part of this study.

There are many studies on the challenges immigrants face when they come to Canada (Akter et al., 2013; Ewoudou, 2011; FCM, 2011; OHRC, 2013). The identified barriers typically fall into two categories: individual deficiencies and systemic shortfalls. Cullingworth (2004) consolidates and highlights these barriers to include the following:

“Inadequate recognition of credentials and experience; licensing practices of professional associations and regulatory bodies; absence of accountability requirements for regulatory bodies; costly licensing fees and examinations; requirements for unnecessary training and upgrading; inadequate provision of upgrading opportunities; insufficient financial support to facilitate upgrading; lack of a central coordinating agency or clearly accessible information to assist in the process of accessing professions and trades; gaps in employment support services; complex jurisdictional issues between federal and provincial levels of responsibility; lack of government policy coordination
both between levels of government and among government departments; language barriers, particularly in technical language; the requirement of Canadian work experience; concerns about immigrants’ unfamiliarity with Canadian culture; lack of social and professional networks necessary to tap into the hidden job market; and, underlying many of the above barriers, racism and discrimination” (Cullingworth, 2004, p. 2).

Racism and discrimination, as Cullingworth (2004) describes, remain the underlying reason for many of the barriers IEPs experience through day-to-day individual interactions or reflected at a systemic level. The requirement of ‘Canadian experience’ for instance, “is [the] most convenient and covert method, ostensibly productivity relevant, which Canadian employers use to discriminate against (or to politely refuse the job to) skilled immigrants, particularly those from the Third World countries, without violating the provisions of the Human Rights code” (Sen, 1978, p. 20).

Issues concerning discrimination, class, and racism emerge from the findings with the IEPs, with some participants mortified at the unfair tactics they had to experience. To address these challenges requires a concerted, conscious and long-term effort that the bridging programs are not equipped to address with their short term, uncertain and precarious funding model available to them; an indication of a systemic issue in itself. The bridging programs respond to some of these challenges like a hit and miss effort, with inconsistencies in how these programs have been developed and delivered. The lack of focus by the bridging programs on issues such as discrimination and racism or on how not to be discriminated against leaves these concerns unattended and permitted to proliferate. Recognizing the crucial role immigrants play in Canada’s economic growth, Mirchandani (2004) identified that policies must deal with employer racism, expounding that it is not only knowledge but the diversity of awareness of all citizens that needs to be recognized. While these may be specific issues, a broader question
that arises for those who complete the bridging programs is whether their education is considered to be equivalent to those who are Canadian educated even after finishing the bridging program? What value does the labour market place on these bridging programs? There is no denying that some may have found jobs in their field; however, a majority of the participants interviewed for this thesis was still in pursuit of employment in their profession, even after graduating from these programs. These results validate the findings of other numerous studies on the challenges immigrants face (Akter et al., 2013; Block and Galabuzzi, 2011; Guo, 2010; Lee, 2010; Reitz, 2011; Shan, 2009). The results also give further insight into the effect of programs that have been created to help overcome the barriers IEPs face. They point to addressing these issues through band-aid fixes. Furthermore, even after IEPs obtain jobs in their respective professions, the challenges that they initially faced had not been eradicated. With findings where the disparities continue unabated and the IEPs for whom these programs were created continue to remain detached from their profession, I argue that it is time to remodel this ‘bridge.’

Findings from participants in this thesis underscore the domination of neoliberal concepts in how the programs are developed and implemented. Some of these strategies are reflected in the bridging programs and apparent in how they leave the IEPs actively responsible for their own wellbeing. The concept of “active society” can also be linked to a particular politics of self in which we are all encouraged to “work on ourselves in a range of domains” (Larner, 2000, p.13). The emphasis on self leaves IEPs susceptible and dependent on what is available to succeed. Many researchers have mentioned that we are living in the “age of neoliberalism,” referring to the spread of capitalism, consumerism and the dismantling of the welfare state (Thorsen, 2009).
Its influence is broad, affecting people widely including their thought processes. I highlight Foucault's explanation of neoliberal governmentality that is focused on governance and affects the behaviors and desires of its citizens (Baltodano, 2012). The bridging programs are seen as a tool through which IEPs are made to believe that not getting a job in their profession is as a result of their 'deficit' and should readily accept it to be their own fault. Under such a concept, systemic issues or those related to discrimination and racism become obscure and remain unchallenged. The effort, energy and attention is diverted away from the critical issues of IEP unemployment and poverty. It imposes punitive judgments by unreasonably highlighting 'deficits' while systemic constraints of inadequate employment opportunities, unfair housing practices and/or discriminatory and racist behaviors are ignored and not brought to question or addressed.

Furthermore, the programs are reflective of a market-based approach in which the client is seen as a consumer to be attracted to business, while the bridging programs are restricted by narrow guidelines devoted to quantifiable outcomes. The funding model of the bridging programs is such that the service providers have to create a program that has to meet strict criteria under government funding requirements. They are also expected to charge fees to the already deprived participants - a reflection of the influence of neoliberalism on these programs. By establishing the bridging programs, the government appears to be supporting economic integration but in essence disengages itself from protecting the IEPs, leaving them to their own fate.

The supports available for IEPs are inconsistent and limited. Some may qualify for a loan under the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), which in turn creates a debt for them. Others may be able to access the Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance
Program (OBPAP), which is limited only to tuition costs; yet there are others, who do not qualify for any supports at all. These inconsistencies have raised anxiety and created difficulties for all those involved especially the IEPs who are new to the country and have to support their families. Under the capitalistic and neoliberal markets, the IEPs are required to pay for attending the program and create their own value by overcoming the challenges they face. Although the IEPs had to incur an expense to complete the programs, those who benefitted from them include employers who acquire qualified employees without incurring much cost for training. IEPs also tend to provide surplus value to the employer with their international experience and expanse of knowledge, which in many instances are not fully recognized, or utilized (Hathiyani, 2006). Instead of helping fight the challenges and inequalities that exist for IEPs, bridging programs can be seen as a tool to help businesses acquire trained personnel, underscoring the role of neoliberalism. Harvey (2007) notes that “the freedoms it embodies reflect the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations and financial capital” (p. 7). Similarly, inviting highly qualified professionals to Canada and limiting their ability to practice their profession leaves them vulnerable and hopeless. Such a climate of integrating IEPs into the labour market alienates them from their true worth and ability to use their talents and skills to be productive, leading to their deskilling and desolation in the long run.

There were jobs that were created as a result of the bridging programs. Some participants acknowledged that jobs such as those in administration and teaching have been created because of the bridging programs. A closer analysis, however, reveals that these jobs are precarious and devoid of any job security or benefits. Temporary, part-time and casual jobs without benefits are not an ideal sense of a secure
professional career, revealing once again the unstable climate of disparity, precariousness, and shortsightedness of neoliberalism. The increase in inequality according to David Harvey (2007) is a result of the ongoing process of accumulation by dispossession that facilitates the transfer of wealth from the poor (and marginalized) to the wealthy. The dispossession is not limited to monetary wealth, but consumes IEP knowledge, education and experience as well. Such findings lead us to believe that unless there is a stable, resolute or systemized effort to address the challenges IEPs face, whether it is through the bridging programs or otherwise, the band-aid solution will not make any significant dent in resolving the issues.

The bridging programs are modeled around the IEPs as a consumer with productivity as an outcome measure and the program as a commodity. This limits IEPs ability and affects what they can or cannot achieve. The ideals of neoliberalism intertwine and intersect with other theoretical frameworks such as racism, discrimination and class which increases the complexity of the issue. With its emphasis on participant’s experiences, the approach of this thesis is interpretive and helps identify meanings these internationally trained professionals have placed on taking such courses for which hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent (Gordon, 2011). I am not refuting that there could be many IEPs, who may have benefited from the bridging programs and the quantifiable outcomes required by the Ontario Government may reflect such positive results (Gordon, 2011). However, this thesis goes beyond those formal results. Recognizing that in a qualitative study of this nature, results may not be generalized; yet, the findings help us penetrate into the depth and the intricacies of the issues and concerns, which otherwise would not have been possible. It provides a snapshot of the complexity of challenges IEPs face in employment and demonstrates
the inability of neoliberal-inspired bridging programs to grapple fully with this complexity and address the challenges they face.

In the development of the bridging programs, the internationally trained professionals for whom the programs have been created remain outsiders with little or no meaningful involvement in the decision making process. Under neoliberalism, only a few have the control and power with most citizens relegated to the role of being onlookers (Ross E and R. Gibson, 2007). With the advent of these bridging programs, the government is seen to be taking some action, however, these programs have little or no impact on the professional organizations who actually determine who is allowed to practice in their profession or not. While there is little influence on the professional organizations, there is also no clear direction as to what these bridging programs actually are. Are they just individual courses, a make-up course, a job preparation course, an extra level of education, a new stream of education, a certificate course, post-graduate course etc.? With such unclear direction, the focus of this thesis is therefore from the perspective of the internationally educated immigrant, the very people who are supposed to benefit from such programs. It gives voice to these internationally trained immigrants on their experience of being integrated into the Canadian labour market and an effort to find out from them how the bridging programs helped them or not, and what obstacles and challenges were they able to overcome or not. This thesis reveals new knowledge about the bridging programs which has not been identified before and adds value to the existing research by relating the much needed perspective of the participants themselves. The analysis and knowledge gained from this thesis will inform the development and formulation of policies around labour market integration for internationally trained immigrants.
With the announcement by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister, John McCallum to increase the number of immigrants coming to Canada in 2017 (Government of Canada, 2016) the need to better understand and overcome the challenges immigrants face is clearer than ever. As one of the most diverse cities in the world, Toronto’s population, which is set to rise in the coming decades, will have to develop a cohesive and integrated approach that effectively addresses the economic integration of immigrants. To do that will require the will and effort from all levels of government including municipalities the private sector and the immigrants themselves. Anything short of that could affect the future of not only immigrants but in the long run the fabric of Canada as a whole.

1.4 Summary of Chapters

In our day-to-day transactions, we come across various situations that could be explained through one theoretical understanding or another, hence this clarification at the beginning of the thesis. Chapter Two therefore, presents a theoretical framework that supports the analysis of the data to understand the experience of IEPs in their labour market integration in general and bridging programs in particular. This second chapter explains the intersectionality of different theoretical frameworks such as neoliberalism combined with discrimination and racism that synthesize and encapsulate the rationale to the experiences of IEP’s in their settlement process and completion of the bridging programs.

Chapter Three presents the research design and methodology employed in outlining the empirical research for this thesis. To get a good understanding of the effectiveness of the bridging programs for IEPs, an interpretive lens is used to first get an overview of the issue at hand by exploring secondary sources that provide
information on Canada’s immigration policies, immigration trends and challenges immigrants face. With this background, we can get a lay of the land on the numerous bridging programs offered by various institutions supported by the Ontario Government. The interpretivist approach is an attempt to achieve an understanding of the social world from the perspective of those who experience it (Walters, 2009). Interpreting the lived experiences of the IEPs brings forward the reality as they see it. The central research questions that formed the basis of the primary data revolved around issues to do with (i) settlement challenges (ii) experiences about the bridging programs and its beneficiaries and (iii) ways to improve the situation of IEPs.

With a focus of this thesis on immigrants, *Chapter Four*, starts by glancing at the historical perspective of Canadian immigration policies over the years. I trace the evolution of Canada’s immigration policy from an early emphasis on race and culture to a shift in human capital theory to its current state of emphasis on neoliberal principles, a thread that weaves itself from the past to the present. An overview of immigration history has been chronicled to provide a basis by which the current experiences can be compared. Such a measure helps us identify an important thread that runs through these policies and continues to reflect on immigrant experiences to this day. *Chapter Five* focuses on the various dimensions of the challenges new immigrants face when they come to Canada with a key focus on their integration into the labour market. With an aging population, low birth rate and shortage of skilled labour, Canada requires young and well-educated, skilled people to sustain its economic growth (OHRC, 2013). Although this gap in the labour market is covered through immigration, the process of labour market integration is not devoid of barriers and challenges. Not only are many immigrants not able to find employment in the profession of their education and training
for which they were recruited to come to Canada, they also find it difficult to get precarious employment (Akter et al., 2013). The range of these challenges, which are wide and varied, are described in this chapter.

The Ontario government in its effort to fill the gap and address the lack of economic integration of immigrants has invested millions of dollars in programs such as the ‘Bridging Programs’ (MCI, 2013). *Chapter Six* therefore, gives an overview of the bridging programs using secondary data and summary of the related literature I have come across. In this chapter, I take a close look at the bridging programs in Ontario in general, and Toronto in particular.

*Chapter Seven* focuses on the effectiveness of the bridging programs as relayed by the participants and reveals inconsistent results with expectations of becoming integrated into the economic system remaining unfulfilled. While some participants experienced some benefits as a result of the programs (such as some assistance in getting accredited, obtaining work experience or help in writing resumes), their goal of becoming economically integrated remained a far-fetched reality.

In *Chapter Eight*, lack of marketing, inconsistencies and unfulfilled expectations in relation to the bridging programs are highlighted. It focuses on the responses of the participants on how they got to know about the bridging programs and identifies how the marketing of these programs leaves a lot to be desired. The biggest challenge experienced by IEPs according to much research is the inability to find employment in their field of training (Akter et al. 2013; Reitz 2011; OHRC 2013). Many participants steered towards precarious employment and at the time of the interviews were continuing to work hard to bring food to the table for their families.
Chapter Nine addresses issues around networking, social capital and alienation. The lack of networks and social capital has been identified as one of the challenges for new immigrants. Participants acknowledged that they have made good friends as a result of the bridging programs; however, those relationships are not enough to help IEPs get employed in their profession as the new friendships were mainly with IEPs who were in a similar situation as them. The participants also felt alienated from their profession, their families and their community, felt a loss of their identity and were eager to get back to practicing their profession.

Chapter Ten delves into the experiences of IEPs about the bridging programs that reveal instances of racism and class discrimination in their classroom. There were instances where the students experienced racism from their teachers as well as at the placement agencies that were an extension of the bridging program. While the bridging programs are supposed to help break down barriers, instead the IEPs experienced issues related to discrimination and marginalization as a result of them.

Chapter Eleven focuses on the neoliberal model of the bridging programs and asks the key question of who benefits from them. A market-based approach of the programs unravels the competition that exist between service providers. They try to attract the IEPs to their courses to maximize their funding which is found to be unstable, inconsistent and time limited. Businesses were among the beneficiaries from this program with a ready availability of trained and job ready IEPs. Along with the IEPs benefiting through their learning, the service providers felt there were jobs that were created because of these programs. However, a close analysis of such jobs revealed that they are part-time, temporary, and precarious in nature, reaffirming how neoliberalism is central to the running of these programs.
This thesis would be incomplete if it did not make recommendations for improvement of the bridging program in particular and the underutilization of immigrant skills in general. In Chapter Twelve, I make suggestions that include introducing legislative changes, changing the funding formulae, marketing of any programs to be truthful, their pedagogy to be realistic, involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process and creating more opportunities of gaining work experience among others. Most issues identified in this thesis that affect IEPs are systemic, and the response has to be similar to bring about any changes to the underutilization and underemployment of immigrants. Any programs created should be geared towards addressing the inequalities that exist and that all should get a fair and equal chance to the available opportunities. For any solutions to be into place, input from those that are affected by the issues is of utmost importance. Participants in this thesis voice their ideas and suggestions on how to improve both the bridging programs and the labour market integration challenge IEPs face. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research.

Chapter Thirteen concludes by highlighting the key findings of this thesis, their consequences to the participants and how these findings could be incorporated in establishing the policies and processes of the bridging programs in particular and the integration of IEPs in general. It summarizes issues that are core to the IEPs and their integration into their profession, so that they do not have to experience the negative aspects of settlement in Canada.
Chapter 2
Domination of Neoliberalism in Immigrant Settlement and Bridging Programs

2.1 Introduction

The non-recognition, underutilization and undervaluing of immigrant skills and education have enormous consequences both to the immigrant as well as the state. These imbalanced experiences enveloped under complex and multilayered underpinnings, cannot simply be understood from a single lens. The main focus of this chapter is to discuss the conceptual framework for this thesis. When I started my research, I initially intended to situate my discussion around one conceptual framework that supports the analysis of the data, neoliberalism. As my research progressed however, I identified issues related to racism and class repeating themselves and realized that neoliberalism alone was inadequate to explain the varied experiences of IEPs, hence the inclusion of discrimination, racism, and class in this thesis. I was cognizant of gender differences in immigrant employment experiences (Premji et al. 2014; Sethi, 2014, Solar 2011) however, as will be discussed in section 3.6 and section 12.3, it did not stand out to show any significant difference between the female or male participants in terms of the bridging programs. That could be possible as a result of my approach to interviews with participants in this thesis where I did not ask leading questions making it possible that gender issues that have been noted in the literature exist but did not surface here. I however argue that out of these theories, neoliberalism stands out as the dominant framework that has increasingly framed Canada’s immigration policies and government programs, especially the bridging programs. I
highlight that neoliberalism not only plays an overtly critical role in the formulation of policies and programs but more importantly, through them, a covertly potent role of promoting “deficit” as the reason of IEP integration failure, and a result of their own shortcoming. I also delve into other equally important conceptual traditions related to the issue, such as discrimination and racism, to give us an understanding and an awareness of the underlying dynamics and forces that are involved. These are deep-rooted traditions that have been adapted, adopted and transmuted into many sub-traditions. I refer to the day to day challenges and experiences of immigrants, perceptions of deficiencies and the preconceived negative connotations that are attached to them, regardless of their backgrounds, qualifications, expertise or all the positives they may bring. I start by looking at the role of neoliberalism as a dominant and central conceptual framework in this thesis along with discrimination, racism and the interspersing of alienation that I have found to be important paradigms in this discourse.

2.2 Neoliberalism as a Dominating Principle of Bridging Programs

Canada has a long history as a welfare state which got solidified during the great depression in the 1930’s. “The universalist welfare state is founded on the conviction that government has a legitimate and major role to play in altering the market economy’s unequal distribution of income, wealth and opportunity” (Battle and Torjman, 2001. p. 13). Canada’s social security system is unique with all levels of government playing a role in providing an array of societal needs to its citizens. Programs under Canada’s “social safety net” ensure that citizens have enough income to meet their basic and special needs. A report by the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations proposed that the responsibility of those who are employable but unemployed
be with the federal government and the provinces take responsibility for social services (Moscovitch, 2015). Since the 1970’s, due to changes in the economic climate, there has been a thrust to decrease social programs and government expenditures as a way to return to economic prosperity. It has emphasized individuals as consumers, concepts espoused by neoliberalism. In the name of modernizing social programs and encouraging effectiveness, the neoliberal agenda of the governments has impacted the welfare state by promoting the primacy of markets over the states (Baker, 1997). It has emphasized individuals as consumers, concepts espoused by neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism has been like an economic tsunami sweeping the globe and engulfing most countries away from their traditional structures of power (Ong, 2007). It has become a widespread exhortation in many political and academic debates (Thorsen, 2009, p.2), hence its presence and emphasis in this thesis. Discourse on neoliberalism has focused mainly at a global level on macro issues, however, similar principles continue to be experienced and be embedded at a micro level in our day to day transactions, profoundly impacting individuals or groups at various times. From immigration policies to bridging programs, neoliberalism has played a dominant and influencing role, but also an obscure one that has significant consequences - one of the key themes highlighted in this thesis. My focus on neoliberalism is in the discourses with IEPs and the way it legitimizes deficiencies and tries to teach them that failure is theirs and had nothing to do with it being systemic. According to Foucault, neoliberalism is a form of “governmentality” that is focused on the mode of governance (Baltodano, 2012). It impacts individuals at a micro level in their behaviors and subjectivities, but also validates the actions at a macro level. The IEPs blame themselves by internalizing their failure to integrate into their profession and in the process validate the bridging
programs as a legitimate avenue of support, circumventing the systemic or prejudicial issues that exist.

Defining neoliberalism is tricky because the theory of neoliberalism does not constitute as part of social sciences, but of economics that is associated with free market enterprise. It is important, however, to have an overall and common understanding of neoliberalism or the neoliberal ideology, which I have used interchangeably. In his *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Harvey (2005) describes neoliberalism as;

*...A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defense, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets.* (Harvey 2005. p.2).

The role of the state as Harvey explains is to encourage marketization and promote the advancement of free markets. He elaborates that according to neoliberalism, maximization of entrepreneurial and institutional freedoms can lead to human wellbeing (Harvey, 2006). While it borrows capitalist ideas, neoliberalism promotes market deregulation and retrenchment of the welfare state (Shields, 2004). Naomi Klein, in her book *The Shock Doctrine*, *The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, illustrates the three trademark demands of neoliberal practice as being privatization and turning over education and health care to private operations, government deregulations and deep cuts to social spending (Klein, 2007). These principles of neoliberalism studied extensively in recent years were first espoused by Fredrick Hayek of Austria and promoted by Milton Friedman from Chicago University in the early 1970’s. Unlike the
capitalist understanding of each one with equal and fair opportunity, neoliberalism emphasizes policies and processes "whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit" (McChesney, 1998, p. 7).

Neoliberalism legitimizes the capitalist accumulation process, while promoting disempowerment of workers through deregulations and de-unionization. “Neoliberalism is an ideology, a politics, and at times a fanaticism that subordinates the art of democratic politics to the rapacious laws of a market economy that expands its reach to include all aspects of social life with the dictates and values of a market driven society” (Giroux, 2004, p.12). It manifests as giving people a choice while being radical in practicality, affecting people in their day-to-day living. The IEPs seem to have a choice of the bridging programs, but in reality, their choices are limited to the few programs the government has approved, which may not be as helpful to their needs. Describing neoliberalism, Monica Prasad (2006), explains in The Politics of Free Markets, that it “favor(s) capital accumulation over income redistribution” (p. 4). She argues that political opportunities and policy processes have led to the implementation of neoliberal policies because they seemingly provide choice to individuals which makes them popular even among those who are oppressed.

Utilizing Prasad’s (2006) reasoning, it can be inferred that the neoliberal policies affecting IEPs are not challenged because they affect only a small fraction of the population without having any significant visible impact on the majority. Programs for immigrants impact a limited number of people and so there is no significant challenge when there are cuts to them as they do not impact the majority of the population. The IEPs who are new to Canada come as individual professionals, are not formally
organized and have little influence to bring about any changes to their predicament. In essence, by creating support programs such as the bridging programs, the government stands to gain political capital by being seen to be doing something to address the situation of IEPs and hence such programs are rarely disputed or challenged. The other issue with neoliberalism is its enforcement of policies through a culture of fear. Democratic principles are curtailed by instilling fear to enforce control and domination (Giroux, 2005). By looking at the effects of neoliberalism, it becomes clear that the main achievements are significantly affected through legislation on how wealth is distributed. It also limits the ability of the labour class to bring about a change in their places of work.

Neoliberalism means many things, depending on one’s vantage point, and is practiced inconsistently throughout the world. According to Foucault (2008), neoliberal governmentality is the "conduct of conducts". His discussion around neoliberalism focuses on ‘governance’ that impacts a larger realm to produce new subjectivities, moralities, behaviors, and desires from its citizens (Baltodano, 2012). It is important to understand the deeper sense of the mentalities to govern. Using Foucault's analysis of neoliberal governmentality, "the neoliberal subject is an individual who is morally responsible for validating the social realm using rational choice and cost-benefit calculations grounded on market-based principles to the exclusion of all other ethical values and social interests" (Hamann, 2009, p. 37). Related to this, I would like to emphasize and use as the central theoretical framework in this thesis the understanding of neoliberalism according to anthropologists - “as a structural force that affects people's life-chances and as an ideology of governance that shapes subjectivities” (Ganti, 2014, p. 89). Such articulation of connecting prejudices and highlighting the underlying forces
is significant to understanding how neoliberalism plays a compelling role in realizing the objectives of integration mentioned earlier. Although the angle of inquiry may vary, it gives us an opportunity to identify and connect things from a broader perspective rather than taking a narrow approach; for instance, immigration and labour marketing integration can be studied as the two sides of the same coin instead of being looked at separately. A mix of “neoliberal exceptions and exceptions to neoliberalism” elicit various solutions producing different political results and diverse social transformation (Ong, 2007, p. 6). It helps to understand the impact of neoliberalism in relation to discrimination. Neoliberalism targets the individual, instilling in them the goal of self-sufficiency and being morally responsible as mentioned above, with any failures being a result of their shortcomings, regardless of any structural or systemic challenges that exist. By doing so, it evades and avoids the key focus on the historical procedures, processes, and policies that could otherwise bring change. It takes away the ability of a person to look at another’s predicament in a compassionate way (Baltodano, 2012). The norms of common interest and public good are relegated to the background with little or no emphasis ascribed to them. Individuals are expected to access the relevant markets and functions as equal players and so any inequality or social injustice that exists is seen as a result of their own inability and should be acceptable (Thorsen, 2009).

“The primary rationale for the development of this specialized form of professional education (bridging programs) is the perceived discrepancy between immigrants’ prior knowledge and experiences and Canadian standards of professional practice” (Lum et al. 2011, p. 148). Essentially, bridging programs start with a notion that IEPs possess ‘deficiencies’ that need to be addressed, which I find to be problematic. The programs
are formulated from a standpoint of negativity, where the IEPs who are already qualified and experienced professionals need more training to prove themselves. It discounts all that the IEPs possess, with no consideration for the education and skills they have acquired over the years in international settings. There is no consideration of how their knowledge could be harnessed for the public good. Education is no longer seen as a tool to be protected to create public good; rather it is seen as a commodity that can be traded in the market (Baltodano, 2012). The IEPs are left to deal with a system where each individual or cohort has to make their own effort to get integrated into their profession. The bridging programs attract IEPs so that their “deficit” or “skills gap” can be overcome. Under this discourse, the emphasis changes to skills; however, one cannot disassociate the skills from the person possessing them. When that happens, the immigrant effectively becomes invisible as the shift in emphasis falls only on their skills and not on the person or on their challenges and needs. Consequently, the focus also changes from a social justice point of emphasis to that of economic justice (Goldberg, 2005). The prejudices, unfair practices or systemic shortcomings become veiled, as attention shifts to education and skills of the IEPs.

Trying to understand the underutilization of immigrant skills is challenging and inconsistent. While discriminatory hiring practices may explain largely their over-representation in low paying jobs, under neoliberalism the inability of immigrants to secure employment in their profession is viewed as a result of their inability owing to personal and cultural reasons. Although IEP credentials have been accepted and approved for immigration to Canada, they are however seen to be deficient and their education and qualifications unequal to Canadian standards when they seek to practice their profession. Under neoliberalism, the challenges and suffering immigrants go
through is seen as a function of personal choices. The blame is therefore directed towards immigrants, with their education and skills not having much value.

Such contradictory outcomes also point to a collision between the human capital theory and the neoliberal understandings. While the former professes that higher education will lead to better remunerations, the later would like to see highly educated labour available at a cheaper rate. “The economic policies, privatization, and individualism that are characteristic of neoliberalism are, for neoliberals, signs of progress. But from a critical perspective, neoliberalism does not appear to be focused on creating more prosperity and freedom for all members of society, but on restoring elite class power” (Cragg, 2011, p. 93). For many IEPs, it is a reality experienced on a daily basis. The fear, however, is that neoliberalism will slowly erode institutions of public good and political democracy since “the freedom of the masses would be restricted in favor of the freedoms of the few” (Harvey, 2005. p. 70).

Using Foucault's (2008) understanding of governmentality as the conduct of conducts where the control of behaviors is manifested, I argue that the bridging programs are a tool in regulating IEPs and making them subjects of the state. Funds are allocated by the Ontario Government to institutions to run the bridging programs for upgrading immigrant professionals' knowledge and skills so that they can integrate into the labour market; these programs come with requirements of budget monitoring and productivity measurements. The institutes or agencies that deliver the programs have to meet certain quantifiable criteria set by the government. “The problem is that neoliberalism is not a neutral, technical discourse that can be measured with the precision of a mathematical formula” (Giroux, 2005, p.12). The very existence and development of the bridging programs revolves around the neoliberal funding model.
Institutions submit proposals for funding to the Ministry to deliver the ‘bridging’ programs and produce outcomes that are related to quantifiable numbers. The funding agreement is such that the service providers have to enter into a legal contract to obtain the funds in return for providing a ‘service’ on behalf of the government.

The success of bridging programs is measured through the number of professional immigrants who got jobs instead of “measuring systemic changes” (Goldberg, 2005, p. 54). The emphasis under such a model is on an input-output system that controls the function of economic production (Olssen and Peters, 2005). Deconstructing the notion of skills and training programs, Goldberg (2005) highlights that there are consequences to having training and assessment policies as solutions to economic integration of immigrants as they "devalue immigrant education and skills and their employability to the Ontario labour market" (p. 202). It has led to a discourse that distances equality in favor of quality, accountability, efficiency and choice (Dei et al., 1997). “This mentality puts a strain on organizations since organizations must constantly apply for short term funding, in a world of uncertainty, with tight time constraints and heavy administrative details” (Goldberg, 2005. p. 46). Markets or external agencies are utilized as a tool by which governments can affect control under the guise of accountability. This is enforced through contracts that stipulate and ensure compliance, monitoring and accountability.

Olssen and Peters (2005) identify another angle of “neoliberal governmentality” where power is delegated under an authoritative and structured relation instituted through a contract which in turn is “premised upon a need for compliance, monitoring, and accountability organized in a management line and established through a purchase contract based upon measurable outputs” (p. 325). Bridging programs fall under this model, in which the institutions develop the pedagogy but have to follow the
requirements of the funders, leaving little room for creativity or advocacy or addressing systemic challenges. Funding is therefore attached to performance and strict administrative requirements. On the other hand, funds for the IEPs for whom the programs have been created is limited and inconsistent, leaving many IEPs having to pay to get their qualifications ‘Canadianized’. Such a model exposes the weakness within the program for both the service provider, as well as for those who participate in it. Through this thesis, I have come to realize how the IEP’s or the programs meant for them have become a ‘commodity’ in the labour market. At times, it is the programs such as the bridging programs that become a ‘commodity’ to be purchased, while at other occasions, it is the IEPs that become a ‘commodity’ and the agencies instruments in meeting the government agenda. Many IEPs as I will identify later in this thesis, are treated as consumers to be marketed and attracted to enrol with no guaranteed returns associated after completing the bridging programs, except for a certificate of completion that may not hold much value. While the IEPs are left vulnerable and expendable in the current neoliberal era, the institutions that can offer these immigrants with post-secondary education any hope to withstand and challenge the systemic inequities are themselves under attack with the funding structures and processes imposed on them. Many of these agencies are either universities and colleges or community-based agencies who are known to be advocates and promoters of change. The government requirements however, create a dilemma and a contradictory situation for them, as the format of these bridging programs leaves little room for any advocacy for change or challenging the system where systemic issues continue to dodge the IEP’s. Through bridging programs, these service providers may appear to remain independent but they in essence become an extension of the government in not only providing government-
approved services, but also in how the services are provided. Universities and colleges have therefore, increasingly become willing collaborators to corporate and special interests, ignoring or sidelining social problems and issues as not being so important (Giroux, 2014). With the understanding outlined above, it is therefore not difficult to identify the close connection of neoliberalism to the plight of internationally trained immigrants.

The impact of neoliberalism on individuals and the society as a whole is manifold. From Canada’s immigration policies to bridging programs and IEP actualization, neoliberalism continues to play a fundamental role. For a long time, the Canadian immigration policy was based on Human Capital theory which had its own issues; however, the recent turn in the direction of robust neoliberal principles that give more power to businesses could open different sets of problems. A job letter from a business, for instance, significantly increases the chances of immigrating to Canada, an indication of their strong influence. With such leanings towards businesses, the government has “turned immigration from a tool of picking future fellow-citizens into a pool of cheap labour, to be exploited and sent home” (Siddiqui, 2015, p. A13). The neoliberal approach adopted by the Canadian government in immigration is clearly observable by how immigrants are admitted to Canada and the power it has given to businesses to influence and shape the future citizens of the country. This shift in immigration policies towards a neoliberal ideology has been portrayed as being developed to address the failures of earlier immigration policies. It, however, does not, as revealed in a recent study, bring any changes to the plight of new immigrants to Canada as they continue to increasingly face challenges and income disparities (Ontario Common Front, 2015). The continuation of underemployment produces a pool of low-waged surplus labour and
dispossesses immigrants from their trained profession, conveniently allowing those controlling the markets to maintain their stronghold and further their accumulation. One can argue therefore that recognizing foreign education and providing equal opportunity to the immigrants can lead to displacement of those currently holding positions, leading me to believe that the discounting of the education and skills is concerned “to establish the conditions of capital accumulation and restoration of class power” (Harvey, 2006). Harvey (2006) compellingly describes such articulations as, “accumulation by dispossession.” Such accumulation of wealth is clearly visible with the income gap growing wider. An important measure of inequality is the accumulation of wealth. A recent study by Ontario Common Front (OCF) on income inequality found that disparity in Canada has been rising, with Ontario having amongst the worst record of all the provinces (Ontario Common Front, 2015). Although there has been a positive turnaround in Ontario’s economy after the recession of 2009, those that have benefitted the most are the highest income earners (Ontario Common Front, 2015). Such an outcome should not be a surprise with a heavy leaning of government practices towards neoliberalism. This disparity has impacted the disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as women, immigrants and visible minorities the most, many of whom work at minimum wage.

Another report commissioned by Metcalf Foundation identified a drastic increase (42%) of the working poor in Toronto. The study also found that a high proportion (73%) among those who were working poor were immigrants (Stapleton et. al., 2012). Immigrants face unemployment rates that are twice that of Canadian-born workers and the disparity is increasing precipitously. The percentage of new immigrants earning minimum wage has tripled since 1998 to 19.1 % in 2011 (Ontario Common Front,
It therefore leads one to believe that the discounting of education and skills has continued with little or no change. For the IEP, “the dilemma of the dispossessed is that material and material deprivations leave them at the low end of any index of power and their relative powerlessness ensures their continued deprivation” (Parenti, 1978, p.65). Such deep-rooted strategies perpetuate a cycle of poverty and vulnerability. I would like to add that for IEPs the dispossession includes taking away the ability to practice their profession, deskilling, exhausting their savings and questioning their identity, repercussions of which can be devastating for those at the receiving end but also to the society as a whole. The impact of neoliberalism on IEPs stands out as dominant in this discourse, but in many ways is interconnected to other conceptual paradigms such as discrimination and racism which I would like to address as well. With the advent of neoliberalism, issues related to racism, class, etc. have been shrouded and taken a back stage (Goldberg, 2009). Neoliberalism focuses mainly on inputs of labour and the functioning of the economy which have historically been linked to practices of discrimination and racism (Davison and Shire, 2015). Some of these issues have taken shelter under the umbrella of neoliberalism which appears to offer choices and options, but in essence are geared to support a limited few.

2.3 Discrimination and Racism

Canada’s immigration policies of the past have evolved from an early emphasis on race and culture to the current emphasis on market needs (Kelley and Trebilcock, 2010). While the racist policies of the past may have been eliminated on paper, immigrants from non-white background continue to experience discrimination to this day and the development of bridging programs under neoliberalism does little to address or contest the oppressive nature of racism that IEPs experience. It is therefore important to
understand how overt or covert forms of discriminatory and racist activities manifest in the labour market integration of IEPs in order for programs such as the bridging programs to be able to address them.

Robert Miles defines "racialization" as a "process of categorization" whereby relationships are defined by biological characteristics through which "social relations between people [are] structured" (1989, p. 75). The notion of ‘us’ and ‘them’ creeps up as those from developing countries in Asia and Africa are identified as ‘immigrants’ unlike those from European countries. Even when the difference in “culture” is brought up as Gillborn mentions in his interview, it frequently implies regressive, even racist, perspectives (Orelus, 2011). There is an implication that “you” are different from “us” and usually refers to differences in race that you are not the same and something is lacking in you, more in tune with the deficit model. Since you are different from us, you need to be retrained to act and behave like “us.” Guo (2007) reasons that immigrant knowledge is seen as inferior and racialized in Canada, where differences are deemed incompatible to the social fabric of ‘traditional’ Canada. He attributes the non-recognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience to a deficit model of difference where differences are tolerated rather than embraced (Guo, 2007). Differences such as the variety of foods, clothing or festivities are usually accepted as exotic but those that challenge hegemony and seek equal opportunities are seen to be deficient and deviant. Guo further explains that the two ideologies, those of Canada’s commitment towards democratic principles and the negative attitudes towards immigrants co-exist with each other and refers it as “democratic racism” (Guo, 2007). To echo this sentiment of contradictions, I wish to use my own personal experience as I believe it to be reflective of the experiences of many professionally trained immigrants in Toronto.
When I arrived in Canada my impression was that there would be no
discrimination or racism as it was a country of immigrants, that everyone was treated
equally and all had equal opportunities. However, finding employment and successfully
integrating into the economy turned out to be arduous tasks. Yee and Dumbrill (2003)
explain that “in every instance of interaction, race configures the perceptions of both the
observer and the observed and subsequently plays a role in determining the dynamics
of the relationships… In general, few would contest that racial-ethnic minorities
experience unequal outcomes” (p.111). Many studies relate that poverty continues to be
segmented on racial lines with little in place to address the issue (Block and Galabuzzi,

There are however differences and tensions that exist in the understanding of race
and racism. While Marxists focus on material conditions and modes of production in
explaining racism, the critical race scholars center their argument on ideological
differences between and within class formations (Bakan and Dua, 2014, p.5). “Racism
is not only about people’s perceptions; it is about deep-rooted structures of oppression
that are not going to change easily” (Gilborn, 2011, p. 26). Like Arat-Koc, I would like to
argue that the underutilization of skills, poverty and underemployment of immigrants is
“the new racial domain” (Arat-Koc, 2014).

According to Danso (2007), the Canadian labour market “does not allocate jobs on
the basis of skills and education alone” (p. 5). There are other factors that influence the
outcome in the job market. “An anti-racism perspective specifically looks at processes of
racialization that grants those who are White, the power and privilege to function in a
world that mirrors their needs and aspirations” (Yee, et al. 2006, p. 8). Teelucksingh and
Galabuzzi (2005) reiterate that race continues to be a major factor in the distribution of
opportunities within the Canadian labour market. Findings of a research I had done on professional immigrants who drive taxis in Toronto expose that underutilization of professionally trained immigrant skills cannot be fully understood without taking its prejudicial and racial dimensions into consideration (Hathiyani, 2006). The most prevalent barrier cited by professionals in the study was racism. “Even when the barrier mentioned was lack of the right English accent, lack of Canadian experience, or non-recognition of qualifications from certain countries, there was almost a sense of veiled undertone of discrimination attached to it” (Hathiyani, 2006, p. 73). Racial prejudices continue to plague the way members of the dominant race interact with those of the non-dominant race. This has been as a result of “the construction of world history (that) has been dominated by Western Europe, following their presence in the rest of the world as the result of (their) colonial conquest and the Industrial Revolution” (Goody, 2006, p.13). The European or White people have maintained their privilege of ‘whiteness’ (Yee et al., 2006). Whiteness is therefore seen as the norm. The exploitation of non-Whites has led to growth and prosperity for only a privileged few and has had a devastating effect on others. In a study on social workers, Yee et al.(2006) emphasize that “these social and cultural processes also result in exclusionary and discriminatory actions against visible minority social work professionals who are negatively understood and seen as not fitting in with dominant cultural norms” (p. 8).

To overcome discriminatory and racist tendencies, the government has over the years taken big steps and brought significant changes such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Multiculturalism Act to deal with legislated racism within Canadian policies. While these have helped address some issues of racism, they have not been able to eliminate it. Some issues have crept underground, become veiled or
taken on a new meaning. The new reality for many is that one’s skin colour, mother tongue, culture, religion or country of origin is not seen as a problem; rather, as mentioned earlier, it is actually welcomed as ‘exotic.’ The difference is not considered to be a problem; however, the problem is in problematizing the difference (Smith and Tudor, 2003) especially when it comes to equal employment opportunities. “Difference is then used as a tool by mainstream Canadian society to exclude minority groups” (Danso, 2007, p.9). Thus, racial minorities continue to experience social and economic discrimination with regard to employment and aspects of their social lives.

The material basis of racism has been embedded into capitalist competition (McLaren, 2011). In today’s age, demanding Canadian experience is like the proverbial chicken and egg scenario that places the immigrants in a ‘catch 22’ situation. How can one get experience if there is no first job available? “The demand for Canadian experience is discriminatory and anti-ethical to the democratic principles of justice, equality and fairness that Canada espouses and prides itself on” (Danso, 2007, p. 7). As a result of the racist and discriminatory attitudes, many IEPs experience undervaluing and underutilization of their skills, which denigrates them to “second class status both socially and economically” (Maraj, 1996, p.91). Even the wording used by employers and assessment bodies to assess immigrant skills is a factor that influence the outcome in the job market (Danso, 2007). In one of my earlier studies, I found that the “underutilization of professionally trained immigrant skills cannot be fully understood without taking its prejudicial and racial dimensions into consideration. The most prevalent barrier for not getting employment cited in the study was racism (Hathiyani, 2006). One might argue that the disparities and barriers are a result of unequal education from different countries. This concept is repealed through a report in Globe
and Mail that identifies that even the children of visible minority immigrant parents who go to universities here in Canada earn less in comparison to their Canadian-born white colleagues (Friesen, 2011). If children of immigrant parents who have been born and educated in Canada continue to have disparities in the income levels, can those who were born and educated outside Canada fare well by taking a few extra months of “bridging” program training?

I acknowledge Miles’ perspective that racism and sexism is an ideological phenomenon and plays a major role in the capitalist economy (Miles, 1989). It can be argued that racism can be used to divide class unity among subordinate classes by separating them as members of dominant ethnic groups and racialized minorities (Bonacich, 1979). “Discrimination against an individual or a group can be practiced and yet readily ‘disguised’ by pointing out their deficiencies in regards to various, ostensibly productivity relevant characteristics such as ‘Canadian experience’, Canadian academic/technical degree/diploma, etc.” (Sen, 1978, p. 21). One cannot turn a blind eye to these important and necessary requirements. However, it requires common wisdom to realize that “professional competence and innate abilities are often more important, in the long run, towards productivity than past Canadian experience” (Sen, 1978, p. 21). The requirement of “Canadian experience” has become so common that it is considered a norm. The brunt of such discriminatory behavior is carried by racialized immigrants especially women (Ewoudou, 2011). “Women, especially migrant women slotted into the most detested "dead-end" jobs, denied basic human rights, and made to feel less than human, feature prominently among these pools of cheap non-citizen workers” (Gupta and Iacovetta, 2000, p. 2). The recent changes in 2015 by the Ontario Human Rights Commission to make it illegal to ask for Canadian experience are fairly
new and it has yet to be seen how the business community embraces it. The IEPs’ experience so far suggests the continuity of discriminatory, sexism and racist behavior, drawing lines between immigrants and the local employers in a process of racialization.

Agocs and Jain (2001) in their study conclude that the presence of racism and sexism cannot be ignored no matter how much we may want to believe it does not exist in today’s world. The pressures to deny, to ignore, to refuse to know, and to be complicit in everyday racism are tremendously strong. Such behaviors may exclude or marginalize racialized minorities and/or Aboriginal people, creating a “chilly climate” impacting their quality of life and professional outcomes (Agocs and Jain, 2001). Linking racism to the free market economy, Miles’ study on racism considers it as an ideological phenomenon that plays an important role in the mode of production under capitalism (Miles, 1989). The paradox of the situation, as mentioned earlier, is that while discriminatory hiring practices may explain to a great extent the over-representation of immigrants in low-paying jobs, under neoliberalism, the blame is directed towards immigrants with their education and skills holding little value.

It is no secret that Canada’s past immigration policies have been discriminatory, for racialized groups (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2010). Research shows that racialized groups continue to experience discrimination (Block and Galabuzzi, 2011). The question that arises is, can the bridging programs address the obstacles and discrimination IEPs experience? Newcomers have consistently related that there is stigma attached to being an immigrant. It makes them feel “marginalized and oppressed” (Maraj, 1996, p.92). It is difficult, demeaning and demoralizing for a person to be rejected time and again, or to be asked to change the way they talk, or adjust their culture to fit someone else’s and constantly act to fit in, or have their knowledge and skills considered “deficient” despite
having evidence that validates years of education, experience and accomplishments. These are issues that can be attributed to being systemic and connected to Canada’s immigration history. They continue to be faced by IEPs on a regular basis in their effort to integrate into their profession.

2.4 Relationship between Neoliberalism and Racism

The relationship between neoliberalism and racism is unique, inconsistent and at times contradictory. While racism is profoundly rooted in the past, there is an assumption under neoliberalism that history does not matter (Kojic, 2015). It suggests that racism which is embedded in Canada’s history (Kelley and Trebilcock, 2010) and neoliberalism have no relationship. If the past does not matter then, the acknowledgement and apology in Parliament by the Prime Minister of Canada for the racist Komagata Maru incidence over a century ago or to the First Nations people on the discrimination and atrocities committed against them holds no value. Most of our current institutions and policies - although neoliberal in nature - are grounded in foundations from the past. “Though theories of the market, neoliberal or otherwise, are not themselves racialized (not least since they deal in inputs of labour rather than human beings), the functioning of the contemporary global economy is deeply embedded in the histories and practices of racism” (Davison and Shire, 2015, p. 83). The institutions created under this notion can go unchecked for prejudicial behaviours. Beneath the surface could lay the unreconciled duality of ignoring the discrimination within the institutions and social structures it has produced and continues to support (Goldberg, 2009). Under this pretext of not being seen as being overt, racism has been relegated from the official agendas contending that race is not an issue anymore. It has been masked under the guise of opportunity for all with a discourse that is seen to be
colour blind, promoting freedom and choice as its cornerstones (Davison and Shire, 2015). By not focusing on race, such agendas abrogate responsibility and attention from it while the systems and institutions continue to perpetuate it.

Analyzing the "skill shortage" discourse, Goldberg (2005) identifies that two ideologies play a prominent role in this discourse; the neoliberal ideology and the racist ideology and explains that when there is a conflict between the two, racism goes underground and remains subtle while neoliberalism emerges as the dominant one (p. 267). Neoliberalism promotes that those who are at the top are there entirely as a result of their own merit while those who are not in those positions are themselves to blame for their status, given their own fault and deficiencies. Those who uphold these neoliberal principles fail to acknowledge the advantage of the existing networks, exposure to the system, patronage and power that maintains the privileged in their position (Davison and Shire, 2015). I find this to be critical and problematic as racism is allowed to slide under the radar with fewer checks and balances and fewer controls from the government. It lets those institutions that have racist tendencies to continue to remain alive and troubling. Although neoliberalism may appear not to encourage racism at an individual level, it continues to promote the replication of the very structures and systems that were created as a result of it.

Canada’s immigration policy is such that certain individuals, with their capital contributions, are considered to be more favorable compared to those whose capital offerings are not be significant. This is where neoliberalism and racism intersect. Profits for the corporate world increase if labour that is available is cheap. The jobs that are available for immigrants are labor-intensive jobs that require little use of their education
or skills. A majority of the participants in this thesis were from non-European countries who related how they had experienced discrimination to practice in their profession.

Another contradictory factor under neoliberalism is that the movement of capital and goods is freely promoted between borders while human beings mainly from racialized groups are heavily controlled. A case in point is the ongoing saga of restricted flow of people from Africa and the Middle East to Europe where thousands have lost their lives, while oil and other commodities flow freely to the same regions from there. Such contradictory practice reveals the racist undertone of neoliberalism. Most new immigrants who are mainly from non-European countries are usually made scapegoats when issues such as crime or threat to national safety are highlighted in public discourse (Kojic, 2015). The fallout from such discussions results in the perpetuation of prejudices but also instigates the government to introduce stricter controls and more punitive measures aimed at members of certain groups who evidently are racialized. While there is no denying that racial conceptions are embedded into it, the notion of neoliberalism being a racist ideology in itself needs to be explored further (Kojic, 2015).

2.5 Integration or Alienation

For IEPs, being accepted and integrated into their profession is key to their success. The focus therefore of this section is to examine the theory of alienation as it relates to integration. As immigrants continue to flow into Canada, their integration into the socioeconomic fabric of Canadian life determines how successful they are. Even though some key guiding principles such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms have been enshrined to ensure equal opportunities, not everyone has benefited from such policies. One of the challenges IEPs have to overcome in order to be integrated is the lack of networking or, in many instances, being distanced or alienated. It is well known
that ‘who you know’, can play an important role in one’s success. For many IEPs, having a network of those in similar profession can enhance their chances of getting into their own profession. If, however, the networks belong to a profession that is distanced from that of the IEPs, the results could lead to unnecessary challenges or experiences of being alienated from their profession. This thesis focuses on how bridging programs address the issue of alienation and networking. Alienation is a term that has been utilized in many different ways. Explaining Marx in his book of *Alienation* on this issue, Joachim Israel states that having to sell their working capacity is not an “expression of (their) personality and needs but something that has been forced upon (them). (Their) working capacity, being transformed into a thing, a commodity to be bought and sold, is no longer experienced as (their) life power. The consequence is that the worker becomes alien to his/her own activity and alien to the products he produces” (Israel, 1971. P. 43). Seeman (1961) describes it as a psychological state of “powerlessness,” meaninglessness, “normlessness,” “isolation,” and “self-estrangement.” Joachim Israel (1971) views it as including impacts related to both psychological as well as sociological aspects.

For many IEPs, not getting a job in their field of training is considered being alienated from their profession. The longer they remain unable to practice in their profession the more alienated they become and in many cases divorced from their occupation of training. They are estranged from their own qualifications and training, stripped of all pride and dignity in their work and left in a condition of total alienation. Such repeated messaging through their experiences could lead them to believe that their education is of lower value requiring validation. The bridging programs reinforce the belief that the foreign education and training of IEPs is inferior and hence of a lower
standing compared to those who are Canadian educated creating a distinction that
distances and alienates them. From immigration to bridging programs, neoliberalism
places the interests of one group against the other. At various stages of their settlement
and integration, IEPs have to confront the specter of division and alienation. They are
constantly placed in a position of “us” versus “them” - being called and considered
“immigrants” and not “Canadians,” being identified as “foreign educated” and not
“Canadian educated.” They have to complete a bridging program unlike those who have
graduated locally, all resulting in their feeling alienated from their profession.

Social alienation through lack of professional networks plays a significant role in
the integration of IEPs into their profession. Good networks allow for appropriate
understanding and appreciation of the professional environment. It can help avoid
unnecessary anxiety and concern. By not having employment in their profession and
not being able to integrate with their fellow professionals, leaves IEPs to establish other
social supports alienating them further from their profession.

Along with being alienated from their profession, IEPs exhaust their savings and
remain dispossessed of their possessions. Whether it is skills or their assets, it takes a
good proportion of time and effort to accumulate and bring them when they came to
Canada. The accumulation by dispossession invariably happens in many forms
including subtle ways, alienating one from the other. Harvey has argued that from the
very beginning, neoliberalism has been “a political project to re-establish the conditions
for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites” (Harvey, 2005, p.
19). IEPs relocate to Canada with their credentials, skills and assets with the
expectation of continuing or doing better than their previous settlement. Alienation is
from lack of opportunities and the obstacles they have to face to practice their
profession. The longer they stay away from their profession the more detached they become, eventually losing the connection altogether with their profession. To be effective and successful the bridging programs have to address issues around alienation among others mentioned earlier in this chapter.

2.6 Conclusion

From immigration to the bridging programs, there are many theories that explain this phenomenon however as highlighted above neoliberalism plays a critical role. While the main focus of this thesis has been neoliberalism, it is, however, not lost that there are interconnections and tensions that exists within and between various other theoretical and epistemological understandings such as discrimination, racism, and alienation. The underemployment and under-utilization of IEP skills has been associated with “exploitation of labour, rising inequality, acute economic strife for all but the wealthiest individuals and the disappearance of all things public” (Ayers and Carlone, 2007, p. 462). Issues around accumulation by dispossession where power that is left in the hands of a few has been discussed in this chapter. Neoliberalism pronounces power and wealth to be concentrated within certain elite groups (Thorsen, 2009). There has been a focus on how IEPs are programmed to believe that they are somehow ‘deficient’ and that not being able to practice in their profession is their own fault.

Similarly, racism and sexism is also linked to domination and power. Racism has been explored in relation to the bridging programs which can be experienced both overtly and covertly. As discussed in the preceding sections, the relationship between neoliberalism and racism has been highlighted. With the advent of neoliberalism, issues such as racism, class and alienation have been shrouded and taken a different
meaning. They have hid under the umbrella of neoliberalism, which appears to offer choices and options that are in essence geared to support a limited few. These understandings work in tandem supporting each other or hold on their own. The discourse around race, discrimination, alienation and neoliberalism has recently seen a shift from a focus on tackling systemic and structural inequalities towards that of individual rights and equal opportunity (Davison and Shire, 2015). Equal rights and opportunities may however not be equitable if the systemic issues continue to persist. To address the challenges faced by IEPs, understanding these various conceptual frameworks and how they impact them help us identify better ways to overcome the hurdles they face.
Chapter 3
Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the empirical research framework used for this thesis and discusses the methodology and methods used in the research. The approach utilizes an interpretive lens to analyze and get a good understanding of the effectiveness of the bridging programs for IEPs and starts by first getting an overview of the issue at hand. Data from secondary sources was used to identify Canada’s immigration policies, immigration trends, challenges immigrants face and get an overall picture of the bridging programs offered by various institutions supported by the Ontario government. Information was compiled through literature review, available government documents, websites, and brochures. However, for this study, my primary data source was from in-depth interviews with twenty IEPs who have completed a bridging program, and eight administrators or instructors of the program. I explore the experiences of IEPs in finding employment in their field of training, their perceptions of the bridging programs before and after completion and ways to overcome the challenges faced by them. I also interviewed the administrators or instructors of the programs who were able to voice their views on the challenges faced by IEPs, challenges they encountered in the delivery of the programs and ways to improve them. The data collection methods, sampling strategies, data analysis and the limitations of the study are discussed later in this chapter. This study received ethical approval from University of Toronto’s ethical committee and all participants signed a consent form for the study.
3.2 Research Question

This study is descriptive, explanatory and interpretive in the gathering of information and experiences of internationally trained immigrants in their quest to integrate into the labour market, and render their understanding on the effectiveness of the bridging programs. Interpretive research traditions try to make sense of the experiences of individuals, which may be subjective but create a meaningful and significant reality (Prasad, 2005). The research is macro in its scope with questions that were open ended to extract information that is extensive, and involved documenting events and issues that are real by capturing the narratives and experiences of those participating in the research (Neuman, 2006). Interpretivism has influenced the development of this thesis in a way that has extracted the experiences of IEPs with the bridging programs and attached meanings to them. Embedded in the German concept of Verstehen, meaning to "understand", interpretivism was developed by Max Weber, the German sociologist. The focus here is to recognize the underlying reasons behind the person's actions and to understand their point of view. It opens a new horizon of views and gives depth to the understanding of issues from those who experience it. Unlike the quantitative traditions that seek to explain using quantifiable and measurable abstractions, interpretivists consider the socio-structural context and meaning behind the phenomena to understand life experiences (Walters, 2009). It is the understanding of the IEP experience and applying meaning to it which has made their input valuable. The different categories that have been crafted are articulated as being reflective of their experience. "Interpretive work is conditioned by arrays of local interpretive resources, recognizable types, familiar vocabularies, organizational missions, professional orientations, group cultures, and other existing frameworks for assigning
meaning to matters under consideration” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994, p. 264). The probing revealed the underlying causes to obtain a broader picture, not limited to their credentials, but to include the impacts to their socio-economic welfare situation. These qualitative narratives capture the vibrancy and depth of the problems highlighting the social stratifications, ideological formations, conflicts between classes and structural power dynamics (Prasad, 2005, p.113). Through the narratives and flowing accounts of IEPs, certain aspects of the bridging programs have been identified which would otherwise not have surfaced. Probing questions around IEP experiences and asking about who benefits from the bridging programs reveals the tensions and interconnectedness of the different theoretical frameworks discussed in this thesis. By interpreting the discourse and narrative, issues around racism and neoliberalism have been highlighted as playing a significant role in the integration process. While the government, along with educational institutions has implemented bridging programs from their perspective, the qualitative method used here gives us a descriptive and interpretive understanding of the situation from the participant’s perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). It is through a lens by which “individuals make sense of the phenomena they encounter and order them into taken-for-granted realities” (Prasad, 2005, p. 14). It helps to understand how people think and comprehend the effectiveness of the bridging programs from the perspective of those for whom the programs were supposed to help in overcoming barriers and find employment. It brings out the critical issues encountered by them which otherwise would not have been possible.

Furthermore, this thesis is based around the concept of creating a ‘bridge’ as a solution to overcome obstacles and challenges faced by internationally trained immigrants. The challenges to employment are broad and varied ranging from
insufficient recognition of credentials to lack of Canadian experience or ignorant or discriminatory practices of employers (Wayland, 2006). I find the barriers to fall under two major categories; firstly economic integration under which are issues such as lack of Canadian experience, lack of skills utilization and lack of accreditation and secondly matters such as discrimination and racism under which fall the obstacles of language and lack of networking resources. The bridging programs have been developed to help bridge the barriers and overcome these challenges.

The interpretive lens as indicated earlier has influenced this thesis both in the gathering and in analysis of the secondary data on immigration policies and bridging programs as well as the primary data on the experiences of IEPs in completing the bridging programs. It helped raise issues of discrimination and racism even when the respondents did not do so in their responses. This research gives voice to the IEPs who have completed the 'bridging' program, relates their lived experiences and identifies what barriers if any, the programs help overcome. Probing the answers helped identify factors that may not be so obvious or beyond the scope of the bridging programs and extract meanings these internationally trained professionals have placed on taking such courses. This perspective has added value to the existing research and addresses the issues from a different angle – whom the programs are meant for, the IEPs. To support my analysis, I also interviewed the service providers or deliverers of the programs to understand their point of view about the goals of these programs, their challenges and who really benefits according to them. A detailed questionnaire is attached in Appendix 1, however, the following key questions guided my thesis:

1. From the standpoint of the IEP what challenges did they face in their quest to be integrated into their profession of training in Canada and how did it affect them?
2. As an IEP, what was their experience in completing the bridging program and how did the bridging programs help integrate them in their profession of training?

3. Whom do the bridging programs actually benefit? How can these programs be enhanced and improved?

An important aspect of these questions was to understand the underlying factors of the experiences of IEPs. This is where learnings from interpretivism helped get to the profoundness and depth of the responses and attach meanings to them. I got to know how neoliberalism impacted the IEPs at the individual level through internalization into believing they were at fault due to their “deficiencies” and how they were being dispossessed of their education, skills and wealth. The questions along with their probing also helped connect neoliberalism and racism to the experiences of IEPs.

From the standpoint of the service providers, the focus was similar to the one above but took a slightly different angle to cover the challenges they face in the delivery of the programs. A detailed questionnaire is attached as Appendix 2. The following key questions guided my thesis:

1. From the standpoint of the service providers what challenges did the IEP face in their quest to be integrated into their profession of training in Canada and how did it affect them?

2. As a service provider, what challenges did they face in the delivery of bridging programs?

3. Who do the bridging programs benefit? How can these programs be enhanced and improved?

The data collected to answer the above questions and its analysis helped to understand the plight of internationally trained professionals, the challenges they face and explored
links to theoretical or conceptual frameworks such as neoliberalism, racism, class, discrimination etc. The thesis brings to light analysis of some veiled systemic problems that exist which could be used to inform the formulation of policies around labour market integration for internationally trained immigrants. Results from the study identify issues that need be addressed to enhance the bridging programs and also guide policy makers and program developers to more appropriate and effective program strategies.

3.3 Research Design

The research strategy adopted for this thesis offers a two-pronged approach. First I examined the secondary data such as statistics, government reports, and literature review. Next, I completed qualitative interviews with IEPs who had completed a bridging program, as well as with administrators of the programs. I utilize an interpretivist approach that may be seen as subjective but generates data that has great depth with a high level of validity and helps us understand the interconnectedness of issues. Through this method, I have tried to learn and understand what is going on in the IEPs lives and their experiences. My interviews focused on the challenges immigrants face in taking the bridging programs and identified any oppression, distortions and power play that may exist. I also placed emphasis on reflective assessment and critique through the lens of power, domination, and conflict (Prasad, 2005). During the research, I examined and asked the critical question as to who really benefits (Burbules and Berk, 1999). The questions for this thesis were developed to extrapolate who were the beneficiaries of the bridging programs and the power dynamics at play. But more importantly, the motive was to get to the bottom of IEP experiences and determine ways to overcome the challenges they face. Under the interpretivist lens, interpretations may be unlimited but portray a meaningful understanding of IEP experiences (Heracleous et al., 2004,
It allows us to understand the data in many ways. The differentiated viewpoints give us more depth into the underlying causes. They help us understand how people reflect and make sense of their experiences. The long standing predicament of the IEPs reveals the connection between Canada’s history on immigration policy to the present day experiences of many immigrants, which, if not checked, could slide into being accepted as an unavoidable reality and a norm. Such notions, described by Antonio Gramsci (1971) as ideological hegemony, become so common and part of our daily lives that they slide under the radar and avoid any attention or scrutiny. Insights from Gramsci’s focus on the hegemonic dominance and expose the subtle coercion of cultural values and norms that are portrayed as being common values for all (Anderson, 1976). In the case of IEPs, their international education is characterized as lacking and deficient regardless of where they come from, hence the development of bridging programs which could be seen as addressing the problems in the Canadian system. As a result of the expansion of these programs and the emphasis placed on them, this notion is not only acknowledged but is accepted by many, making it a necessity for IEPs to complete bridging programs to succeed in spite of their qualifications and wealth of international experiences. It is therefore not uncommon for IEPs to be expected to complete a bridging program if they want to practice in their profession and be successful in Canada.

Communication to the IEPs before their arrival and thereafter plays a vital role in the portrayal of an image of IEP inadequacy. Uncritical acceptance of such messaging is bereft of the truth, especially when the qualifications of IEPs have been recognized by the Federal government as being acceptable to immigrate to Canada. Habermas (1984) discusses to the importance of coordinated communication within communities but
shows his apprehension when such messaging is systematically distorted as in the case of the immigrants.

A key difficulty experienced by IEPs in integrating into the labour market relates to their acceptability by the professional bodies. The bridging programs have been devised as an extra or added course to fill the gap to integrate the IEP’s into the labour market. Through the bridging programs, knowledge that is taught is legitimized; but, in other ways it could also be seen to proscribe the international education and skills IEPs possess. Making the IEPs take an extra course to acquire a certificate through the bridging programs which may not hold much value commodifies knowledge. The IEPs who already have qualifications from another institution incur an unnecessary cost to attend the bridging program to legitimize their education and training which they already possess. In essence, it is to re-certify what they already possess with an added cost. Knowledge here is utilized in a limited way, in contrast to the international and broad range of life experiences, or what one could call ‘wisdom,’ that the IEP’s bring to Canada.

This thesis is a macro analysis of the IEP experience with the bridging programs that have been developed to integrate them into the labour market, with a focus on understanding the exploitation, discrimination, power and class struggles that exist in the programs. As indicated earlier, I have used insights from the interpretivist approach that is multidisciplinary and not confined to a narrow approach. This method has helped to understand the meaning IEPs have placed, about taking the bridging programs and their effect on them, as well as its associated effects. “Such multiperspectival work is not only permissible but positively valued in most forms of discourse analysis” (Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002, p.4). While the method of this study has been qualitative
interviews, it also examines secondary sources such as archived information, review of previous research on bridging programs, government reports, institutional web postings and statistics to explore how the ‘bridging’ programs help overcome the core issues of underutilization and underemployment of internationally trained immigrants. There are over 100 professions regulated and unregulated for which bridging programs have been funded (Ontario, 2012). Various organizations are responsible for bridging programs; some are occupation specific while others provide licensure guidance and internships to acquire Canadian work experience (Duncan & Poisson, 2008). These programs also have operational differences and diversity with an ultimate goal to see internationally trained immigrants get employment in the profession they were trained in. This research is not a program review nor is it an assessment of each bridging program to identify whether they are successful or not. It is more of a bird’s eye view that looks at the ‘lay of the land’ and extracts responses that shed light on the broader and foundational issues related to the bridging programs in particular and the integration of internationally trained immigrants in general. For a non-statistical research study such as this, critical traditions as mentioned earlier guide it to extrapolate, identify and comprehend concerns of integration, discrimination or power dynamics that exist. This thesis goes beyond identifying issues; it crafts out options to bring about a change that makes a difference in the process of labour market integration of IEPs immigrating to Canada.

I have chosen Toronto as the metropolitan focus because it is known as a City of Immigrants and prides itself on “Diversity Our Strength” as its official motto (City of Toronto, 2011). Toronto remains a magnet for immigrants, attracting thousands to the City annually. Although the number of immigrants settling in Toronto have somewhat decreased, it still attracts 32.8% of Canada’s new immigrant arrivals (Paperny, 2011).
Furthermore, there are over 100 bridging programs most of which are located in Toronto. Over 50,000 internationally trained individuals have gone through the programs in Ontario (HUMA, 2011). With a large number of internationally trained immigrants residing in Toronto and the various supports such as the bridging programs readily available in the City, I have located the focus of this study in Toronto.

The gathering of data and information was done first through secondary sources including literature review, government reports, audits and websites. The critical traditions biggest commitment is its methodological obligation to rigorous and concrete historical research and the attention it gives to patterns of everyday material existence (Prasad, 2005). The design of this thesis has incorporated a historical lens to Canada’s immigration policies and the experiences of immigrants to its current state, followed by the current experiences of immigrants on settlement and bridging programs as the primary source of information, as well as the interconnectedness between the two. It has allowed inquiry of all players and actions related to IEPs from immigration policies to bridging programs. Moreover, it has facilitated the inquiry of the experiences of IEPs in relation to the policies laid out by the government. Although the education and experience of IEPs have been accepted for immigration to Canada, the development of the bridging programs to get their education and training experience validated directs the focus on the deficiency of the IEPs, concealing the shortcomings of the corporate world to accept the highly educated internationally trained professionals. Asking who benefits from these programs was one of the emphasis of this thesis.

The method of the primary source of information for this thesis has been qualitative in nature to explore how effective the ‘bridging’ programs are devised to help overcome the core issues of underutilization and underemployment of internationally
trained immigrants. This method involves recording and capturing the real accounts and experiences of people (Neuman, 2006). Participants under this method had the opportunity to discuss their experiences as professionally trained persons with regard to their settlement in Canada, finding employment and their experiences with the bridging programs.

The interviews were semi-structured and questions to the participants were open ended to permit an unlimited number of responses that would allow for unanticipated findings. Participants were given ample opportunity to articulate their concerns and experiences. Their responses were audio taped with their permission and later transcribed. Once the data was gathered, it was organized into conceptual categories to create themes and concepts using the MAXQDA software. Here, similarities, recurrent ideas and repetitive patterns that reflect participants’ experiences in completing the bridging programs and understanding of labour market integration into the Canadian society were identified. The software helped to bring out the common experiences individually but also helped to connect similar ideas of all participants. New and emerging themes have been flagged and highlighted in the analysis, later in the thesis. The information collected sheds light on the ‘bridging’ programs and helps to identify other shortcomings in the labour market integration of immigrants in Ontario.

3.4 Interview Process

A dominant strategy in qualitative research is purposeful sampling. It seeks information-rich cases that can be studied in detail (Patton, 1990). It is not the representativeness, which is important, but the relevance by which participants are selected (Flick, 1998). I chose a non-probability or non-random sampling method and posted flyers at various places such as the various employment resource centers, job
finding clubs and institutes where it is common for those who have completed the bridging program to visit. The flyer as seen in Appendix 3 explained the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of the study and the contact information of the researcher. The response level, however, was weak. Recognizing the reality of a qualitative study such as this one that is twined with time and resource constraints, I opted to use snowball sampling to recruit more participants. Yegidis et al., (1999) write that under snowball sampling, “potential participants are not selected at a point in time, rather the researcher can ask current participants for names of people they know who like themselves, have experienced some problems or who like themselves meet the necessary criteria for inclusion in the population” (p.184 -185). The participants in this thesis were given flyers and requested to share with other potential participants to contact the researcher if they wanted to participate in the research. Some limitations under snowball sampling recognize that it is not possible to identify sampling error or make generalizations from the sample respondents, however to minimize any errors and have a good representation of respondents, I kept track of a good mix of people from various professions, gender, countries, etc.

They were asked the following screening questions:

1) Were you born outside of Canada?

2) Have you graduated from a bridging program?

When the answers to both these questions were positive, I then scheduled a meeting with them at a location of their choice such as at the University of Toronto, a coffee shop, restaurant, a library or any other public place. At this meeting, participants were offered refreshments during the interview.

During the interview, I first started by giving a brief background about myself, my
training and interest in the subject. As an immigrant myself, I anticipated that this would make the participant feel more comfortable and at ease. I provided the participant with a voluntary informed consent form that gave a brief description and the purpose of the study. “Voluntary informed consent may be defined as agreeing to participate by choice, and not participation through coercion or force, as well as the participant having a clear idea of what their involvement will entail” (Yegdis et al., 1999, p. 38). I gave the participants assurance of anonymity and emphasized to them that their names will be treated in the strictest of confidence as laid down by Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Ontario Government, 2007). Participants were encouraged to feel free to interrupt, ask for clarifications and to speak their mind and heart without feeling intimidated. Permission was sought to audio record the interview and participants were advised that the study was strictly voluntary and that they had a right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Furthermore, I provided the participants with my contact numbers for them to follow up with me if they were interested in getting the results of this study. I responded to any questions they had and motivated them to co-operate and provide answers that were valuable and informative. Although, as an immigrant, I had my own experiences of settlement in Canada, as a researcher, I tried to be as neutral, objective and non-judgmental as possible, not having any bias towards any potential candidate regardless of their opinions and views. I kept my own interests to myself during the interview and accepted without influence all accounts relayed to me and recognized that each person had their own experiences with a story to tell. Each interview took approximately an hour. The participants were allowed to discuss any themes relevant to their socio-economic, immigration, labour market integration and settlement issues. Participants were given ample opportunity to articulate their concerns
and issues. Grinnell (1981) explains that the researcher must allow the participants to
tell their stories and not bring his or her own agenda to the research. With every new
internationally educated immigrant participant to the research, the process just
mentioned above was repeated.

To get a holistic view surrounding the bridging programs, I sought input from
another set of participants who were the deliverers of the bridging programs. They were
administrators or instructors of the bridging programs. Since the providers of the
bridging programs are known and limited, I sent a letter of invitation (see Appendix 4) to
institutions offering bridging programs and requested them to contact me through email
or telephone. Although I did not anticipate any issues of conflict for the respondent or
their institution, I assured the respondents of confidentiality of their name and the name
of their institution. I met with them at a location of their preference. At this meeting with
the participants, I explained the process and obtained their consent and authorization to
proceed before I started my interview with them. The participants were informed that
they were under no obligation to complete the interview and had all the flexibility to walk
away from it at any time during the process. The reason for the research was explained
to the participants. I responded to any questions they had and motivated them to co-
operate and provide answers that were valuable and informative. There was no bias
towards any potential candidate regardless of their opinions and views. Each interview
took approximately an hour, and with the consent of the participants, the interview was
audio recorded. I allowed participants to discuss any other themes relevant to the
delivery of the bridging programs and immigrant settlement issues. Participants were
given ample opportunity to articulate their concerns and problems. With every new
participant to the research, this process was repeated.
3.5 Sampling Method

As getting a list of those who had competed a bridging program was not possible, a representative sample of IEPs was not possible. Sequential sampling where relevant cases are sought was another option (Neuman, 2006). What worked best was the distribution of flyers to the initial participants to share with others they knew who had completed a bridging program. With the details of the research and the contact information of the researcher, the response was much better. The primary data for this research came from a non-representative sample. Despite a voluminous and wide-ranging literature on qualitative studies, there is no consensus on what size a sample should be. Mason (2010) in his study of sample sizes and saturation point, contends that in qualitative research as much as one occurrence of the data is what may be needed in understanding the process behind the topic. More data therefore may not produce more or better information once it has reached a point of diminishing returns (Mason, 2010). In a study by Guest et al., (2006) on examining the quantity required in a qualitative research found that a very early point of saturation had been reached in the original sample size of sixty participants, and concluded that “a sample of six interviews may [be] sufficient to enable development of meaningful themes and useful interpretations” (p.78). Another study by Atran et al., (2005) suggested ten participants as being sufficient to establish a consensus for a qualitative study. For this research, I intended not to take a baseline approach but to work on a sample size that was going to be reliable and credible. Based on the research method mentioned above, this qualitative sample is a size I consider to be fair that has allowed me to discuss their experiences and capture the important perceptions of internationally trained immigrants. Since these were in-depth interviews, they may not provide any particular measurement
or generalization similar to those that are possible through positivist research. They however give us significant insights into the issues experienced by the participants and provide us a good understanding into the subtle or causal relationships between the challenges internationally trained immigrants face and the bridging programs they have completed. It has also allowed me to assess how bridging programs help or hinder the settlement process, and explain systems of thought, which highlight the problems that are specific to the issue (Small, 2009). Through their responses, I have been able to identify common themes or trends in their experience to be re-trained and be gainfully employed in their original profession of training.

Being a visible minority who came as an immigrant to Canada did not guarantee me an interview from other immigrants. There were a couple of participants who initially agreed to be part of the research, but backed out at the time of scheduling an appointment giving reasons primarily of unavailability of time. Eventually, twenty participants volunteered and the interviews were completed with eleven male and nine female participants in the thesis. They came from eleven countries and eleven professions from all parts of the world. For the service providers of the bridging programs, I initially intended to interview ten participants who were involved in the delivery of the programs. Due to time constraints and limitations of this study, I managed to interview eight participants who were involved with the various institutions, such as universities, colleges and community agencies as seen below. As can be seen from the table later in this chapter, every effort was made to include a broad spectrum of participants. Letters were sent to service providers to participate in this thesis. There were some who declined or did not respond to the request. The programs delivered by the institutes or organizations that took part in this thesis have been generalized to
broad professional sectors in order to keep their anonymity. These included but were not limited to health-related, engineering, social sciences, business and accounting, trades, communications and job preparation. The interviews were conducted at their location or a location of their choice. Consent requirements with all the participants were read, explained and consent papers signed. The main categories of the programs, such as regulated and non-regulated professions, were well represented by the participants in this thesis. I would like to mention that although there was a good representation of regulated and non-regulated professions the intent is not on the generalizability of the results. It is the depth of the information and the intricacies related to the bridging programs that is of significant value here. The participants represent a wide range of bridging program experiences and capture a good diversity of the programs mentioned in Chapter 6. The perspectives of the participants reflect a background of experiences from all over the world.

3.6 Participants of this study

Safeguarding the confidentiality of the participants in this thesis and the institutions they attended or worked for has been the cornerstone of this thesis. The names of participants utilized in this thesis are fictitious to avoid the disclosure of their identity or that of their institutions. Information that could reveal their identity has been carefully obscured without changing the content of the data. After the acceptance of this research by the thesis committee, all the raw data collected will be discarded in confidential waste.

The IEPs who were participants in this thesis were from various professional backgrounds and completed the bridging programs according to their needs. Table 3.1 gives a brief background of the participants in this thesis who completed the bridging
programs. They came from various geographies and different educational and professional backgrounds and possessed a wealth of experience. At least one participant took more than one bridging program from different service providers. The service providers who participants took the bridging program from ranged from community based agencies to community colleges and Universities. Findings from the interviews give us good insight into the extent of immigrant experiences. At the time of the interviews, out of the twenty participants who participated in the study only five were working in their profession of training. There were seven participants who were working in other types of jobs including survival jobs, while eight were not working.

Along with their enormous professional experience (discussed in the next section), the participants also spoke at least two languages with many of them conversant in up to four languages, an indication of the vast cultural experience they possess. Other information such as their backgrounds, education, profession, skills, experiences etc. has been kept the same and remains accurate.

Out of the twenty participants in this study, twelve were employed while others were still looking for work. Five had employment in their profession of training prior to immigrating to Canada while seven were working in jobs not related to their profession. Of those not employed in their professions, seven were working in low-wage jobs. Of the twelve that had employment, four were in regulated professions. The fact that out of the twenty participants interviewed only five were employed in their professions suggests that there exist systemic barriers, which curtail the IEPs from employment in their professions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Geographic area</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Years in Canada</th>
<th>Languages Spoken</th>
<th>Employed in their Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asha</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilip</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>MSc (2)</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No (another job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumtaz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>MSc (2)</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No (another job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samir</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>MSc (2)</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No (another job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>South America</td>
<td>MSc (2)</td>
<td>Communications and Journalism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekle</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Urban Planning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behrang</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agha</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>MSc (2)</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No (another job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashid</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zahra</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Physiotherapy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No (another job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promita</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No (another job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taj</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No (another job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salma</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As noted from *table 3.1*, this study did not identify any significant gender differences from participants in relation to the bridging programs. For instance out of the five participants who found employment in their professions after their participation in bridging programs, three were women, all in regulated professions and two were men (one in a regulated and one in an unregulated profession). Those not employed in their professions included two women and five men. Out of the sample as a whole therefore, 7 men and 5 women found employment after bridging programs. Although asked, participants did not note that issues such as the availability of childcare affected their ability to gain to access and eventually employment.

This study also did not reveal significant differences in experiences on the basis of age. Out of the ten participants who were in their forties, six were employed with two of them in their own professions. There were five participants in their thirties and four were employed with two in their own profession. There were three participants in their twenties and one was employed. Finally, there were two participants in their fifties and one was employed. While these results cannot be generalized, half of the respondents in this study were in their thirties, and respondents in this age group were more successful than those in other age groups in being employed.

The eight service delivery participants were of different backgrounds and equally divided on gender lines representative of the various delivery agents. They included
community based agencies, community colleges, as well as universities that delivered various programs from employment related to professional accreditation. Their responsibilities also varied from being coordinators to lecturers or teachers of the bridging programs. *Table 3.2* gives a synopsis of the participants with their original names replaced with pseudonyms to keep their identity or that of the institution confidential.

**Table 3.2: Description of service providers who participated in this thesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Type of Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Community based agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Administrative, Lecturer</td>
<td>Community based agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Community based agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>University, Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bila</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Administrative, Lecturer</td>
<td>University, Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.7 The Experience and Education IEPs Bring to Canada

As indicated above there were two types of sample groups used in the qualitative interviews. The first set included twenty IEPs who had completed at least one bridging program. These were nine females and eleven males between the ages of 20 to 50 years. The participants were multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multilingual originating from eleven different countries and from a wide variety of professions that included both regulated professions such as Architecture, Social Work, Civil Engineering,
Physiotherapy etc., as well as non-regulated professions such as in the field of Economics, Communications, Business etc. Most participants spoke at least two languages. They had resided in Canada for less than five years. All but two had a Master’s degree with most of them having a double Master’s degree, an indication that they were highly educated representing fourteen different professions. Many of the participants had acquired their education from different countries of the world with some having acquired their Master’s education from the United States or from Europe where the standard of education is seen as comparable to, if not better than that of Canada. Most participants had their educational credentials accredited in Canada and were of the opinion that their education was from a highly reputed university in their country of origin. At the time of the interview most participants had not found employment in their profession of training and were working in jobs that were below their level of training or in an unrelated profession.

With high education levels, the experience of participants of this research reflects a myriad of extensive knowledge and skills in their profession. Agha who had two degrees, one in Human Resources and the other in Social Work, stated with enthusiasm, “Both my degrees have got Canadian equivalency, so I’m good to go.” Before Agha came to Canada, he had worked with an international non-profit organization for almost ten years as a director responsible for program management, international non-profit management as well as human resource training and development. He however was still looking for work in his profession at the time of the interview. Zahra, a medical profession graduate in clinical physiotherapy, had seven years of experience working in a government setting and had run her own consultancy before migrating. Peter, who worked with an international NGO was “involved in
programs for war torn children, kids that have been caught up in war," and Samir had been working for ten years at a national level in his profession before he came to Canada. Carmen was involved with international NGO’s for many years in environmental communications and had received international awards for her work on Human Rights. Tekle, who hails from Africa, had a double Master’s degree, was the head of a department at the university in his country of birth, was a lecturer and owned a consultancy. Behrang possessed seven years of experience in consulting in the engineering sector in Asia, while Ali had been the vice-president of a bank in the Middle East, a role he savored for many years before immigrating to Canada. Dilip had a double Master’s degree with seven years’ experience of working with international agencies, “was familiar with international protocols and how things are done internationally.” Since many of the participants possessed a Master’s degree, they had also lectured at their local universities or colleges.

It is clearly evident that those who participated in this research came to Canada from all parts of the world, came with a high level of education and work experience, and had graduated from universities that were considered to be of high repute in their countries of origin. For most, their work encompassed larger responsibilities and jurisdictions beyond national boundaries. They had studied and progressed to a stage where one could classify them as having reached a stage of being high “human capital,” arguably the “cream of the crop” from whatever country they came from. As identified elsewhere, most of the participants came from countries that are considered developing or mainly from Asia, Africa or Latin America with major costs of their education borne by their countries of origin who stopped benefitting from their investment when the IEPs immigrated to Canada. Although it is not the intent of this thesis to focus on this issue, it
should not be lost that the brain drain of the highly trained people from developing countries generates a big human capital deficit and developmental cost to them, which is problematic in many ways.

The second type of sample group for this thesis were the service providers or deliverers of the bridging program. Once again, the intent was to interview ten participants however due to time constraints, I was able to interview eight participants. It must be noted however that all the service providers were immigrants who were employed in the various positions at the institutes. Formal educational institutions, such as universities, colleges and community-based agencies, deliver bridging programs. Participants from five formal educational institutes and three community-based agencies were interviewed. They were four female and four male participants who were involved either in the administration of the program or in the delivery of it. The range of involvement of the service providers from administration to lecturing was broad and framed a clearer picture of bridging programs from the standpoint of delivering them. A synopsis of the respondents who participated in the research has been provided in Table 3.2.

3.8 Research Limitations

There are questions around reliability and validity that surface when it comes to this type of qualitative research. It, however, needs to be understood that post-positivist research is different from that of the positivist tradition that has its own set of guidelines around quality control which lack compatibility with the other (Prasad, 2005). They, therefore, cannot be measured with the same standards. As an immigrant who has experienced the labour market integration, I have been careful not to oversimplify any issues and have been careful with the method of collecting of data. It has given me the
opportunity to interact and personally talk to those who have gone through the bridging programs. The importance of research like this one is based on the real life experiences and the presentation of the research is in the form of coherent and plausible narrative (Prasad, 2005). What is important in such research as this is not the quantity of information, but the depth of insight and knowledge it produces. It is through such a degree of evidence that I have been able to identify not just the obvious, but the subtle nuances that impact the bridging programs and the integration of IEPs into the labour market.

There are other limitations in a study that involves non-random sampling like this one. Without having a database of those that have completed a bridging program, the snowball sampling method was adopted after getting some initial interviews which may appear to carry with it a bias such as one person influencing the other. This bias, however, was reduced to a minimum as the respondents were only asked to share the flyer with those that they knew had completed a bridging program. It was through the flyer that they were requested to contact me if they were interested in being part of the study. Once they contacted me showing a willingness to be part of the research, I ensured that each one was afforded an independent and confidential process as others. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted with each participant separately and independent of others to try and reduce any bias that would otherwise have been created. Every effort was made to ensure that the confidentiality of participants was upheld with no information of the other being revealed.

3.9 Conclusion

When using qualitative research as this one, generalizations may not be possible. However, the reason for selecting a qualitative path instead of a positivist method is that
it helps understand and address important life questions and daily experiences that could not otherwise be explained. Utilizing the interpretive approach as the empirical framework in this thesis abstracts the conflict, exploitation and power dynamics that exist in terms of bridging programs and integration of IEPs. These categories have been crafted, interpretation of which has been articulated as being reflective of their experience. It is through such an approach that those who are disadvantaged are given a voice where issues such as neoliberalism, discrimination, and power dynamics become evident. It brings to the fore concerns that are complex and cannot be understood through a simple answer. This type of scientific inquiry is “more artistic and craftsman-like than scientific on account of its affinities with narrative genres such as history, literature, and philosophy” (Prasad, 2005, p. 6). This research gives us valuable insights into the issues of bridging programs and the integration of IEPs and act as a catalyst to further explore other issues faced by immigrants in general and bridging programs in particular.
Chapter 4
Canada’s Immigration History, Immigrant Trends and Employment Outcomes

4.1 Introduction

Canada is a vast country with a relatively small population and immigration plays a pivotal role in its economic growth. It has been known to be a country of immigrants and except for the First Nations, virtually all of Canada’s population has an immigrant connection and can trace their roots back to another country (Petri, 2009). There have been unprecedented changes to the immigration policy in recent times with an emphasis on short-term labour market needs (Alboim and Cohl, 2012). This chapter takes a glance at the immigration priorities of the past and identifies their discriminatory and racist impact. It also traces the shift seen in these systems from a human capital model to neoliberal principles. These policies have resulted in an increase in immigrants who have more qualifications and education than in the past. While these amendments have evolved over the years, the IEPs find themselves challenged to practice the profession they were trained in. A substantial underutilization and undervaluing of IEP skills where employment outcomes of new immigrants have been significantly lower than those born in Canada continues to exist (Akter et al., 2013; Ewoudou, 2011; FCM, 2011; OHRC, 2013; Reitz, 2011). As a result of this failure to integrate new immigrants into the labour market, programs such as the bridging programs have been created to patch the gap and address the troublesome experiences of IEPs.

As much as there exists a shift in immigration policies, immigrant trends have also changed over the years. Historically, the preferred sources for immigration to Canada were from the United Kingdom, the United States and Western Europe. However, in
recent years this has changed with more immigrants coming from Asia and Africa (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2010; Teelucksingh and Galabuzi, 2005). This chapter explores immigration history and discovers a link that runs through the immigration policies, the challenges faced by immigrants and the creation of bridging programs. I start with an understanding of the evolution of Canada’s immigration priorities to its present state, identify the trends in immigration and highlight employment outcomes of new immigrants during recent times which have led to bridging programs, the effectiveness of which is discussed in later chapters of this thesis.

4.2 Historical Context of the Canadian Immigration Policy

Immigration policy became one of the top priorities after Canada became a Confederation in 1867 with the first Immigration Act being passed two years later. The aim was to attract a large number of immigrants to occupy the vast lands as a means of securing Canadian border and to stimulate the economy and meet the demand for domestic goods (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2010). Between 1914 and 1920 the government faced a number of issues both internationally, as well as at home. In response to World War I, a new legislation known as The War Measures Act, 1914 was passed prohibiting movement of certain Canadians and placing “enemy aliens” such as the Japanese in internment camps. Around the same time, there was the nationwide uprising in the labour movement to which the government responded by quelling such revolts (Kealey, 2002). Then in 1919 the government introduced a new Immigration Act that gave more powers to itself, allowing for automatic deportation of anyone supporting the uprising (Kelly and Trebilcock, 2010). A dominating theory was the Eugenics theory of racial bias, a presumption founded on the belief “that humans were primarily defined by their hereditary composition came into acceptance during this time. Characteristics such as
intelligence and feeblemindedness, traits such as alcoholism and criminality, as well as numerous diseases were passed in the blood plasma from one generation to another” (Kelley and Trebilcock, 2010, p. 212). The immigration policies of that time openly favoured one race or group of people over another and influenced the immigration policies heavily. This continued for a long time until World War II.

After World War II, there was rapid economic growth, and immigration was once again viewed as a factor helping to bolster it. In 1967, Canada changed its immigration policy from being discriminatory on the lines of colour and origin, to one based on a rationale that certain immigrants, by reason of their education, training, skill, or other special qualifications, are more likely to become successfully established in Canada than others (Li, 2003; Kelly and Trebilcock, 2010). It introduced a point system based on the Human Capital Theory that placed much importance on a range of categories such as education, skills, language, etc. According to the Human Capital Theory individual and aggregate investments in learning activities lead to greater individual and societal economic benefits (Livingstone, 1997). However, the recent experiences of immigrants prove this to be to the contrary as it is not uncommon to see highly qualified IEPs taking menial jobs where their education and skills go underutilized. The shift in emphasis in the immigration policy from the country of origin to human capital for immigrant selection, however, opened the door to a pattern of immigration from all parts of the world. As a result, immigrants form an increasing percentage of the population mix. According to the census of 2011, residents of Toronto who were born outside of Canada numbered 1,252,215, accounting for 49% of the City’s residents, making it one of the most multicultural cities in the world (City of Toronto, 2014).

By presenting the roots of Canada’s immigration policies, I argue that not only
have they not been free of discrimination and racism, but on the contrary were established as a result of the prejudice and predispositions that existed at that time. Furthermore, although the introduction of the point system in 1967 may have eliminated the intolerance from the policies and the laws on the surface, it has not been able to eradicate the discrimination for the daily experiences of many. Such discriminatory practices are evident from the responses of the IEPs and will be discussed later in this thesis. It needs to be understood that the prejudiced doctrines before 1967 were not only related to immigration policies but were the mantra of the government at the time. Many institutions and systems that are currently in place were formed decades ago and continue to function to this day with little change even though the demographics in recent years, as we will see in the next section, have changed from being Eurocentric to more people coming to Canada from Asia and Africa. Immigrants have during recent times increasingly experienced the underutilization of skills and underemployment (Akter et. al., 2013; OHRC, 2013; Reitz, 2011). To address this failing and an increasingly louder public outcry, bridging programs were created among other responses, and so this thesis is an analysis of their efficacy. Lately, however, there is a significant tactical shift as the Canadian immigration laws have undergone a further unprecedented makeover with little or no public or parliamentary debate.

4.3 Recent Changes: 2008 Onwards

Only six years after a major overhaul of the immigration policies and programs by the then Liberal government in 2002, another set of sweeping changes were introduced by the Conservative government. In 2008, the federal government started introducing unprecedented changes that affect all streams of immigration. “In addition to altering the substance of immigration policies and programs, the government has transformed the
process for undertaking immigration reform, and the powers and roles of government and other key players” (Alboim and Cohl, 2012, p.01). The new changes impact all streams of immigration along with citizenship, international studentship, temporary entry as a foreign worker, and many of its programs. While the three major categories of immigrants such as economic class, refugees and family class have remained the same, their sub-categories have changed. Alboim and Cohl (2012), in a detailed analysis of these changes, identify that the “areas of concern include the government’s growing focus on the economic class and short-term labour market needs, a lack of policy coherence and evidentiary basis for many decisions, a weakening of traditional democratic processes, and a less welcoming environment for the people Canada needs to attract” (p. 2). Many of the changes have been made inconspicuously and with little debate. In 2008, the government in its Budget Bill included an amendment to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to empower the minister to issue “Ministerial Instructions” to immigration officers. By espousing this, the Conservative government signaled a drastic expansion of the neoliberal ethos and concentrated the power to a limited few. Harvey (2005) argues that under the neoliberal philosophy, “a strong preference exists for government (to govern) by executive order and by judicial decision rather than democratic and parliamentary decision-making” (p. 66). This pronouncement by the government gave exceptional powers to the Minister to make changes without going through the parliamentary process. What has followed is a multitude of alterations and modifications to the immigration policies.

In December of 2014, the Ministry of Immigration and Citizenship announced a complete overhaul of the long-established points system from a maximum of 100 points to a total of 1200 points (Canada Gazette, 2014). Unlike the previous system, the new
system does not indicate the minimum threshold of points that would be required to immigrate to Canada. It gives more emphasis to a job offer. The new system was developed by the government after consulting with a nine-member group comprising of business representatives including Canadian Chamber of Commerce (Mas, 2014). Using a small group of selected individuals, limited to the corporate sector for consultations, only reiterates the neoliberal emphasis of the government agenda that benefits businesses the most. Consultations with just one sector of the spectrum such as the business sector to develop policies stifles its scope and limits its latitude. If there have to be consultations, it is paramount that all relevant stakeholders such as businesses, professional associations, not for profit advocates, educational institutes, IEPs, public etc. have to partake in it. While the legislative changes have recently been implemented, the implications will take some time before they are fully understood. Beiser and Bauder in their commentary explicated, “Canada’s once path-breaking immigration policies are being transformed into a system that mainly serves employers, treating immigrants not as future citizens or members of Canadian communities and families but merely as convenient or cheap labour. This is a clear shift from previous policy” (2014). These policies by the government appear to follow the neoliberal script in support of the employers. Such emphasis on employers could have grave consequences for the nation in the long run. Allocating half of the points to an employer to decide on who can come to Canada is, in essence, giving this task of choosing the future citizens of Canada to employers, leaving many to question the wisdom of the government to make such an undertaking.

Under the new system ushered in January 2015 known as the ‘Express Entry’ those who have an employment offer are preferred over others. Prospective immigrants
who have completed a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) which includes receiving a job offer from a Canadian employer or those who have been nominated for immigration by a province or territory are given a maximum of 600 points, up to half of all the points (CIC, 2015). Such high emphasis on a job letter as indicated on the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) is shown in Table 4.1 can be seen by many as problematic and gives much influence to the employers. It has the potential to leave out many highly qualified and skilled potential immigrants who do not have an LMIA, refuting the traditional immigration system that was based on the Human Capital theory. The CRS chart as shown in Table 4.1 below gives a breakdown of how points are allocated.

Table 4.1: Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS)

![Table 4.1: Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS)](Image)

(Source: CIC, 2015)

There are four categories of focus with the major ones being education and experience and getting a job offer or being selected by the province. Under the previous system,
those with high qualifications could gain more points, giving them a better chance to qualify to immigrate while those with less education could score fewer points. Under the new system, the one with higher education who has no job offer may not qualify to immigrate although their long-term outlook of success in Canada could be better while one who has lower education and has a job offer could have easier access to come to Canada. When questions regarding Canadian work experience, qualifications, accreditations, etc. keep dodging those who are already in Canada, people out of the country may even have a harder time. With such a huge emphasis on the job offer, it is reflective of the neoliberal policies being undertaken by the government and the power to dictate immigration outcomes being shifted to the business sector. The “Express Entry” essentially acts like a job bank serving businesses by matching prospective immigrants with employers while the government’s task is reduced to that of a broker. Under this new system clarity remains elusive as the potential immigrants have to apply online first, are placed in the Express Entry Pool and assigned points based on the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) but remain unsure if they will qualify to immigrate to Canada. The transparency in such a system remains diminished with the uncertainty of not knowing what points would be required to qualify for immigration to Canada.

On a regular basis the Ministry of Immigration and Citizenship invites those who are ranked among the highest in points from those in the pool to make a formal application to immigrate to Canada. Up to 500 points are allotted for age, education level, language proficiency and work experience in Canada, while a maximum of 100 points is allotted for a combination of education level, foreign work experience and a certificate in the trades (Canada Gazette, 2014). Another problematic issue with this
new points system as mentioned earlier is that there is no pre-determined cut-off point, raising issues of transparency and consistency. Initial reports as shared by the government on the cut-off points show an unexplainable variance in who could qualify to come to Canada. In January 2015, the cut-off point for those who were invited to make a formal application was 886 points while in March 2015 it was 453 points (CIC, 2015). The difference in the allocation of points in March is almost half of that in January. Little is given in terms of explanation or justification. Such fluctuations open up questions of transparency and fairness and how those decisions are made. For decades now, those who applied for immigration to Canada knew from the onset the minimum requirements and whether they would qualify to immigrate with enough points or not. Essentially with the new system, the selection transparency and pragmatism has effectively been replaced (Beiser and Bauder, 2014). With such changes brought by the Conservative government, there has been a shift in the basic philosophy of the Canadian immigration policy from that of human capital to neoliberalism.

4.4 Immigrant Trends

Having glanced at Canada’s immigration policy over the years to its current state, this section focuses on the trends of those who come to Canada. The entry of new immigrants has been controlled and limited over the years. Since 1968, the flow of new immigrants has been capped at below 1% of the country’s population (CIC, 2014). As reflected in Table 4.2 the total number of immigrants who have come to Canada has generally increased during the 13 year period starting from 2000 to 2014. In 2014, there were 260,421 immigrants who arrived in Canada. The total number peaked in 2010 with 280,688 immigrants which included 186,915 who came as “economic immigrants”, the highest number during this time span. IEPs fall under this category. Over the years,
most immigrants who have come to Canada have done so under this category. They are selected under the points system based on their educational attainment, language skills, occupation, job letter, etc. As a result of the emphasis on education until 2014, the education levels of immigrants has increased over time in Canada. The family class category has not seen much change from 66,875 in 2001 to 66,667 in 2014. On the other hand, the number of refugees Canada has accepted has decreased over the years from 27,917 in 2001 to 23,287 in 2014.

Table 4.2: Immigrant trends classified by the major immigration categories.

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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic immigrants</td>
<td>155,716</td>
<td>137,863</td>
<td>121,046</td>
<td>133,746</td>
<td>156,313</td>
<td>138,248</td>
<td>131,244</td>
<td>149,067</td>
<td>153,491</td>
<td>186,915</td>
<td>156,118</td>
<td>160,821</td>
<td>148,181</td>
<td>165,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>27,917</td>
<td>25,110</td>
<td>25,983</td>
<td>32,686</td>
<td>35,774</td>
<td>32,499</td>
<td>27,954</td>
<td>21,859</td>
<td>22,850</td>
<td>24,697</td>
<td>27,873</td>
<td>23,099</td>
<td>24,049</td>
<td>23,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other immigrants</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>3,782</td>
<td>9,196</td>
<td>7,115</td>
<td>6,779</td>
<td>10,375</td>
<td>11,312</td>
<td>10,733</td>
<td>10,623</td>
<td>8,845</td>
<td>8,305</td>
<td>8,960</td>
<td>7,039</td>
<td>5,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category not stated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender not stated</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
<td>250,637</td>
<td>229,049</td>
<td>221,349</td>
<td>235,823</td>
<td>262,243</td>
<td>251,640</td>
<td>236,753</td>
<td>247,245</td>
<td>252,172</td>
<td>280,688</td>
<td>248,749</td>
<td>257,895</td>
<td>258,953</td>
<td>260,421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CIC, 2014/5

An increase in the overall numbers to Canada has also meant that a large percentage of immigrants have made Ontario their home, with the highest number of newcomers, 140,526, coming here in 2005 (Table 4.3). Although over half of all
immigrants to Canada came to Ontario, there has been a decline over the past 10 years in the percentage of immigrants who make Ontario and Toronto their home. From 2004 to 2013 there was a 13% decline in the percentage of immigrants who came to Ontario, totaling at 103,494 immigrants. At the same time, the decline in the percentage of immigrants who settled in Toronto was 11%, representing 81,691 people.

Table 4.3: Permanent residents making Ontario and Toronto their home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Permanent Residents</td>
<td>235,823</td>
<td>262,243</td>
<td>251,640</td>
<td>236,753</td>
<td>247,245</td>
<td>252,172</td>
<td>280,688</td>
<td>248,749</td>
<td>257,895</td>
<td>258,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Resident coming to Ontario</td>
<td>125,093</td>
<td>140,526</td>
<td>125,891</td>
<td>111,316</td>
<td>110,877</td>
<td>106,860</td>
<td>118,110</td>
<td>99,459</td>
<td>99,149</td>
<td>103,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Residents coming to Toronto</td>
<td>99,913</td>
<td>112,832</td>
<td>99,289</td>
<td>87,139</td>
<td>86,899</td>
<td>82,638</td>
<td>92,182</td>
<td>77,759</td>
<td>77,397</td>
<td>81,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% coming to Ontario</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% coming to Toronto</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CIC, 2014

Immigrants to Canada come from all over the world. A majority of immigrants, as shown in Graph 4.1 below, are economic migrants; most of them come from the Asia-Pacific region, followed by the Africa and Middle Eastern regions. Residents of Toronto identified as coming from over 230 different ethnic origins making it one of the most diverse and multicultural cities in the world (NHS, 2011). This also validates a growing ethnic community otherwise known as “visible minorities” that are on a fast track to becoming a majority in Toronto. I highlight this point as there are consequences and challenges as we will see in later chapters for those from ethnic groups in getting employment. An important point to note as identified in Graph 4.1 is that the majority of
immigrants who come to Canada are from Asia. While most of the immigrants who come under the two main categories of economic class and family class come from Asia, the highest number accounting for refugee class come from Africa.

**Graph 4.1: Immigration by category and source area 2013.**

While the ‘baby boomers’ in Canada have been aging, people who have been migrating to Canada have been relatively young. In 2011, a majority of the people who came to Canada since 2006 were between the age of 25 and 54 years, the core working age group (NHS, 2011). Earlier in this chapter, we saw that Canada’s immigration policy had placed a lot of emphasis on education by allocating more points. It comes as no surprise therefore that along with a younger immigrant group their education levels has also remained high. Within the various educational cohorts, immigrants constitute a
higher share of residents with a university degree. One-third of Canadian residents with a university degree were immigrants (Esses, 2013).

Table 4.4: Immigrants as a Percentage of Total Population by Education Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Arrival of Immigrant</th>
<th>No diploma or certificate</th>
<th>High school diploma, no post-secondary</th>
<th>High school diploma, some post-secondary</th>
<th>Post-secondary diploma or certificate</th>
<th>University degree</th>
<th>All groups of educational attainment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All immigrants</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>2,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants who arrived within previous 5 years</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants who arrived 5 to 10 years ago</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants who arrived more than 10 years ago</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>1,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian born</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>2,895</td>
<td>1,722</td>
<td>7,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population¹</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>1,831</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>3,607</td>
<td>2,770</td>
<td>9,693</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Arrival of Immigrant</th>
<th>Percent distribution (25 to 54 years of age) (average for 36 months up to October, 2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All immigrants</td>
<td>20 21 19 18 34 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants who arrived within previous 5 years</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 9 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants who arrived 5 to 10 years ago</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 8 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants who arrived more than 10 years ago</td>
<td>14 15 13 12 17 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian born</td>
<td>79 77 79 80 62 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population¹</td>
<td>100 100 100 100 100 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Includes temporary residents.

(Reproduced from Esses, 2013)

From Table 4.4 and Graph 4.2, it is evident that there have been more new immigrants and immigrants in general with university degrees as compared to other levels of
education. It also shows that the trend over the years for immigrants having university qualification has remained high compared to those with other levels of education.

**Graph 4.2: Education levels of Immigrants in Toronto- 2011**

![Graph showing education levels of immigrants in Toronto- 2011]

New immigrants
- No certificate, diploma or degree: 27615
- High school diploma or equivalent: 40450
- Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma: 7580
- College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma: 20260
- University certificate or diploma below bachelor level: 12965
- University certificate or diploma at bachelor level or above bachelor level: 73120
- Bachelor's degree: 39070
- University certificate, diploma or degree above bachelor level: 34055

Source: CIC, 2014

It is not only the education levels that have been high but also their skill levels as indicated in *Table 4.5* below. The most number of permanent residents over the years have been in the professionals category followed by those in the skilled and technical professions. Those who have been in managerial positions have seen an increase in their numbers. While skilled professionals have seen a slight decrease in numbers over a ten-year period, there has been an increase in clerical and labour related professions, although these figures remain low in comparison to other professions. These are the skills they brought with them and intended to use in their profession; however, it does not mean that they have been able to work in their profession of training. Reasons and challenges for not being able to work in their profession are discussed in the following
Although the percentage of internationally trained professional may appear significant, “statistics show that internationally trained applicants continue to be under-represented among those accepted into full membership in the professions, suggesting persistent disadvantage with regard to licensing and professional employment” (OFC, 2013, p.6). Of all the professions, the pharmacist profession has the highest percentage of internationally trained professionals as seen in Table 4.6 with 40% of its members having been trained out of Canada, followed by audiologists and architects at 34 % and 29% respectively. Engineers, chiropractors, dentists and doctors all have over a quarter of their members who were trained outside of Canada. Except for audiologists, chiropractors, chiropodists and dental technologists all other professions in Table 4.6 saw an increase in the percentage of immigrants in their profession.
Table 4.6: Percentage of Internationally trained members in their profession.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Percentage of members internationally trained, 2011</th>
<th>Increase or decrease from percentage in 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacists</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians and Surgeons</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Surgeons</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiropractors</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometrists</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Technologists</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiropodists</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoscientists</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Technicians and Technologists</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiotherapists</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwives</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinarians</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Laboratory Technologists</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: OFC, 2013)

From the above findings, the new immigrant in most instances is young, professional, of Christian faith, highly educated with post-secondary qualifications and makes Ontario his or her home.

4.5 Immigrant Employment Outcomes

Economic objectives have largely dominated Canadian immigration policy as discussed earlier in this chapter with a commitment to long-term labour market goals (Li, 2003). Although Canada welcomes new immigrants, there is evidence that Canadian
immigration policy has not been very successful in integrating many of these highly educated and skilled newcomers into their professions (Akter et al., 2013; Block and Galabuzzi, 2011; Galanneau and Morissette, 2009). Statistics reveal that immigrants experience lower participation and high unemployment rates (Kelly et al., 2011). Since 2006, the participation rate among Canadian-born as displayed in Graph 4.3 has remained around the range of 88%. This has consistently been higher than the participation rate for immigrants, in general at 83%, and much higher than new immigrants who hover around 74%.

As indicated in the graph below, on average the difference in labour force participation between Canadian-born residents and immigrants who had arrived most recently was 14%. Canada’s economic structure has changed since the recession of 2009. Canada’s unemployment rate, in general, rose rapidly during that time and has remained at an elevated level ever since (Kelly et al., 2011). While immigrants, and especially recent immigrants, have consistently had higher unemployment levels than Canadian-born workers, this gap has widened since the 2009 recession (Kelly et al., 2011). The average unemployment rate for Canadian-born residents was around 5%, whereas the average rate for immigrants who had arrived within the previous 5 years was more than double at around 13%.
Studies also identify that there has been a further decline in full-time work and a rise in precarious employment for recent immigrants especially after the recession of 2008, with those working in the manufacturing sector taking a hard hit (Kelly et al., 2011). These findings of disparities in unemployment levels between those who are Canadian born and those who are not is an indication that all was not well for new immigrants to Canada. The difference in unemployment rates between these groups as indicated in Graph 4.4 is significant. The barriers and challenges they face are as a result of both individual and systemic shortcomings which are looked at closely in Chapter 5.
Graph 4.4 Unemployment rates of Canadian born and immigrants be 2006 - 2013.


4.6 Conclusion

Canada’s immigration policy over the years has increasingly brought more educated and qualified immigrants. It, however, has not been able to utilize fully the skills brought by these IEPs, leaving their skills underutilized and, in many instances, leading to their de-skilling. To halt this advance of underutilization of immigrant skills and to integrate them into the labour market, the government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in programs such as the 'bridging programs' (MCI, 2013). The Canadian government has initiated a massive change in its immigration policy since
2008 with the most recent changes occurring in an “express entry” system that kicked off on January 01, 2015. The extreme powers that have been given to the Minister under the current Immigration Act to determine regulations are reminiscent of the unlimited and arbitrary powers the Ministers had over a century ago. For many decades, under the old points system, the minimum threshold of qualification to immigrate was clear and well known; under the current provisions, it is less clear and inconsistent. While new legislative requirements are being implemented, their implications will take some time before they are fully understood. Furthermore, with the new changes to the immigration policy, there is a shift in its theoretical underpinning to that of a strong leaning towards the neoliberal approach. These changes give more power to businesses to select who comes to Canada and from where. Such power allocated to businesses allows them to be the gatekeepers to dictate Canada’s future citizens, causing apprehension to many. Since the law is relatively new, researchers and policy makers will keep a close watch on the outcomes and impact of the change in this policy. It is however anticipated that the businesses will select qualified people at lesser cost.

The trends of immigrants over the past ten years show that those who immigrate to Canada come from all corners of the world, and are mostly in their prime age between 25 and 44 years, highly educated, speak many languages and likely to be members of a visible minority. They tend to come from countries in Asia or Africa and are highly skilled and experienced in occupations of professional nature. Suffice it to say that Canada has succeeded to attract amongst the best human capital that is available internationally without having to spend much on them; it, however, has not been able to utilize fully the talents and skills they bring to the country. The low participation rates and high unemployment rates mentioned in this chapter reflect a bleak experience for
these immigrants with many challenges and factors related to the under-utilization and undervaluing of immigrant skills. What follows, therefore, is a summary of the challenges IEPs experience in their effort to be integrated into the labour market.
5.1 Introduction

Immigrant education levels have increased over the years while their employment outcomes in comparison to those who are Canadian-born have deteriorated (RBC, 2011; Reitz, 2011). Even after being selected to come to Canada as qualified professionals, many immigrants are driving taxis, mopping floors, bagging groceries or guarding office buildings (Reitz, 2011). Many immigrants are not only unable to find employment in the profession of their education and training for which they were recruited to come to Canada, but they are also find it difficult to get precarious employment (Akter et al., 2013). In the last chapter we saw that the immigration policies of the past have led to higher qualified immigrants but have not been able to curtail the difference in the high unemployment and underutilization of immigrant skills. As a result, the bridging programs have been created to address the challenges immigrants face and integrate them into the labour market. The range of these difficulties, however, is extensive and varied with economic integration being an important benchmark in determining the success of immigrants (Ewoudou, 2011; Reitz, 2011). A good comprehension and understanding of the challenges faced by these internationally trained professionals is essential to identify whether the interventions established by the government, such as the bridging programs, are effective in addressing those challenges. This chapter therefore describes the various dimensions of these challenges with a key focus on their integration into the labour market in Canada. It
highlights the different problems immigrants’ face helping us to identify in later chapters which ones the bridging programs are focused on addressing.

5.2 Challenges Immigrants Face after Arrival in Canada

Immigrants have become integral to Canada’s social, economic and political fabric, accounting for more than half of Canada’s total population growth (Akter et al., 2013). Immigrants come to Canada under various categories and comprise of people of diverse genders, varying ages, different family compositions, varying class and different cultures from all corners of the world. Their settlement and integration experiences are also varied and different; however, there are some commonalities and challenges that are similar. Leaving one’s homeland where one has grown up, been educated, learnt skills, gained experience and has established networks is a challenging task. It is natural that those who emigrate have to leave behind all their relatives, acquaintances, influences and ties that may have been established over an extended period of time and bind them on a day to day basis. Not only do they have to make big adjustments but experience significant challenges. Researching for Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) and the Law Commission of Canada (LCC) on legal and policy barriers for immigrants in Canada, Sarah Wayland (2006) has argued that newcomers to Canada encounter numerous specific barriers to secure employment. These include “lack of accurate information about working in Canada at the pre-migration stage, insufficient recognition of credentials earned outside of Canada, lack of Canadian experience desired by employers, lack of knowledge of Canadian workplace practices, ignorant or discriminatory practices of employers, and narrowly-defined settlement services that do not provide needed information and training” (p.12). Although the skill level of immigrants has risen significantly, this problem of immigrant employment problem has
become more serious and difficult than it was in the 1990’s (Reitz, 2011). In a study done earlier, I had found that before internationally trained professionals come to Canada, the impression they get is that their qualifications will have a similar standing with little reliable information on what to expect (Hathiyani, 2006). When immigrants’ move to a new country where the culture, language, climate and laws are different, they have to start their lives all over again. Some may get good jobs, but many have no choice but to take low paying jobs, unrelated to their education and skills. These issues were highlighted decades ago but continue to dodge new immigrants as it is not uncommon to see those who are highly trained as engineers, doctors, scientists, etc. end up underemployed in jobs that are different from their training (Akter et. al., 2013). These are not jobs that realize their full potential, but are seen as a last resort for earning a living and bringing food to the table. The cost of this “brain waste” to Canada is over $3 billion (Reitz, 2011). Studies abound on the challenges immigrants face when they come to Canada with some researchers accentuating more on certain aspects as compared to others (Akter et al., 2013; Ewoudou, 2011; FCM 2011; OHRC, 2013; Owen, 2009). Economic integration, however, has been found to be one of the most profound challenges faced by new immigrants in Canada (Akter e al., 2013; Ewoudou, 2011; FCM, 2011; Hathiyani, 2006). It is the main issue which many immigrants face. I will therefore start with a look at the overarching problem of economic integration which can only be achieved by addressing the distinct challenges related to it. These challenges are complex, multi-layered and multidimensional and can be categorized either as an individual problem, a systemic shortfall or a mix of both. If these issues, however, are to be addressed, the bridging programs which have been portrayed as a way to address the integration of immigrants will have to be focused and a concerted
effort made to overcome the barriers as they impact newcomers in many aspects of their lives. These include but are not limited to financial, emotional, physical and mental factors, issues related to adapting to a new beginning (Wayland, 2006). The challenges faced by new immigrants, and especially those who are IEPs, in their settlement in Canada are numerous and may not be possible to document all of them, however, below are some key challenges that impact IEPs most.

5.3 Economic Integration

Many immigrants and refugees to Canada may have endured significant hardships in their native countries, but few may have anticipated the challenges and obstacles they and their families would have to overcome in their newly adopted home. The biggest hurdle for new immigrants in their settlement in Canada is the integration into the economic system (Akter et al., 2013; Ewoudou, 2011). Economic integration is an important benchmark in determining the success of immigrants and an overarching issue that has many components attached to it. Simmons (2010) identified employment and remuneration, socio-cultural integration and ethnic identity as being significant problems. Numerous other studies have also found that the biggest challenge immigrants experienced was finding employment (Ewoudou, 2011; Lee, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2005; Wayland, 2006).

Economic impact is determined through the reduction of skills utilized by immigrants because their qualifications were not recognized in the workforce (Reitz, 2005). These immigrants have higher levels of education but their earnings have been lower and falling in comparison to the native-born Canadian (OHRC, 2013; Lee, 2010; Simmons, 2010). They start at an earnings disadvantage as compared to those who are Canadian-born, and it is taking longer to narrow this earnings gap (Lee, 2010). The
unemployment rates of immigrants as seen in Chapter 4, in Graph 4.5 have consistently been higher compared to those born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013). At first, the earnings gap was felt to be short term in nature but has now been recognized as more severe and long term. This concern was raised over three decades ago when Judge Abella in her report on immigrants identified that, “it was a waste of human and intellectual resources that these people are consistently underemployed for reasons that have less to do with their professional qualifications or qualifiability and more to do with the insularity of some professional organizations” (Abella, 1984, p.50).

More recently, a study on immigrant communities in Toronto found that only 3% of immigrants who used to work in professional occupations before immigrating were working in their own field while the rest engaged in survival or precarious jobs (Akter et.al, 2013). A staggering percentage of immigrants’ skills are not being utilized and going to waste. This predicament has been ongoing for a long time now with some who are able to integrate into the economic system while many are denied the opportunity to practice their skills and talent, creating an enormous impact on themselves and the economy. Such outcomes should be of concern to all, the individual, families, and the nation as a whole.

The effects of the challenges to economic integration are multilayered and intertwined, impacting immigrants in many ways. The challenges affect all immigrants in general but impact women in more profound ways (Zaman, 2008). Although the scope of this thesis regarding IEPs is gender neutral, a separate study on the plight and experiences of women IEPs is highly warranted. I, however, do not want to circumvent the important role women play in the settlement of their families and the enormous sacrifices they have to make. In her research on the impact of lack of ‘Canadian
experience’ on immigrant women, Sethi (2014) identified that it was the most significant factor in their deskilling with other factors such as being disempowered, loss of identity and mental and physical health issues playing a major role. These issues interconnected with other manifestations such as class, gender, race and ethnicity combine to have a major impact on their settlement and how they are viewed in the labour market (Ng, 1996). Elaborating on the challenges immigrant women face, Solar in her study quoted a participant stating that;

*as the primary caregivers in the family, many women tend to look at themselves last in all situations. A woman will support her husband to find meaningful employment, care for the children, and maintain the household which is a full time job in itself, but it is often difficult for her to find the time and energy to job-search for herself with these additional responsibilities on her shoulders* (Solar, 2011, p. 40).

This can curtail their ability to practice in their profession of training and limit their economic integration. As productive members of the community despite having extra obstacles and discriminatory practices in accessing equal opportunities is counterproductive and has repercussions to the immigrant women, their families and to society in general.

The lack of opportunity for a skilled person to practice their talent has a huge impact on the economy. The economic impact is defined as the reduced value of the work done by immigrants because their qualifications are not recognized in the workforce (Reitz, 2005). Under neoliberalism, if immigrants cannot be employed in their profession of training, it is as a result of their inability due to personal and cultural reasons (Shields, 2004). They may possess higher qualifications but are seen to be ‘deficient’ and ‘lacking’ and required to enhance their human capital even more. Under the human capital theory, higher the education the better the outcomes should be;
however, results for immigrants in Canada have not produced the desired results. Even after securing a job, both established immigrants and recent immigrants have been found to have a weaker chance compared to Canadian-born citizens of being promoted at their place of work (Fang et al., 2012). These are issues that have continued to be troublesome for many immigrants creating disparities that have broad-ranging effects on the individual, their families and the country as a whole.

The goal of a professional person is to practice in their profession regardless of where they received their qualification from, especially when they have been accepted to immigrate based on their credentials. While those who are educated in Canada may find they can do that after their qualification without much difficulty, those who are internationally qualified find their path littered with challenges. Randall Collins (1979) suggests that professional credentials are more about the monopolization of opportunities than about the requirements of actual work, and the raised credential demands eventually lead to its devaluation. The adverse outcomes experienced by the IEPs in their effort to integrate into the economic system in Canada can be attributed to many factors such as credential recognition, Canadian experience requirements, discrimination, racism, classism, sexism networking and lack of opportunities along other variables, which have a significant influence, and their dynamics must be considered as well. The creation of the bridging programs serves to integrate IEPs economically and help them overcome the challenges they face. In order to assess the effectiveness of the bridging programs, it is important to understand and reflect on the challenges. Although many of these challenges could be placed as subsections under economic integration, I have identified them separately due to their significant impact on the integration process.
5.4 Recognition of Credentials

A major hurdle new immigrants, especially internationally trained professionals, face in their economic integration, is the lack of recognition for their credentials, skills, and experience (Ewoudou, 2011; Lee, 2010; OHRC, 2013; Reitz, 2005). “Foreign qualification recognition is the process of verifying that the knowledge, skills, work experience and education obtained in another country is compatible to the standards established for Canadian professional and tradespersons“ (FLMM, 2009, p. 01). In an analysis of Canadian census data, Reitz (2011) identified that although the education level of Canada’s immigrants had risen much more than that of Canadian born, the proportion of those working in professional fields had declined to 51 percent from 53 percent, while those working in low skilled jobs had increased significantly by 160 percent. It affects mostly those who come to Canada under the skilled worker or independent class category. Immigrants under such a category have already been assessed on their education and qualification through the immigration process by the Federal Government and accepted to come to Canada. They, however, have to get re-assessed and accredited by the local professional bodies and institutions to work in Canada as there is no centralized body that has been established to do that. There is an assembly of players involved in the assessment, with nearly 500 professional regulatory bodies, many credential assessment institutions along with hundreds of post-secondary institutions, immigrant settlement agencies, employers and immigrants (FLMM, 2009). Studies have reiterated that foreign-based qualifications are undervalued and unrecognized (Ewoudou, 2011; Lee, 2010; Guo, 2009; OHRC, 2013).

While certain educational accomplishments may be accepted and considered valid, the vast knowledge and experience possessed by foreign-trained professionals
are often treated with suspicion and considered inferior (Guo, 2009). Hongxia Shan (2009) in her thesis on Chinese engineers, argues that regulatory and licensing bodies need to go beyond the borders to understand how to make use of international training to complement Canadian requirements. Without such knowledge, not only is the IEPs academic credentials brought to question, but the wealth of international experience they possess also goes unrecognized. As a result, many immigrants take jobs for which they are over-qualified or are unrelated to their training and expertise (Ewoudou, 2011; Hathiyani, 2006). As time elapses, skills of well-educated immigrants erode over time (Galarneau and Morissette, 2009). The longer these individuals remain outside the field of training and education, the more their prospect of working in their professional area decreases. It eventually makes it difficult for the highly qualified person whose contribution in their country of origin was greatly cherished to discover that their education and skills are of little significance or value in Canada. This loss is significant as they could get de-skilled and may not be able to practice their skills in future. The issue of credential recognition in Canada as indicated earlier is not new and has been known for a long time now. Decades ago, Judge Abella in a report titled *The Equality in Employment*, identified the following issues:

*Many skilled and professional immigrants are frustrated by the absence of a mechanism to determine whether or not the professional qualifications they bring to this country qualify them to practice their profession in Canada or determine what upgrading courses are necessary. The examinations and licensing requirements for many occupations and professions across Canada are prohibitively expensive. A system of qualification and credential assessment should be available so that recent as well as prospective immigrants can be advised accurately about exactly what is necessary in order to qualify than to practice their professions. It is a waste of human and intellectual resources that these people are consistently underemployed for reasons that have less to do with their professional qualifications of qualiﬁability and more to do with the insularity of some professional organizations. Having been selected as immigrants to Canada, many on the strength of these very qualifications, it is unfair to put*
insurmountable impediments in the way of their practicing the professions they may be qualified to practices (Abella, 1984, p.50).

Abella recognized and pinpointed the issues and highlighted the reasons as well. Thirty years later, similar concerns continue to be echoed that while credentials of immigrants that had been deemed attractive and acceptable for immigration purposes were proving to be difficult to gain meaningful employment (Ewoudou, 2011; Lee, 2010; OHRC, 2013). In a study by The Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) called Getting Your Professional License in Ontario: The Experience of International and Canadian Applicants identified that problems still exist in the registration process of a professional. It further identified that these were not limited to one or two professions with common problems existing across the registration system (OFC, 2010). The Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) is an arm’s length agency of the Ontario government established under the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act of 2006. Another report commissioned by the Wellesley Institute, identified this predicament in a decisive way, finding only 3% of respondents in their study were working in the profession in which they were trained (Akter et.al., 2013). Canada has been part of the international alliance that accepted the guiding principles under the Lisbon Convention of 1977, which stipulates that recognition of foreign qualifications should be granted unless significant difference could be, demonstrated (Owen, 2009). While internationally, the Federal Government has professed to adhere to the guiding principles of the Lisbon Convention, the issue continues to be a big hurdle and a stumbling block to integrating new immigrants into the Canadian labour market.

There are some professions in Canada where employment is subject to regulations such as, licensing or membership requirements in an association. About
18,000 are assessed annually by credential evaluation services with 7,500 more evaluated by regulatory bodies (Owen, 2009). An analysis sponsored by Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative (TIEDI) identified almost 70% of new immigrants required a license or certification to practice in their profession with 40% experiencing difficulties in getting credentials assessed (Zikic et.al, 2011). What was alarming was that women experienced more problems compared to men. The study also identified that while almost 80% of the internationally trained immigrants had checked if their credentials were recognized or not while in Canada, only 22% had done so prior to immigrating. 78% of people had not examined or investigated if their education and qualifications would be acceptable to find work in Canada. Alarming as they are, these findings do not shed light on the reasons why a high percentage of immigrants do not seek to know if their credentials were recognized prior to coming to Canada. Perhaps it is the acceptance of their credentials by the government through which they have been endorsed to immigrate to Canada. To seek such answers warrants another study other than this one but it also leads us to question where prospective immigrants get their information about the labour market in Canada. One thing however is clear that while some may have established networks in Canada, all of them have to go through the Canadian foreign mission and fulfill the application requirements, offering an opportunity for the government for appropriate and consistent information to be shared in a timely manner and the process of accreditation started before their arrival in Canada.

The non-recognition of foreign qualifications has been acknowledged by the Federal Government as being an issue and as a result, *The Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications* comprising of the federal, provincial and territorial governments made a joint commitment to work together to
improve the foreign qualifications assessment and recognitions systems in Canada (FLMM, 2009). There are however concerns with such a framework for it to fully succeed. Key stakeholders such as the municipal and city jurisdictions were missing at the table along with the professional bodies and employers. The municipal and city levels of government work closely with and deliver services directly to its residents. They are usually the first line of supports for newcomers as are professional institutes and employers who will grant accreditation or hire them. Failure to have the right stakeholders can only signal a system that cannot function successfully.

Another systemic issue ascribed to accreditation is to do with the responsibilities vested in various authorities and governing bodies. The authority of letting immigrants into Canada and accepting their qualifications for immigration purposes is a federal jurisdiction while the qualification recognition for practicing the profession is mainly a provincial responsibility. What is accepted by one jurisdiction may not be recognized by another. Occupational standards may differ from one province to another and so the messaging one receives can be confusing. It gets even more complicated as it is not just the provincial governments that set the standards for all regulated professions. This authority in many instances has been delegated to professional regulatory authorities and professional organizations that assess the skills, qualifications and credentials of applicants. Each professional organization may have different set of requirements leading to a lack of consistency and coordination (Guo, 2009; Owen, 2009). “Statistics show that internationally trained applicants continue to be under-represented among those accepted into full membership in the professions, suggesting persistent disadvantage with regard to licensing and professional employment” (OFC, 2013, p.6). These impact mostly those that are highly educated with great potential and creates a
perception that Canadian employers and professional bodies are acting in a
discriminatory manner towards immigrants (Grant and Nadine, 2005), a process which
can be complicated, time consuming and expensive. Getting credentials evaluated
costs money and comes with a price tag which may act as a hindrance for many new
immigrants (FLMM, 2009). Being new to the country, the focus for new immigrants is
usually on settlement and providing food to the table. Getting accredited is a process
that has a cost and takes time. For someone who has taken a survival job with fewer
working hours and minimum wage, this requirement to pay for accreditation and
licensure can be lengthy and a difficult one.

The regulated professions, such as engineers, require all foreign trained engineers
in Ontario to get their educational background evaluated by an academic committee in
order to get licensed and may be asked to write some technical exams to ensure their
knowledge proficiency. They also need to have four years of work experience, with at
least one year under the supervision of a licensed Canadian engineer. This is followed
by professional practice examination (PPE) and submission of references in order to be
registered as a professional engineer (Shan, 2009). For another regulated profession
such as the medical profession, the requirements to be able to practise is very different.
The internationally educated medical students have to pass standard examinations that
include proficiency in English before they can access the mandatory residency
requirements. “In Ontario and all provinces in Canada, IMDs apply for residency
training through the non-profit agency, the Canadian Resident Matching Service
(CaRMS). CaRMS manages the application files of both Canadian medical graduates
(CMGs) and the IMDs applying for training, and matches the program choices of the
IMDs and CMGs with the hiring preferences of the programs who have interviewed
them” (Colette, 2011, p. 3).

For unregulated professions, the requirement to practice varies and is different for each profession. To address this broad range, the bridging programs for the business sector targets many other professions such as those with backgrounds in accounting, business, finance, management, marketing, public administration, human resources, and information technology (MCI, 2016). The challenges to get accredited are multiple ranging from an individual level, institutional related or systemic which the IEPs have to overcome, giving rise to the question on how effective can the bridging programs be in helping immigrants overcome such obstacles. These are wide ranging issues and unless they are addressed in a concerted and systemic way, the results can only be one that are haphazard, chaotic and a patch-work solution.

5.5 Lack of Canadian Experience

Another crucial challenge immigrants are confronted with when seeking economic integration is to be asked to provide evidence of Canadian work experience (OHRC, 2013). While few bridging programs provide exposure to work experience, the demand to illustrate “Canadian experience” continues to dodge many internationally trained professionals. To begin with, it is hard to define or explain Canadian experience. For some it may mean exposure to Canadian culture by living here, while for others it is to do with having work experience in Canada regardless of whether it is volunteer experience or precarious employment (Ozair, 2012). The Ontario Human Rights Commission recently took a bold step of addressing the “Canadian experience” issue and recognized it to being used for discriminatory purposes hence a human right concern (OHRC, 2013). Addressing this predicament, it identified under section 23(3) of the Code that “employers should not ask questions about where an applicant got their
experience” (OHRC, 2013, p.9). It denigrates the strict requirement of “Canadian experience” as *prima facie* discrimination and calls for the recognition of the “inherent dignity and worth of every person and to provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination” (OHRC, 2013, p.3). The requirement for “Canadian experience” is not limited to employers. For engineers who want to work in Ontario, Canadian work experience is extremely important. IEPs requiring engineering licensure need to have four-year work experience, with one year of “Canadian experience” (Shan, 2009). To address such a concern, the OHRC (2013) report reinforces that;

*employers and regulatory bodies should assess all prior work experience, regardless of where it was obtained. Often, there are easy ways to evaluate a person’s skills and abilities without having to contact a Canadian reference or insist on prior work experience in Canada* (p.10).

This change is however recent and remains to be seen what the implications will be and how fast employers will join the bandwagon.

The requirement to produce Canadian work experience has been incredibly frustrating and trying for new immigrants (Ewoudou, 2013; Reitz 2005; Statistics Canada, 2005; Zikic, et.al 2011). It has not been uncommon for one to be politely informed that, “sorry you have no Canadian experience.” To demand this type of experience from a recently arrived immigrant is reflective of the proverbial chicken and egg scenario on what comes first. Sen (1978) had argued that Canadian experience is;

*simply a screening or filtering criterion used by employers in hiring immigrant /young workers in the presence of incomplete information and uncertainty about their individual productive characteristics. Canadian experience, accordingly, contributes in no way to superior economic performance; it increases neither cognition nor socialization* (p.17).

This explanation implies a discriminatory facet in the selection of the one who is locally educated over the one who got his or her training internationally. Such a requirement has eliminated many potentially good candidates with the right education and skills from
even attempting to apply. This practice can be viewed as a ‘screening out’ process of essentially new immigrants to Canada. One can argue that it is an employer’s euphemistic way to hide their biases and comfort level and is not based on the qualifications of a person in determining who gets hired (Ozair, 2012). While this issue was raised decades ago it is only recently that changes to the Ontario Human Rights Code were introduced and it will have to be seen whether the emphasis on section 23(3) of the Code will bring about a change to the plight of internationally trained immigrants or lay bare the underlying discriminatory causes that exist. This leads us to the next challenge that immigrants face, that of discrimination and racism which is addressed in the section below.

5.6 Discrimination and Racism

Along with the above issues of credential recognition and requirement of ‘Canadian experience’, research also shows that racial minorities experience greater problems of skill underutilization, and this can be viewed as evidence of racial discrimination (Akter et.al., 2013; Reitz, 2011; Teelucksingh and Galabuzzi, 2005). Jeffrey Reitz has reiterated that “although the problem with recognition of immigrants’ foreign qualifications generally has not been articulated as one of racial discrimination, racial discrimination definitely is one cause of skill underutilization” (Reitz, 2005. p.12).

Race and cultural difference play a big role in the underutilization of immigrant skills. It is well known that assessment of qualifications or professional competence is affected by social characteristics and these include race and national origin as well as gender, age and other individual qualities, such as height and physical attractiveness. When the discounting of immigrant qualifications disproportionately affects visible minorities, as it clearly does in Canada, it is an instance of racial discrimination (Reitz, 2011, p.21).

What is concerning is that studies have not only identified that skin colour does matter
and it is keeping first generation Canadians who are of visible minorities out of good jobs but is also affecting second generation immigrants as well (Block and Galabuzi, 2011).

“Even though “races” are socially constructed, they have been used as though they are biologically constituted “races” that are premised upon essential or primordial, and therefore unbridgeable, differences of people. In turn, alleged or constructed “racial” differences have been used to justify racial supremacy and racial inequality” (Li, 2003, p.2). It is not surprising therefore, for someone to be referred to as an “immigrant” based on their ethnicity or colour of their skin. A person who is of visible minority regardless of whether they were born in Canada or not is considered an ‘immigrant’, while someone who is of European ancestry born elsewhere and having recently arrived in Canada is considered a ‘Canadian’ can be indicative of how people from certain regions of the world are viewed in the public sphere.

Conversations within the context and manner in which language is utilized can be powerful. Words can determine or influence the discourse, perceptions and eventually the decisions that are made. It can imply causality and produce undesired meanings (Bauder, 2013). Newcomers can be thought of and be considered as outsiders while those practicing in the profession can be regarded as insiders. “These implied meanings and the emotional responses they elicit have real consequences, affecting the judgment and behavior of decision makers and voters, which can in turn inform policies and legislation” (Bauder, 2013, p. 2). The use of the word “immigrants” can be problematic as it categorizes them as the “other”. Miles defines such a characterization of the “other” as being “a naturally inferior group” (Miles, 1993, p. 60). Roxana Ng (1996) echoed similar sentiments highlighting that the word “immigrant” creates an image of someone
who does not speak English well and is a form of identifying or labelling an individual. “It is the language that is spoken from ‘sedentary or state-centric perspective’ where ‘we’ talk about ‘them’ even if our ancestors were also migrants once” (Turton, 2003, p. 4). The usage of the word “immigrant” creates an image or a persona of the person who is considered to be one of those who do not speak English well and possess certain deficiencies in comparison to “white” Canadians, even though they may have been born in Canada. It is a form of what I would like to refer to as ‘immigrationizing’ them. This happens when a person of ethnic background, is perceived to have come from a foreign country, cannot speak English well, has qualifications that are considered substandard, knowledge that appears irrelevant, experience that does not matter, is part of an ‘exotic’ culture and has a complicated set of religious beliefs. It is not uncommon for a racialized person to be asked where they are from even though they may have been second or third generation Canadian. Such “labelling” of individuals’ only helps to reinforce the negative perceptions and exacerbates the already difficult situation many immigrants have to endure.

Discrimination based on class or race has a belief system that some are superior to others. They are viewed as “a process involving mental images in which people who have some distinctive physical attributes and who may have associated ethnic characteristics are viewed as different, less deserving, suitable only for low-wage jobs and as outsiders with respect to the normal benefits of membership in a given society” (Simmons, 1998, p. 87). Historically the preferred sources for immigration to Canada were from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Western Europe. In recent years however, this has changed with more immigrants coming from Asia and Africa (Block and Galabuzi, 2011). Hence issues connected to race have come to the forefront.
These are issues that entail much more than just an individual. They involve systems and institutions.

The type of discrimination where people have preconceived opinions not only encourages segregation but provides a “system-sustaining explanation for existing inequalities” (Parenti, 1978, p.97). Maraj (1996) identified some time back that race(ism) was a determining factor for the success of immigrants in Canada and emphasized that it is part of a system that is perpetuated through “governmental institutions, professional associations, various levels of schooling, businesses and other places of employment” (p.69). The question therefore arises as to how the bridging programs that are being run by such institutions address these critical issues of discrimination and racism. The existing systems and structures are emphasized as the natural way of doing things and do not recognize that power can operate within policies for privileged groups while having a negative impact on others (Ball, 1993). It is the concentration of power with the privileged groups and its impact to the rest of society that needs to be understood in this discourse. Under the neoliberal policies racism and discrimination do not come to the fore because discrimination is almost always hidden behind readily available justifications, such as lack of qualifications meeting Canadian standards and lack of Canadian work experience (Turegun, 2008). Racial discrimination is "veiled" as it is hidden behind a mirage of giving people a choice. Along with these are the legal requirements, policies and procedures that were devised to suit a particular section of the populace and continue to remain in place affecting many aspects of the IEPs daily interactions, be it individual, institutional or system related. Such are the complexities and interconnectedness of the issue that continue to remain potent and prevailing for IEPs.
Reporting on the studies by the Wellesley Institute and Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, The Toronto Star newspaper identified that visible minority Canadian workers earned 81.4 cents for every dollar paid to their Caucasian counterparts (Keung, 2011). As explained earlier, there are many aspects and layers to discrimination with some groups experiencing more than others. Gender related discrimination for racialized immigrant women plays a considerable role in this deplorable situation. These women experience a “triple negative effect” of being female, immigrants and of visible minority (Maraj, 1996, p.23). Studies continue to show that there exists a "significant income differential between racialized women and non-racialized men. Racialized immigrant women make 48.7 cents for every dollar that non-racialized male immigrants make" (Block and Galabuzi 2011, p.12). This considerable difference in income disparity and the overrepresentation of immigrant women in low paying jobs reinforces existing stereo types about their employability. Regardless of their education and skills, they continue to face challenges at various levels and stages of their integration even when they intend to enhance their abilities.

Along with the overall challenges mentioned earlier, financial constraints can hinder their pursuit of re-training and upgrading or when they want their education and expertise to be accredited. Many immigrants find that returning to school in order to get back to their original professions, on top of supporting their families, creates a major dilemma in their lives (Zaman, 2008). For many mothers, availability of day care and costs associated with it can pose a big challenge. New immigrants may not have much extended family support or reliable friends to help them with child-care. This can become an impediment to enhancing their skills, taking training courses or even accepting employment. The recent Canadian elections of 2015 brought to the fore and
made obvious, the usually subtle discriminatory and racist forces that continue to exist in Canada. What was surprising and distressing is that discriminatory rhetoric against a particular community was being fueled by the leaders of the country, albeit for their own personal gains at the expense of a united, multicultural and inclusive country. The more new immigrants perceive they face discrimination the less they identify with their new country, which not only prevents integration into the Canadian workforce but averts immigrants committing themselves to their new country and developing a strong Canadian national identity (Grant and Nadine, 2005). The impact of racism and discrimination is enormous affecting the core of integrating new immigrants into the Canadian system and the bridging programs that are supposed to help in this process are neither positioned nor equipped to addressing them as we will discuss in later chapters.

5.7 Profession Related Culture and Language

Along with education, language proficiency is one of the main determinants of success in Canada (Wayland, 2006). Profession related culture, refers to the common language, norms and understandings utilized in a particular profession. Immigrants come from diverse backgrounds and speak various languages. This issue especially affects those immigrants who come from non-English speaking countries. If their command of the English language is not close to the native speakers standard, they remain disadvantaged (Galarneau and Morissette, 2009). Language and culture can become a hurdle for immigrants and hinder them from making vital connections in their effort to settle in Canada. Lack of fluency in the English language compounds the difficulties in becoming gainfully employed and can impede personal development and civic participation (Hathiyani, 2006). There are many classes for English language
training, however these have their own intricacies and pose challenges themselves (Wayland, 2006).

*Eligibility for language classes restrict many of the federal-funded programs to those from specific immigration categories, those who have been settled in Canada for less than three years and those who have not yet obtained citizenship. The impact of this has meant that many women, arriving with young children, miss the window for training…* (Akter et al., 2013, p16).

Without appropriate language skills even accomplishing daily tasks such as explaining to a doctor, using public transit or buying groceries could become an issue. The number one priority for most immigrants is to work and support their families; however the long working hours and busy schedules keep many who want to upgrade their skills including language skills are distanced from benefiting from such training programs (Hathiyani, 2006). Recognizing the significance of this challenge, some bridging programs have tried to address it to some degree as we will see in later chapters.

While many immigrants have the technical skills to practice their profession, they may lack the culture of the profession in Canada or the occupational-specific terminology and communication skills that are required (Weiner, 2008). They may be able to speak multiple other languages, which could potentially be beneficial to open new markets for businesses. This reality however, carries little or no weight. Sometimes an accent that is different may also compound the ability to be gainfully employed (Hathiyani, 2006). Fluency in language or lack of understanding of the Canadian ‘jargon’ or professional culture could pose an impediment getting employment. Although immigrants have to show proficiency of either English or French, one of the two official languages before they come to Canada, they may lack the mastery of specialized workplace language skills (CIC, 2004). Having a foreign accent can also become a basis of discrimination (Hathiyani, 2006). An accent other than what is considered
‘Canadian’ is related to a lower education and intellect (Maraj, 1996). Such perceptions of lower education breed stereotypes and can confine and limit opportunities to low-skilled employment and minimum wage jobs. The emphasis on the accent is especially surprising in Canada where there is no one English accent. Those from Newfoundland have a very different accent from those who come from Quebec, which is very different from those who live in Ontario or Alberta. Excluding someone due to an accent or the use of required ‘jargon’, which can be learned over time, can impede the principles of having equal opportunity for all and hinder the integration process. Can the bridging programs that are supposed to help integrate IEPs change someone’s accent, or teach them the necessary language skills or expose them to the jargon of the workplace and the local industry is a question to be addressed?

5.8 Social Capital and Networking

Social capital plays an important role in providing both supports for settlement as well as guidance to the employment market. It is the networks and relations among people who have some connections that foster co-operation and trust within that group (Jurkova, 2014). Social capital helps in the settlement process, economic prosperity, getting a job and improve the overall happiness of an immigrant (Nakhaie and Kazemipur, 2013). Bridging programs can play a major role in being that vital link to enhancing the existing social capital of IEPs. Positive and appropriate links that are formed through social networking can lead to successful integration in the community and the labour market.

Good networks play a big role in finding work (Hathiyan, 2006). It is commonly understood that a large percentage of jobs are hidden. These are jobs that are not advertised, but staff in the organization could be aware of them. Having an extensive
and good network can give one an advantage in letting them know where jobs have opened up or exposing them to the workings of the organization. Getting sound advice, right leads and knowing where the jobs are can transform to an advantage in finding employment. "It is whom you know that is important," a common saying that could play a major role in getting the job. Unfortunately for the new immigrant developing those networks takes time and effort. Establishing good networks can make the difference for a new internationally trained professional to be successfully integrated into the labour market. “Social networking leads to the connectedness of people in a society and reflects their ability to associate with one another. Networking is viewed as an essential mechanism for encouraging cooperative behavior, improving the efficiency of society by generating coordinated actions, and meeting common goals” (Turkina and Thai, 2013, p 111). Networking in this day and age has many facets which are all significant for any success. There could be networks that are family oriented, profession related or institutionalized (agencies) that provide guidance and appropriate connections that can lead to employment.

For new immigrants, family relationships, friends or ethno-cultural communities play a key role in their settlement and integration into the Canadian system. It is natural for immigrants to settle close to where their family and friends reside. Good social capital accounts for positive experiences and settlement of life in Canada (Houle and Schellenberg, 2010). These connections are utilized for various reasons and supports such as overcoming the “lack of knowledge about the formal system, inability to distinguish between formal and informal resources, inability to navigate an unfamiliar formal system, distrust of the formal system, dissatisfaction with the formal system, over-confidence in the capacity of the informal processes and/or cultural, religious,
language and gender barriers that make it difficult to use the formal system” (Woodgreen Community Services, 2010, p. 21). For new immigrants, their networks are not as extensive as those who have been born here or have been in Canada for a long time. It is not surprising therefore, as some have argued that new immigrants have a social capital deficit. “Immigrants tend to leave behind their social networks and other social relations that could otherwise help them in job acquisitions and occupational mobility” (Nakhaie and Kazemipur, 2013, p. 421). It is recognized that family connections are vital in the settlement process however immigrants who obtained jobs through family, friends or personal initiative have been found to have got more low paying jobs compared to those who accessed through union postings or recruitment agencies (Fang et al., 2012).

Having the right and knowledgeable social networks can be the key to guiding new immigrants in the right direction. Professional organizations and community-based agencies play an important role in this regard. On a day-to-day basis, people interact with each other at various levels. With new immigrants who are increasingly from countries other than Europe where the socio-cultural norms, language, geographical environment, and communicating styles are different, navigating social interactions in Canada can be a difficult task especially for those who have been brought up in a very different environment (Hathiyani, 2006). Acquiring social skills that are accepted locally can pose a barrier for new immigrants especially when it comes to employment. First impressions make a lasting impression and people make judgments based on appearance, communication and presentation styles. Presenting oneself at an interview could be a daunting task for someone who is struggling to adjust to a new system, new culture, new norms and a new environment. For a new immigrant, Canadian business
etiquette may be different from what they have been exposed to which could make a
difference in their early integration into the labour market. Knowing the cultural norms
and culturally appropriate communication can help to be accepted faster and be
economically integrated expeditiously (Hathiyani, 2006). Linking with community-based
agencies that can provide such leads and guidance is essential. Having appropriate
social networks who guide the new immigrant with the right knowledge and professional
advice can make a big difference in their integration into the labour market.

General networks can be beneficial to the new immigrant. They can however
also hinder the progress and produce negative results, especially if the knowledge base
of that network is limited or not up to date. For professional immigrants, getting the right
guidance in their field of profession is critical. The focus of many bridging programs is
on the various professions. Making connections with professionals in their own field can
lead to better insights into the profession and open the doors to a job in that profession
as many employment positions are not advertised. Bridging programs are well placed to
deliver this service. Insufficient or lack of knowledge in a particular field for the IEPs
could lead to delays, frustrations and a possibility of the internationally trained
professional to be misguided with a slim chance of getting back to their profession of
training when they came to Canada.

5.9 Conclusion

There are many similar and repeated stories about the challenges immigrants
face in Canada. It is evident that life for new immigrants can be extremely challenging
and arduous (Akter et.al, 2013). The challenges described here are both individual as
well as systemic. While the challenges may vary with individuals, they are however
common and can be addressed and overcome. The continuous flow of immigrants to
Canada has been its historical legacy. New immigrants come to Canada as young highly qualified professionals, have good health and come with much of their life-long savings (Hathiyani, 2006). This should be a win/win situation for all, the new immigrant as an individual along with their families and Canada as a whole. Sadly, however, in the recent past, the advantage new immigrants come with is lost over time. It is striking that such diverse groups of individuals, coming from all parts of the world and different professional backgrounds, identify many of the same needs and challenges.

Recognizing this need and the challenges immigrants face to integrate into the labour market, the Ontario government has invested millions of dollars in programs such as the ‘Bridging Programs’ for new immigrants (MCI, 2013). Comprehending the challenges IEPs experience in their labour market integration and the sagacity of why it is happening is key to understanding how effective are the bridging programs. Having scanned some of the common challenges what follows, therefore, is a synopsis of the bridging programs that exist in Ontario.
Chapter 6

An Overview of the Bridging Programs and Literature Review

6.1 Introduction

There are over 200 agencies in Ontario providing various programs and supports to immigrants (OCASI, 2013). These programs include Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), English as a Second Language (ESL), Bridge Training or Bridging Programs, Job Preparation for Internationally Trained Professionals and Profession to Profession Mentoring Programs to help immigrants adapt to the job market in Ontario. Since 2003, the Government of Ontario has invested over $183 million in more than 240 bridge training programs to help internationally qualified and trained individuals to be integrated quickly into the labour market (Gordon, 2011). Bridging programs exist in other provinces of Canada as well, but the focus in Ontario is to provide training and Canadian workplace experience to both regulated and non-regulated professions (Ontario Immigration, 2013). The Ontario Government further announced in June 2011, that it was renewing funding to the tune of $8.8 million for 12 bridge training programs to help “more than 2,200 highly skilled newcomers get the training they need to help them find a job that matches their education, qualifications and experience” (MCI, 2011). The government has in partnership with educational institutions and regulating bodies initiated a large number of integration programs for immigrants in general and professional immigrants in particular. I argue however in this chapter that these bridging programs are another effort of the neoliberal restructuring of the state. What follows in this chapter is a closer look at the bridging programs in
Ontario in general and the greater Toronto area in particular. I start by glancing at the definition of bridging programs as explained in various sources.

### 6.2 Definition of Bridging Programs

There have been a plethora of programs and initiatives that have been developed and coined in relation to the phrase *bridge*. They emanate from a focus that attempts to connect one to the other and for the purpose of this thesis it is in regards to the bridge training or in other words the bridging programs. I start by remaining as eclectic as possible with regard to its definition and explore the various understandings they append in relation to immigrants in their quest to be integrated into the labour market in Ontario. A *bridge* as defined in the MS Encarta College Dictionary (2001) is “a structure allowing passage across obstacle” (p.174). It is described in the Merriam-Webster as “a structure carrying a pathway or roadway over a depression or obstacle” and “a means of connections or transition” (2013). Accordingly, a *bridge* is supposed to be a channel that helps an individual from one side to get to the other by helping overcome the obstacle and to ensure that the barrier does not become a hindrance. It is supposed to be a connection and a conduit that makes it easier for one to cross from one side to another surmounting the challenge that exists. For an IEP the expectation of a *bridge* would be to facilitate their journey as a practicing professional in their country of origin to a practicing professional in their adopted country of Canada. The obstacle within the context of this research is the barriers foreign trained professionals face to be integrated into the labour market and be effectively able to work in the profession they have been trained in. The integration of these professionals has been a public policy issue for years, and although it is clear that Canada’s economy depends on an increasingly high number of internationally educated and skilled individuals, what’s not clear is the path
new Canadians should take to be recognized and find employment based on their education and experience (Austin, 2008, p.1). Integration of internationally trained immigrants into the labour market is a complex issue that needs to be grounded on assumptions that are realistic and those that can provide positive results. Failure to take into account the underlying assumptions in creating such programs can prove to be the lacunae in solving the real issues. According to Rasheed and Chakrawarti (2006), the bridging programs started with an assumption of deficiency of credentials. Such assumptions stem from negative beliefs regarding internationally trained immigrants abilities. Differences are manifested from a point where there is a “lack of” or “gaps that exist” in their ability to succeed. The lack of success is attributed to immigrants themselves “without looking at the root causes of oppression by localizing the issue within individuals and/or their communities” (Irizarry, 2009, p.1). The problem areas are hence seen to exist exclusively with the internationally trained professionals awaiting a response to be resolved. The various definitions mentioned below are reflective of such assumptions.

The definition of the bridging programs as expounded by policy makers and the government has not been very consistent. While some focus on a quick road to employment, others have dedicated it to more training for the IEPs. A common underlying foundation appears to be based on IEPs having deficiencies. Lum, Bradley and Rasheed (2011) identify that;

*the goal of this training is to promote IEPs’ rapid integration and transition into the Canadian labor market through the acquisition of cultural, technical and literacy competency, and also to provide knowledge about practicing in Ontario workplaces* (p.150).

The Public Policy Forum’s (2008) definition of a bridging program is “any program that
helps immigrants fill education gaps or other professional requirements, provides immigrants with cultural and/or workplace orientation, and/or helps immigrants find work that makes use of their skill set and former training” (p. 4). Bridging programs are therefore “designed to bridge educational or experiential gaps suffered by immigrant workers” (Duncan & Poisson, 2008, p.11).

The definition according to the Government of Ontario has also varied over the years. According to the Labour Market Integration Unit of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration bridging programs are those that “assess a newcomer’s skills and provide targeted training that addresses only what a newcomer needs to meet requirements for licensure and employment in Ontario. Bridging programs provide newcomers with academic training, language training, work experience and other occupational-specific services to help them join the labour market quickly in jobs matching their skills, education and experience” (MCI, 2008). The prominence of providing more training to integrate those who are internationally trained into the labour market is once again evident here.

A 2009 Government of Ontario brochure described bridging programs as a means to “help internationally trained individuals get license and work in their field more quickly” (Government of Ontario, 2009). The wording here emphasizes the “help (to) get licensure and work more quickly.” The expediting of getting work appears to be the emphasis. Further to this, the government site in 2010 defined bridging programs as those programs “that help newcomers get their license or certificate in their profession or trade, so that they can work in Ontario” (MCI, 2010). The emphasis under the first part of this statement is on helping the immigrant get a license or a certificate. The second part of the statement which is the phrase “so that they can work in Ontario”
(MCI, 2010) remains a void commitment as the foreign trained immigrants already have been granted the authority to work in Canada. Furthermore, helping achieve licensing and certification as mentioned in the explanation is just one of the many obstacles foreign-trained immigrants face in Canada. There are many obstacles and challenges that have to be overcome to be gainfully employed in the profession of their training, which were addressed in the previous chapter.

Another definition posted on the Ontario Government website in 2013 described them as follows: “Bridge training programs help qualified internationally trained individuals move quickly into the labour market in Ontario. They assess your existing skills and competencies, compared to Ontario employer expectations. They provide training and Canadian workplace experience without duplicating what you have already learned” (Ontario Immigration, 2013). There are three parts to this definition with the first emphasizing to “move individuals quickly into the labour market followed by assess(ing) existing skills and competencies, compared to Ontario employer expectations” and the third part reflecting on provision of training and Canadian work experience without duplicating what the foreign-trained individuals have previously learned. A most recent description states the following; “Ontario Bridge Training programs help skilled newcomers get their license or certificate in their profession or trade, so that they find employment commensurate with their skills and experience in Ontario” (MCI, 2015). The various definitions from the government sources identified above, while not entirely bereft of being consistent, appear to be all encompassing and general, sending different messaging to different people. This leads to an interesting argument on what really is the focus of the bridging programs. By using the analogy of the term “bridge” as a solution to overcome barriers and obstacles what do the bridging programs help
overcome? Duncan & Poisson (2008) in their analysis relate that “realistic expectations, as well as programming that is able to suit the diverse needs of skilled immigrants, are essential to a bridging program that is going to benefit both immigrants and employers” (p.2). The question that arises is whether the emphasis on training and more training can help solve the challenges these internationally trained immigrants face. Based on the above explanations about the bridging programs the essence of “success” as pertaining to this study is the ability of internationally trained professional to be employed in the profession of their education, training and experience and not any survival job.

6.3 Marketing the Bridging Programs

Bridging programs have been marketed aggressively as a panacea to overcome the challenges IEPs face. Social service centers, community agencies, universities, and community colleges promote the goodness of the bridging programs to attract IEPs. The programs are also marketed through government and service provider websites, utilizing pamphlets at job fairs, workshops and different events at various times of the year. It should however not be lost that an important aspect of unpretentious integration is to provide necessary and realistic guidance and supports to the IEPs and managing their expectations. Creating a genuine environment requires being open and forthright about what the programs could deliver, making it easier for IEPs to make informed decisions and manage their expectations. There have been inconsistencies in how the programs are marketed and expectations raised as a result of it. The perception that has been created by the government has led IEPs to expect employment in their profession of training after completion of the program. According to the Ontario government communication, bridging programs “help internationally trained individuals
get license and work in their field more quickly” (Government of Ontario, 2009). Such communication creates a perception that one will get employment in their field of education and training quickly after completing the bridging program. A more recent communication states that;

*bridge training programs help qualified internationally trained individuals move quickly into the labour market in Ontario. They assess your existing skills and competencies, compared to Ontario employer expectations. They provide training and Canadian workplace experience without duplicating what you have already learned* (Ontario Immigration, 2013).

These type of messaging from the government fuels the perception that bridging programs will help overcome the challenges IEPs face and help them get employed quickly. With such emphasis it should not come as a surprise that hopes and expectations of the IEPs are raised to a belief that they will be employed once they complete the bridging program.

### 6.4 Types of Bridging Programs

Since 2003, over 240 bridging projects in over 100 professions have served about 50,000 internationally trained individuals seeking employment in over 100 regulated and non-regulated professions (MCI, 2011b). Bridging programs have evolved over time starting with pre-licensure and licensure programs in the beginning followed later in 2006 to employment and workforce integration (Gordon, 2011). These programs are offered through various institutes and organizations. Amongst them are universities, colleges, community based organizations, employment agencies, professional associations, hospitals, hospital associations, chamber of commerce, an agency that advocates for immigrants, and a fundraising agency. All these different organizations provide bridging programs either by themselves or in partnership with other
organizations. Through this action of creating and funding the bridging programs, the government in effect is outsourcing its responsibilities of accountability to a third party, keeping in line with the neoliberal philosophies.

The focus of the programs offered by the different organizations or institutes is varied with different time frames and pedagogies. These organizations or institutes may not necessarily be educational institutes nor are they governed by education related statutes. It is worthwhile to point out that education in Ontario is regulated and offered by only certain accredited institutions, whether it is the primary, secondary or higher education streams. Bridging programs on the contrary, can be offered by any non-profit organization that can meet the funding criteria. The differences within these organizations expose extreme disparities and inconsistencies within such programs. Besides meeting the numeric targets and the administration that the funding model requires, the question that arises is whether they all have the necessary qualifications, skills and experience to address and help overcome the challenges that internationally trained professionals face both on an individual level as well as on a systemic platform. Addressing the Canadian parliament, Suzanne Gordon speaking on behalf of Ontario’s Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration on the success of the bridging programs highlighted the following:

Successful programs target one specific occupation. They offer technical language training and communication training, as well as workplace culture orientation. They consult with employers as well as educators and regulators on the technical curriculum and specialized services in employment. They offer participants direct contact with employers, which is key. The stronger that contact is, the better the employment outcomes are likely to be. From a networking event, to a mentorship, to a paid internship, all these activities increase employment outcomes. Successful programs understand that employment services for highly skilled individuals need to be sector-specific. Results are best when service providers have industry-specific expertise. Finally, they engage a wide range of partners, including credential and language
assessors, academic institutions, regulators, and employer champions. (Gordon, 2011).

This encompasses almost everything that the Ontario Government presumes is required for participants in the program to be successful. While the government may have its own thoughts on the necessities, the various professional associations and institutions have their own requirements for accreditation and licensure procedures for IEPs to practice. Educational qualification is only one aspect of assessing competency. Often judgement on ability is confined to credentials which is seen by many as a neoliberal mechanism of exclusionary measure “designed to control and monitor entry to key positions in the division of labour” (Parkin, 1979, p.48). Each institute determines the content of its own program and pedagogy. There is lack of any common standards or consensus, each placing more emphasis on one skill or the other (Reitz, 2011).

A glance at the content of the various programs reveals that most programs have a combination of the components mentioned above. Many bridging programs cover assessment of education and skills of the applicants and components that are related to Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), assessing language proficiency and credentials equivalency. They also cover work placement, mentorship opportunities, work specific language skills, job referrals, resume writing, mock interviews and networking (Rasheed and Chakravarty, 2006). A report compiled by Austin (2008) on best practices on bridging programs identifies that successful programs have developed some form of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). PLAR is used to evaluate the knowledge and skills of internationally trained applicants who wish to enroll in a bridging program or enter their profession of training. Additionally, this form of assessment has been described as a tool for social inclusion.
Such assessments are portrayed to be objective and fair. "The perception portrayed is that assessment is a neutral way to assess immigrant skills. However, assessment is not neutral. Credentials are not objective. Skills are social constructs that are the product of complex phenomenological, social, economic, ideological, discursive, and political process" (Goldberg, 2005, p.169). With immigrants from all over the world having credentials that are so varied, each having their own intricacies makes it difficult for any assessment to be made in an objective and fair way. It makes it even more difficult to judge and make an assessment if it is combined with the varied experiences IEPs possess. With such differences in IEP qualifications, assessing credentials continues to remain a challenge. Andersson and Guo (2009) in their study describe that PLAR has become a barrier to adult learning acting more like a governing tool instead of a means of social transformation. "As technologies of power and the self, the process of PLAR can lead to the devaluation and denigration of immigrants’ qualifications and experience. While certain forms of knowledge are legitimized as valid, the learning and work experience of immigrants has often been viewed as inferior” (Andersson and Guo, 2009, p. 436). Although, an analysis of the curriculum and the pedagogy is not the intent of this thesis, what is evident is the lack of focus that recognizes the experience, skills, dignity and culture of the students. It lacks student centered methods that unearth designs to protect injustices and form a foundation that reflects equality and democracy (Gibson, 2007). These are systemic issues and need to be addressed as such. Creation of bridging programs that lack recognition and fair assessment of other international institutions will have outcomes that reflect the narrow and conceited environment they operate under.
The bridging programs that have been approved by the government have been identified under the following seven categories:

(i) regulated professions and trades – health related
(ii) regulated professions and trades- non health related
(iii) non regulated professions or trades
(iv) trades
(v) research projects
(vi) employer engagement
(vii) general

In an internet online search of the Ontario government website in July 2013 (Ontario Immigration, 2013), I found programs of various types, with different focuses and a range of timeframes. I conducted another review of available bridging programs in March 2016 and identified some changes in the number of programs. Professions such as accountants had fewer programs while the teachers had a couple of more programs and engineers saw no change. The information recorded in 2013, was listed and cross-referenced with other information such as from the Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC). At that time there were 119 programs in the seven categories as mentioned above that were in existence at the time of the review. Recognizing that since 2003 there have been over 240 programs that have been approved, reinforces the impact of the temporality of some programs with limited period of funding that may not be extended beyond a fixed time. One such example was the bridging program offered by the Ontario Institute of Agrologist (OIA) which was informed in the spring of 2009, that its funding had been renewed. During the 4 years after the renewal of funding, 253 applications were received for the program of which 184 applicants received their
Articling Agrologist (A.Ag.) and Professional Agrologist (P.Ag.) designations; and a total of 104 professionals obtained jobs in their field. Despite improved success rate from the previous funding period and returning $153,000 to the Ontario government due to operational efficiencies, no new funding was allocated to Internationally Educated Professional Agrologist Project as of April 1, 2013, thus the program came to an abrupt end (OIA, 2016). These programs therefore fluctuate with no guarantee that they will consistently receive funding. A summary of the programs is shown in Table 6.1. A perusal of the available data shows that almost 70% of all bridging programs in Ontario were being offered in Toronto while 30% covered the rest of Ontario. The paradox of this situation is that 36% of all immigrants in Ontario live in Toronto (City of Toronto, 2013) but the percentage of programs that are being offered here in Toronto appears to be significantly higher. It was not clear how the programs were being allocated; whether consideration was given to the geographic distribution of the immigrant population, the demand for the programs based on a needs basis or on an organizations ability to come up with a program and qualify under the funding criteria.

The most number of programs in July 2013 were in the regulated professions with 53 programs covering 26 professions. These were however, divided into health related and non-health related professions. To be able to work in a regulated profession or use a job title under it, one has to be registered and/or be licensed by an appropriate regulatory body (Ontario Immigration, 2013).

Regulated professions are those for which the province has established self-governing bodies. They include such occupations as accountancy, architecture, engineering, law, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, teaching, and veterinary medicine. Regulated professions are highly skilled; they require postsecondary education and additional training. Most also require that persons be licensed before they can practice the profession (MTCU, 2002, p. 7).
Therefore, anyone in a regulated profession has to be authorized to practice in that profession. Non - regulated professions had 37 programs. Trades with 4 programs had the least number among the categories mentioned. Access to these bridging programs however has been an issue. Certain professions have more programs available while others have none. Access is even more limited for immigrants in smaller towns (OFC, 2013, p.19).

Table 6.1: Categories of Bridging Programs, Professions and Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of programs</th>
<th>Number of professions</th>
<th>Programs serving Toronto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulated professions and trades- health related</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated professions and trades- non health related</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non regulated professions</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Projects</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Not specific</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>53*</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes the number of professions that were identifiable. There could be more than those mentioned.
Data compiled from MCI/Ontario Immigration website in July 2013

(Ontario Immigration, 2013b)

There were 28 programs in 13 regulated health related professions. 11 of those programs were being offered outside of Toronto as identified in Table 6.2. Programs in this category had a wide range, each having a different focus in its content. Service providers of varying backgrounds delivered these programs. For instance, there were
four medical laboratory technologist programs that were offered by two colleges, a hospital and a university each having their own foci and methodology. One program provides practice through simulation to prepare participants for certification; another a mentorship program; yet another that focuses on assessment and language training. The nursing profession had 13 programs, the highest number in any profession. These are being offered by various organizations that include colleges, universities and a professional association. Bridging programs for nurses are the most accessible with programs spread throughout Ontario. There is also a degree program that is available in this profession; however most programs are geared towards helping participants prepare for licensure and to sit for certification exams.

From *table 6.2* it can be seen that there is no consistency in how programs are allocated or where they are allocated. The percentage of IEPs who were audiologists was high and yet there was no bridging program for it while the percentage of the laboratory technologist who were IEPs was low but there were four bridging programs for the profession. Pharmacist is one profession that has been mentioned as seeing a significant success rate. The success rate has been mentioned to have increased to 90% for those sitting for the exams (Gordon, 2011). There were two programs in the pharmacist profession having 12,982 members, 40% of who were immigrants, the highest percentage in any profession. Both these programs were available only in Toronto a limitation to those living in other parts of the province.
Table 6.2: Brief summary of professions with high percentage of immigrants and related bridging programs – Regulated Health Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulated profession or not</th>
<th>Name of Profession</th>
<th>Geographic area program located</th>
<th># of Bridging Programs</th>
<th>Total membership in the profession (2011)</th>
<th>% of immigrants in the profession (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Audiology and speech language pathology</td>
<td>No Bridging Program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,501</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Chiropodist and podiatrist</td>
<td>No Bridging Program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Chiropractor</td>
<td>No Bridging Program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,156</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Dentist (Dental Surgeon)</td>
<td>GTA, London</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8,785</td>
<td>28 Dental surgeons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Dental Technologist</td>
<td>No bridging program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Medical Laboratory Technologist</td>
<td>GTA, Province wide</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7,727</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Physician or surgeon</td>
<td>GTA, Ottawa,</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36,513</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Midwife</td>
<td>GTA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Ontario wide</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>155,817</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,926</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Optometrist</td>
<td>Kitchener Waterloo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,963</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated -health</td>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
<td>GTA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12,982</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information compiled from Ontario Immigration (2013b) and cross-referenced with information from the Office of the Fairness Commissioner (2013).

A matter of concern was the proposal by the Ontario College of Pharmacists for regulation changes that would have made bridging program mandatory for all internationally trained applicants (OFC, 2013). This would have created a separate level
of educational requirement for internationally trained pharmacists and opened up new
dynamics and a Pandora’s Box in the education system in Ontario. It would have
endorsed the belief that the internationally trained professionals education and skills
were inferior to those educated in Canada regardless of their abilities, training and
experiences. The Office of the Fairness Commissioner had argued at that time against
making it mandatory identifying that 40% of internationally trained applicants had
passed the required pharmacy exams without a bridging program, and “therefore a
bridging requirement was an unnecessary barrier to licensing” (OFC, 2013, p 20). This
reflects the power regulatory bodies can wield and had such a change in regulation
been allowed to pass it would have started a domino effect for other professions to
emulate.

There were 23 programs in non-health related regulated professions that covered
13 professions most of which were offered in Toronto (Table 6.3). The engineering
profession with 26% of its membership of 75,059 as immigrants had six programs.
There were five bridging programs for accountants whose focus included language
assessment, workplace related communication training, preparation for exams etc. The
engineering technician, technologist profession who had 20% and geoscientists with
22% of its members as immigrants did not have a bridge training program. What was
more surprising is that in 2013, I could not locate a bridging program for the teaching
profession that had 16% of its 234,416 members as immigrants. However according to
the MCI website in 2016, there were two programs. The number of teachers who were
immigrants was ten times more than the accountants who had five bridge training
programs. Despite the scale of the percentage of immigrants in these professions, the
lack of programs adds a new dimension and potency to the debate on the allocation of
resources and inconsistencies exhibited by the government.

Table 6.3: Brief summary of professions with high percentage of immigrants and related bridging programs – Regulated Non-Health Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulated profession or not</th>
<th>Name of Profession</th>
<th>Geographic area program located</th>
<th># of Bridging Programs</th>
<th>Total membership in the profession 2011</th>
<th>% of immigrants in the profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulated - non health</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>GTA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,097</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated - non health</td>
<td>Engineering Technician or Technologist</td>
<td>No Bridging Program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16,538</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated - non health</td>
<td>Accountants (CGA), (CMA) and CA</td>
<td>GTA, Sudbury, Windsor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35,739</td>
<td>11 (CA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated - non health</td>
<td>Early Childhood Educators</td>
<td>GTA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36,137</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated - non health</td>
<td>Geoscientist</td>
<td>No Bridging Program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,924</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated - non health</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>GTA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75,059</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated - non health</td>
<td>Social Worker and Social Services</td>
<td>GTA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,628</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated - non health</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Toronto (There were 2 in 2016)</td>
<td>234,416</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated - non health</td>
<td>Veterinary</td>
<td>Guelph</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,276</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information compiled from Ontario Immigration, (2013) and cross-referenced with information from the Office of the Fairness Commissioner (2013b).

There were 37 bridging programs covering 12 identifiable but non-regulated professions (Table 6.4). These were offered by a number of various service providers such as Universities, colleges, community based agencies, employment agencies and professional bodies. As in other categories the programs here covered mentorship to workplace specific communication training, technical skills, exam preparation and job searching among other things.
Table 6.4: Brief summary of bridging programs in Non-Regulated Professions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulated Profession or not</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th># of Bridging Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Bio technology</td>
<td>Mississauga and Ottawa</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Employment Counseling</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Toronto, Hamilton</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>London, GTA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>Hamilton, Ottawa, GTA</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Regulated</td>
<td>Supply chain logistics</td>
<td>Province wide</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information compiled from Ontario Immigration, (2013b)

Since these were non-regulated professions, the actual number of members in each profession was not determined. Information technology had nine programs followed by the environmental sector with six. Most of these programs were only available in Toronto.

In 2009, the Ontario Colleges of Trades and Apprenticeship Act was passed leading to the creation of the Ontario College of Trades. The College has the mandate and powers to regulate all approved trades in Ontario, which has over 150 recognized trades of which 22 require mandatory certification (Ontario Immigration, 2013). Overall, four bridge training programs (Table 6.5) were identified under this section. One program was focused on the mining profession while the other three focused on at least some component of construction. Most of these programs were located outside Toronto.
and some were available in both English and French especially for those in construction management. Similar to other categories, the programs here also assist participants to get practical internships or apprenticeships and support in securing job placements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th># of Bridging Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>Mining Professions and Trades</td>
<td>North Bay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>Construction Management</td>
<td>GTA and Ottawa</td>
<td>2 English and French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>General Trades</td>
<td>York and Peel region</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information compiled from Ontario Immigration, (2013b)

Considering the very high number of recognized trades and those that require to be certified, there were only four programs available in this category with only one available in Toronto.

There were 10 programs that were approved under the research category (Table 6.6). These programs are varied from developing resources, compilation of best practices, competency certificates, frame of reference and establishing a center. They also involved various professions. Most of these programs were health related and were being offered in Toronto.

There were 10 programs located under employer engagement category (Table 6.7). Most of the programs had to do with integrating internationally trained professionals. There were two programs that were profession specific while others were general in nature. Most of these programs were being offered in Toronto. The programs in this category include mentorship programs, holding a conference, creating a guide, developing an online Employer Campus and some employer engagement. In his study
of employers Eric Liu (2007) identified disconnect between the employers perceptions about the skills possessed by foreign-trained immigrants and the actual skills they possess. The focus of hiring strategies was based on mainstream socio-cultural corporate norms which left recent professionally trained immigrants disproportionately disadvantaged (Liu, 2007).

**Table 6.6: Brief summary of research related bridging programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th># of Bridging Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Language Proficiency</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Bilingual Proficiency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Land surveyor</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Equitable Path for Competency Assessment and Attainment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Cultural Competency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Nurses’ Language Competencies:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Improving Recruitment, Hiring, Workplace Integration, and Retention</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Dentists</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Levelling Access Assessment for examination</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Health Sector</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Centre of Excellence for Communication Competency Assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Province wide</td>
<td>Develop a Repository of Regulatory Practices</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Niagara and Ottawa</td>
<td>Workplace Cultural Competency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Medical Laboratory Technology</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Exam preparation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information compiled from Ontario Immigration (2013b).
### Table 6.7: Brief summary of employer engagement related bridging programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th># of Bridging Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Building a Training Infrastructure for Integration</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Enhancing Employer Capacity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Integrating Internationally Educated Nurses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Hire Immigrants</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Internationally Educated Professionals Conference</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>The Mentoring Program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Waterloo</td>
<td>Employment Connections</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>Green Economy</td>
<td>Niagara</td>
<td>Immigrant Connections Initiative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Engagement</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Integrating internationally trained workers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information compiled from Ontario Immigration (2013b).

There were eight programs (*Table 6.8*) which I categorized them as general. These bridging programs are general in nature to help internationally trained professionals find employment. They are not specific to any profession and provide referrals, work placement opportunities, mentorship and advice on starting a business (MCI, 2013). Most of these programs are located outside of Toronto.
Table 6.8: General Bridging Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th># of Bridging Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Regulated Professions</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Information, application and referral service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Workshops on corporate culture and employer expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Group Mentorship program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Province wide</td>
<td>Management competencies and job search supports</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Job matching network</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Project management supports to write the exam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Database, workshops and mentorship English and French</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Non specific</td>
<td>Province wide</td>
<td>Online database</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information compiled from Ontario Immigration (2013b).

An important note to be made is the control and confined governance that has been devoted to the bridging programs. With all the applications for bridging program funding applicants are very clearly instructed not to talk to the media without written consent from the ministry. The directive given in the application guide is remarked as follows:

*An Applicant shall not at any time directly or indirectly communicate with the media in relation to this application process or any legal agreement in relation to this Application without first obtaining the written consent of MCIIT. MCIIT may refuse to consider an Application from an Applicant or may rescind a grant awarded to an applicant who has such communication without its written consent* (MCIIT, 2015).

The application guide restricts and spells out the consequences of talking to the media which could include withdrawal of funds or failure to receive funds in the future.

Potentially such a measure could limit and control the views and concerns in connection with the bridging programs or even restrict those who act as advocates to speak out about any change.
6.5 Funding the Bridging Programs

Since 2003, the Ontario government has invested more than $183 million in more than 240 bridge training programs to help internationally trained immigrants be integrated into the labour market (MCI, 2013). These programs are offered by educational institutes, professional bodies and community agencies who receive funding through Ontario’s Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. For the purpose of this research the application process that had a submission deadline of September 29, 2011 has been used as a reference. According to it the following eligibility criteria was required to be met for any organization to acquire funding:

- be an incorporated not-for-profit organization for at least two (2) years
- design their programs and services for all internationally trained newcomers to Ontario, ensuring equal treatment of Canadian citizens, permanent residents, convention refugees, refugees and refugee claimants who are eligible to work in Ontario
- have a Board of Directors that is democratically elected and representative of the communities and organizations that use its services
- have bylaws that outline procedures for reporting and accounting to their membership for the organization’s operations and performance
- satisfy the Ministry that they can receive, handle and account for public funds in a responsible manner
- demonstrate adequate cash flow management and funds in reserve
- be compliant with the Ontario Human Rights Code and all other applicable laws. (MCI, 2011b, p. 4)

There are seven eligibility requirements mentioned above with the first limiting the applications to not-for-profit organizations. Out of the other six requirements, three emphasize accounting and budgetary matters while two require compliance to non-discrimination in provision of services. The emphasis here is on the ability to manage funds with little mention on the ability of the organization to be able to deliver the appropriate services, or having connection to employers or having any experience to do
so. The focus points to the organizations capacity to be administratively efficient. The eligibility requirements outlined above are broad leaving the doors wide open to any not-for-profit organization to apply for funding regardless of their ability or experience to provide service to integrate internationally trained immigrants into the labour market. This has led to multiple players such as educational institutions, community agencies and government all playing a role in influencing immigrant access to the labour market (Goldberg, 2005). Neoliberalism refers to policies and processes "whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit" (McChesney, 1998, p.7). Although they are required to have democratically elected Board of Directors, organizations hold power and have their own interests and objectives as compared to those for whom these programs are being offered. While the organizations may be able to enhance their capacity and reap benefits, it opens up the question whether those taking the program benefit or not and whether the challenges they face are overcome.

The maximum duration of funding for any project was limited to three years (MCI, 2011b, p. 4). An organization could therefore receive funding for new projects that could last up to three years. Applications for funding for bridging programs fall under three categories with each having a separate set of forms. There are also separate application forms for renewal of funding for projects under the three categories that have already been in existence. These three categories are:

a) Getting a License. "Getting a License projects develop and deliver training and services that assist internationally trained individuals to obtain certification/registration. These projects are strategic interventions targeted at one
specific sector or occupation” (MCI, 2011b, p. 11). The focus here is to provide training to obtain licensure and employment in regulated professions or trades.

b) Getting a Job. “Pathways to Employment projects develop and deliver training and services that assist internationally trained individuals to obtain employment commensurate with their skills, education and experience. These projects are strategic interventions targeted at one specific sector or occupation” (MCI, 2011b, p.14). These training programs assist in getting employment to those in non-regulated professions or those with licensure.

c) Changing the system. “Changing the System projects are initiatives that enhance the fairness and effectiveness with which Ontario’s institutions are able to respond to the integration of internationally trained individuals into the Ontario labour market on a system-wide or sector-wide basis” (MCI, 2011b, p.16).

The emphasis in the first two categories is on providing more training to the IEP so that they can get licensed to be able to work in their profession. Deconstructing the notion of skills and training programs Goldberg (2005) highlights that there are consequences to having training and assessment policies as solutions to economic integration of immigrants as they "devalue immigrant education and skills and their employability to the Ontario labour Market" (p. 202). Under these categories there is no requirement for internationally trained professionals or even the employer who is going to hire them to be included in the decision making process. “The process of social exclusion operates in such a way that those most affected are often isolated from the democratic system, so that decisions about their lives are made elsewhere and by others” (Stevens et.al, 2003, p.88).
The application guide to funding for bridging programs also highlighted two occupation/sectors of particular interest to the Ministry for which applicants were encouraged to apply. These two sectors were the Green Economy and those in the Early Childhood Education. It is understandable that these are the sectors where the Ontario Government placed a lot of emphasis, however a closer look needs to be made considering that these programs for which funding is being made available is for internationally trained professionals. While data for the Green Economy was not available, a report identifies the Early Childhood Education profession as having less than 1% of its members as internationally trained, was not on a priority occupations list in 2010, does not require Canadian experience nor does it require university education (OFC, 2013). The irony of the situation is that, while the government is encouraging more programs in this profession, the percentage of immigrants in the said profession is less than 1%. This opens up the question whether the approval of programs is determined based on need or dictated by a government agenda.

Funds for bridging programs can only be issued with the provision of monitoring of the budget and productivity measurement and a requirement by the agency to “satisfy the Ministry that they can receive, handle and account for public funds in a responsible manner” (MCI, 2011b, p. 4). This encapsulates the neoliberal direction of bridging programs with emphasis on demonstrating accounting as being essential to obtaining any funding. It adds a new dimension and potency to the question whether these institutions chart their programs to satisfy and position themselves for funding requirements or a focus to help internationally trained professionals overcome the barriers they experience and help them be integrated into their profession. It is clear that those institutions that apply for and are granted funding are bound by contractual
agreements, a reflection that the programs becomes a commodity and the deliverers (agencies or institutions) as the extension of how the government extends and controls its agenda. IEPs are viewed as meagre players in the market driven economy, which does not take into consideration the marginalized groups like the new immigrants. Furthermore what has evolved by engaging the universities, colleges and community agencies who have traditionally been advocates and agents of change have now become partners of the government in this neoliberal process of outsourcing, commodification and precariousness. Such developments have long-term consequences that not only outsource the responsibilities of the government to a third party but also directs the attention of the fundamental issues to a different direction away from the government and the core issues of unemployment and underemployment affecting IEPs. The attention is deviated to policies in relation to administration and funding of the bridging programs instead of focusing on issues of underutilization and systemic barriers that are holding IEPs back. What is more problematic is that this shift of attention to commodification with the engagement of key institutions as partners. As commodification of resources increases and government becomes more aligned with capital, its functions get confined to being more of a policing agent as compared to an avenue for social reform and harmony (Giroux, 2004).

While the preparation course for internationally trained engineers writing the Professional Practice Exam (PPE) which is administered by Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) at a university costs $600.00 for 24 hours of program, a similar course delivered by Ontario Society of Professional Engineers costs $99 for 33 hours of program. The cost of these programs vary from no charge to participants to up to $10,000 in fees for the program. To attract more students to the programs and an
emphasis on commodification and a clear move towards neoliberalism, universities are being market oriented in raising funds by offering conversion of Aeroplan miles to cash; 35,000 Aeroplan miles to equal $250. This is reflective of the neoliberal policies where transactions are measured according to standard criteria and performance indicators marketize social activities subordinating professional judgements to accountancy (Levidow, 2002, p.5). Such a move defeats the very fundamental reason Access to Professions and Trades (APT) unit was established by the government in 1995. The mandate of the Unit was to take a leadership role in supporting initiatives designed to assist in the removal of systemic barriers which hinder individuals accredited, educated or trained outside Ontario from gaining access to licensure in their profession or trade (Government of Ontario, 1995). The current funding model for the delivery of the bridging programs does not support what the government set out to do in 1995, on the contrary it could exacerbate the already serious issues IEPs experience in their integration into the Canadian economy. The funding requirements limit the organizations to a narrow focus and curtails them from being creative. It directs them away from policies to overcome systemic barriers to a concentration on administration and funding of the bridging programs and their quantifiable outcomes.

6.6 Funding for Service Users- Internationally Educated Professionals

While the bridging programs and its funding to the agencies was initiated in 2003, it was not until 2008 when financial support for the internationally trained professionals under Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement (LMA) came into effect. As a result the Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance Program (OBPAP) was created which paved the way for some support to the students of the bridging programs. This funding to IEPs was initiated 5 years after the institutions and service providers started receiving
the support from the government exposing in the process not only the lack of foresight and planning at the time of initiating such programs but also requiring the service provider to charge fees for the programs. The OBPAP bursary assistance is funded under Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and is available to eligible students enrolled only in certain institutions for bridge training programs that lead to employment. Those in such institutions could apply for funding and based on the program and available resources could receive grants to cover for tuition, books and equipment (MTCU, 2013). To qualify, the students have to be Canadian Citizens or Permanent Residents, enrolled in a government funded college or university run bridge training programs that charge fees and not be a program under Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).

Although there are more than 100 bridging programs, I identified only 28 programs that were approved under the MTCU criteria for students to be eligible to receive bursary. The bursaries range from $500 up to $5,000 to cover direct education costs for students attending the non-OSAP approved programs (MTCU, 2013). The grants that are available are also limited only to those programs that are offered through the publicly funded Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology (community colleges), publicly-assisted universities and the Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences. There is no financial aid available to the many bridging program participants receiving training at educational institutes other than those mentioned above. Most bridging programs do not even qualify for OSAP. While all institutions offering bridging programs under the Ministry have been approved and allocated financial resources, when it comes to funding for the participants, it is restricted and limited to only a few programs. In contrast, funding for students at another Ontario program, the “Second Career” is
also administered by MTCU and open to all approved institutions unlike under the bridging programs. Furthermore, participants under Second Career qualify for up to $28,000 (MTCU, 2015) an amount that is significantly higher compared to a maximum of $5,000 for participants in the bridging programs. The IEPs do not qualify for the Second Career program as it is not available to those who have post-secondary education. Why such disparities exist for IEPs especially when they are trying to settle and be productive in Canada is not clear. To prove that their qualifications and skills are valid and authentic, the IEPs have to pay or in other words “purchase” the bridging program for their own success as their predicament is due to their own deficiencies and has to be completed by themselves. Many IEPs have to utilize the savings they brought to Canada or borrow to pay for the bridging programs. The irony of the situation is that institutions who provide these bridging programs receive funding and are supported by the government while access to funding for the participants for whom the programs have been created is limited or unavailable. It therefore begs one to question if the programs are more to help the service provider or the service receiver for whom these programs have been created. This model of bridging programs leaves no distinction between getting supports for accreditation, getting some help in practicing ones profession, how these programs are delivered or getting into debt, indicative of neoliberalism as a cornerstone of these programs.

An additional point that needs to be mentioned is that the limited grant for tuition that is available to the students of bridging programs is under the Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance Program (OBPAP), which is administered through Ontario’s Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU). The program delivery of the bridging programs is under Ontario’s Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI).
These are two different ministries dealing with the same program albeit different components; service receivers dealing with MTCU while service providers dealing with MCI, intimating on the programs efficiency or lack thereof. Under these circumstances, a progressive and effective focus would not be possible where the program components are divided. Such a division and separation of funding between ministries, a key element of the program fortifies the belief in the government’s lack of will or seriousness to improve and make a difference in the professional aspirations of the IEPs and its impact on Canada.

6.7 Bridging Programs: Literature Review

Bridging programs are relatively new, hence limited research has been done on them. I have so far come across a handful of papers, findings of which I share below and identify benefits and gaps that exist in the process. The literature on bridging programs that I have come across and as is summarized here focus on various angles of the program with some perspective from the internationally trained professional’s view, for whom the programs have been created. There are however gaps and this thesis adds that voice of the IEPs for whom the programs have been created. The existing research however has been useful as a research tool to identify the gaps and help formulate research questions for this thesis.

One of the first studies on bridging programs was by Jessica Walters (2006). She studied 22 service providers and advocates in Toronto. She found that

IEP service providers perceive that many government policies and programs play an important role in assisting to obtain employment. However, there are systemic barriers that are also created, such as the state’s reliance on professional associations to act as the regulating bodies, lack of integration of policies and programs designed to assist IEPs, and narrow service mandates which work to limit service providers’ abilities to meet the needs of IEPs (Walters, 2006, p.1).
The focus of this study was the service providers and not the service receivers, the immigrants themselves. While not entirely bereft of significant findings, omitting key stake holders especially those that these programs are meant for exposes wide gaps in the study. The study I conducted is from the standpoint of the internationally trained immigrants and adds their voice to the existing literature on bridging programs. The findings shed light on what were the participants’ expectations of the bridging programs and if they were fulfilled. It captures their experiences of completing a bridging program and identifies the gaps that exist.

Another study was by Lum and Turittin (2007) was on the effectiveness of Ontario bridging programs to assist qualified immigrants in obtaining licensure and employment. They used qualitative methods such as of one on one interviews and focus groups to research two bridging programs, one of which was health related. Their questions focused on the learning experience, challenges that hindered their success and the benefits of taking these courses in finding employment (Lum and Turritin, 2007, p 2). The themes that emerged from their interviews revolved around merits of the program, adjusting to the industry requirement and settlement issues. Respondents found that they improved their language skills and gained familiarity of the Canadian workplace. They also recognized the differences in practice standards between their home country and Canada, varying degrees of autonomy and authority structures and the client focused individualized approach within team setting as challenging. The paper concluded that such programs improved the English language skills of those enrolled in the program, increased their chances of being licensed in their professional field and provided them exposure to the industry environment in Canada. Although they did not find the programs to increase employability, Lum and Turittin (2007) shed light on the
benefits of taking courses under the ‘bridging’ program and some of their shortcomings. They suggest “extending the time frame of bridging programs or placing greater emphasis on cultural socialization in preparation for future employment needs to be considered” (p. 5). Their findings also lead us to believe that there may be other factors that were not measured or explored that play an important role for the success of such programs. This thesis captures the gap that exists in what the participants expected and their experience beyond just getting a job if at all.

Bidhendi (2007) in his thesis surveyed 201 graduates from nine different Employment Facilitation Programs in the Toronto area. He used 10 survey opportunities that focused on the skills learning effects and the bridging effects of the program to extract his findings. He concluded that there was improvement in job hunting skills for professional immigrants but these skills did not give them more hope of finding relevant jobs. It was the lack of connectedness to professionals that hindered their access to professional jobs more than gaps in job-hunting skills (Bidhendi, 2007). Another important observation from this research was that economic integration does not necessarily take the route of one’s professional training. The right exposure to the labour market could lead to other employment in professions other than the one they were trained in (Bidhendi, 2007). In light of this, it would be significant to know if and how these programs could expose the immigrant professional to various other employment options.

Bidhendi’s findings are significant but they are limited to the programs that are medium range and do not apply to the bridging programs that are of longer duration such as those offered at various universities or those that include the mentoring or placement component. Generalization from such finding therefore cannot be based on
the study of just one stream of programs, hence the necessity for the need of more studies. Another shortcoming of the research was that Bidhendi relied heavily on the survey method for data collection. Such a method fails to capture the lived experiences of immigrant professional that have gone through the employment facilitation program. More research therefore would help narrow the gaps left from this research.

A study conducted by Duncan and Poisson (2008) and commissioned by Public Policy Forum analyzes the functions and gaps in bridging programs throughout Canada. The research investigates the function of bridging programs in Canada and how they might be improved. An important finding of this research is the essentiality of involving the stake holders from the design to implementation phase, having accurate assessment of participants and offering sustainable funding that will keep the program functioning (Duncan & Poisson, 2008). The report identifies that operational differences and diversity in the programs makes it harder to share “best practices” and that the programs differ by region: In large cities and urban centers there is a focus on occupation-specific bridging programs, in areas with lower population rates, there is a focus on “internship-style and job-skills programming” (Duncan & Poisson, 2008, p.32). The report suggests that the “bridging programs are still in their infancy; however better coordination is needed among provinces and with federal government, and policy changes should be considered with respect to funding and student aid” (Duncan & Poisson, 2008, p.34). It further identifies the importance of input from six different areas in designing and implementing the bridging programs. These areas include employers, regulatory bodies, governments, educational institutes, local communities and design considerations. Although this report identifies some key issues, it misses out an important and essential stakeholder in the whole process, the perspective of the IEP.
Schalm and Guan (2009) documented all the bridging programs offered by Universities in Ontario and described the different modules and services. Their study was limited only to service providers. They reviewed information posted on the websites and identified eight universities in Ontario that offer bridging programs in fourteen professional areas for IEPs. They also recorded a program for employer education and another one for pan-professional development for professional communication. The compilation of the bridging programs was done in three categories; by universities, by discipline and by partnerships and has been a good resource. This paper was an effort to compile a basic inventory of programs that support internationally trained professionals. The research mentioned above give us good insight but it is limited in analysis. It compiles information on programs that are university based and overlooks the many programs that are provided by other service providers such as colleges and community-based agencies. It misses out the key issue, the perspective of IEPs, those it is meant to benefit most, the internationally educated immigrant and their integration into the labour market.

A study by Lum, Bradley and Rasheed (2011) assessed the learning styles and readiness of IEPs in the nursing, pharmacy and teacher programs. These three regulated professions are among the largest and were selected because they have similar regulatory procedures for candidates seeking licensure. A total of 138 participants completed responded to a survey. Using the Kolb Learning Style model, they found IEP’s to be self-directed learners who were able to view situations from different perspectives. With a high number of IEPs, the researchers identified the challenges posed by students and teachers. “The research results confirm the importance of designing flexible student-centered learning in bridging education courses
and programs based on democratic student centered adult education principles” (p. 164). There were limitations to the study as identified by the researchers themselves. Generalization of the results was not possible due to the sample size and the nature of the study. The study focused on the three professions out of the over 40 professions other programs cover. Also, it was more focused on the preferred learning styles and not the outcomes of the programs. The delivery of the programs was conducted by institutes of higher learning whereas bridging programs are being provided by many establishments such as community based agencies, a component that was not addressed by the research. The intent of my research takes into consideration the learnings from the studies above and it brings out the more in-depth and rich experiences of the IEPs that has so far been missing.

More recent research around bridging programs, revolves around individual programs. Switzer-McIntyre et al. (2015) conducting an ongoing program evaluation of the physiotherapy program focused on curriculum design. There were 178 physiotherapist, who had applied for the Ontario Internationally Educated Physiotherapy Bridging (OIEPB) program with only 78 accepted and 39 of those who had completed the program had acquired licensure to practice in their profession. The study closely observed the 10 month, full time program that included two-four week clinical internships and identified that the evidence based OIEPB program curriculum achieved better results with almost half of the participants were licensed to practice in their profession. It was one thing to get licensed but another to get employed and it was not clear from the research if these participants had found employment in their profession. The study was however limited and concentrated on one program with curriculum as its main focus.
6.8 Conclusion

This chapter provides a snapshot of the various types of bridging programs that exist as well as the research that has been conducted on them so far. Bridging programs by their definition are supposed to act as a conduit to get the IEPs from their current situation of not being able to work in their profession of training to being employed and productive as professionals. They are supposed to help overcome the challenges IEPs experience some of which have been mentioned in Chapter 5. Their creation however is based on a premise of deficiency on the part of IEPs. With a heavy influence of commodification, inconsistencies and funding structure that relies heavily on administration and quantifiable outcomes, the bridging programs have their shortcomings that impact their delivery and eventually the intended outcomes. Most of the bridging programs are geared towards providing more training to the already qualified individuals. When immigrants come to Canada they come from all parts of the world having acquired their education and skills from multitude of universities, colleges and institutes. There is enormous experience and diversity in the skills and education they bring. The development of bridging programs is a reaction to the high level of anxiety and perceptions of insecurity on one hand and a response to display some action by the government to the significant underemployment and underutilization of immigrant skills on the other. The programs that currently exist are broad in their focus and inconsistent in their content.

One of the most critical concerns identified in this chapter is the funding model for the programs that is based on the neoliberal principles. It leaves the institutions that deliver the programs in a limbo unable to make any long-term planning as a result of the inconsistent and periodic funding that is available to them. The situation of the
participants is even worse with some programs eligible to get some grants while others do not. Furthermore, the funds are limited to tuition leaving the IEPs vulnerable and hard-pressed when making a livelihood and providing food to the table. Such a funding model relies heavily on immigrant characteristics as key determinants of their own success (Li, 2003), taking the attention away from the systemic issues that exist within the system.
Chapter 7
Addressing the Challenges of Economic Integration

7.1 Introduction
One of the biggest challenges faced by IEPs as outlined in Chapter 5, was their integration into the economic system with sub-reasons associated with it. Factors such as recognition of credentials, lack of Canadian experience, unfamiliar profession related culture, lack of networking and discrimination among others played a significant role in curtailing their labour market adjustment. With a wide range of challenges, findings from the service providers and IEPs shed light on the effectiveness of bridging programs highlighting that although some IEPs benefited from them, the overall model had serious flaws and not functioning as it was intended to be. According to the IEPs, the outcomes varied with unreliable results. In this chapter, I focus on some of the benefits such as getting accredited, obtaining work experience, expanding networks, guidance in employment preparation and having references. I however argue that these were narrowly focused and inconsistent to address the challenges IEPs faced. The results varied based on the program, the institution IEPs attended and even the deliverers of the program. While some IEPs found bridging programs to have helped overcome some challenges, a majority of them were of the opinion that it did not fulfill their expectation of getting employed in their profession.

7.2 Recognition of Credentials
One of the first undertaking for an IEP who comes to Canada with their education credentials and work experience is to get their certificates and degrees evaluated and accredited in their effort to integrate into the labour market in Canada. It is an important
step in their settlement, as many IEPs who do not get their academic credentials recognized take up jobs for which they are overqualified (Ewoudou, 2011). Some bridging programs aim specifically to help credential accreditation requirements as noted by Sarah, an administrator at a university:

*Bridging programs, at least ours, is very narrowly focused on meeting PEO's requirements for licensing* (SP. Sarah).

As Sarah mentions, various components are required and need to be fulfilled to be employed as a professional person. She acknowledges that as a service provider their program is “narrowly focused,” which can be interpreted as being focused only on one aspect, that of credentialization. She however qualifies it by stating “at least ours,” to distance her programs from others, an indication that the programs are different from each other. An earlier finding as identified in *Chapter 6* acknowledged that bridging programs that are focused on a single profession are successful, however there are various components to get licensed to practice in a profession. Sarah’s statement also sheds light on the focus of their program, of meeting the Professional Engineer of Ontario’s (PEO) requirement to qualify to practice engineering. Each profession has its own authority or at times authorities and the requirements for the applicants to fulfill. Although the determination of professional qualification and licensing is done by the professional or regulatory body, the assessment of foreign qualifications for academic purposes is done by educational institutes (Guo, 2009). In Ontario, World Education Services (WES) is one of the five agencies in Canada that form the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) to help with assessments and disseminate information on international education. For those who fall under the regulated professions, they have to pass some tests or exams (or more) and be called
upon to demonstrate their knowledge and skills including that of an official language (CAETO, 2004). For those that fall under unregulated professions, it is the employer who plays a bigger role in accepting their credentials (CAETO, 2004). Mary, another service provider with a community based agency acknowledges getting recognition of credentials as a big hurdle:

one of the major hurdles is recognition of their credentials, licensing and certification and the complexity and the multiple hoops they have to go through and how to navigate those hoops (SP. Mary).

It is not just the difficulty of getting accredited as Mary states, but it has to do with the complexity of it, and the multiple hurdles that IEPs have to go through to get their credentials recognized. Her statement ascertains the complexities of getting credentials recognized. She describes it as going through “hoops” akin more to the circus terminology of making one go through the rings for the sake of it, especially when they are new to a country trying to settle down. There are however concerns about accreditation that are salient and subtle that individual bridging program may not be able to address. Shibao Guo (2009) explains that the difficulties with accreditation is as a result of the prevailing attitudes towards difference. Drawing from critical theory and postmodernism, he argues that issues around the assessment and recognition of credentials is a political act (Guo, 2009). I agree with his assessment that knowledge is power and is socially constructed, culturally mediated, and historically situated. The control of accepting or not accepting ones credentials lies in the hands of the accrediting bodies or the employers as the case may be. They act as gatekeepers to legitimize the knowledge of the IEPs and the qualifications they bring which Guo (2009) argues has been racialized and materialized along ethnic and national lines in Canada. Under the neoliberal strategy, knowledge is controlled and so for the IEPs their
international knowledge is constrained and marginalized through various levels of gatekeeping. The requirements of accreditation, various tests or exams, authorizations by professional organizations before one can practice in their profession are examples of such containments and controls. Jane another service provider also highlighted accreditation as an issue and had this to say:

_I know for the engineers they had to get their P-Eng. So, the credentials became a huge issues for a lot of designated occupations_ (SP. Jane).

As Jane highlights, getting credentials accredited is a big challenge and is not limited to engineers but other regulated professions as well. As service providers Mary and Jane acknowledge that although immigrant professionals usually have an educational advantage compared to other newcomers, they do face challenges related to credential recognition. A study by OFC (2013) found that 33% of internationally trained doctors and 35% of internationally trained engineers were not working in the profession of their training. This issue was not related to one profession but also affected others. In a country like Canada where the _Canadian Charter_ with its principles of justice, equality and fairness reign supreme, occurrences of discrimination and Canadian experience requirements continue to be experienced by the IEPs. Jane identifies credential recognition as a big issue and identifies the level of technical skills the IEPs possess:

_One of the things we did for the engineers is provide them with the soft skills because they already got the technical skills. They've already passed the first level with the credential body, however, they don't have the connections to get that one year practicum they need in order to be licensed in Canada_ (SP. Jane).

There are various levels one has to go through in order to get accredited as described by Jane. It can get complicated and can involve many steps. She acknowledges that IEPs have technical skills but need the one year practical experience required to practice in their profession. It can be interpreted from the statement that the IEPs...
possess good technical skills, they however do not have the “Canadian” experience requirement to be licensed. These regulation and certification requirements for engineers set out by the professional bodies in Canada in the 1920’s was the result of an economic, social and political struggle for Canadian engineers and to get recognition. The current licensure practices work to preserve the social status and economic privilege of Canadian engineers (Shan, 2009). If the IEPs have the right technical skills in a technical profession such as engineering as recognized by Jane, how can one interpret not being able to practice in their occupation other than to maintain privilege and control? The focus of bridging program run by Jane is not on technical skills but to provide soft skills to their students. Soft skills such as critical thinking, interpersonal skills, empathy, and people skills are important components required when seeking employment in Canada. The supports Jane’s organization provide range from soft skills, social capital and try to help in getting the work experience that is required to be licensed, which is elusive and difficult to accomplish as indicated later in Section 7.4 by participants in this thesis.

With a quagmire of issues confronting them, some IEPs reflected the sentiments of service providers and acknowledged their frustration in getting accredited and closer to the labour market. Taj describing his experience stated that;

_I thought uh...it may not work. That I will not be able to enter (and work) in my professional area...because...there is a lot of requirements (for credentials)... you know they need Canadian experience_ (Taj).

Taj feels disappointed and demoralized that he would not be able to work in his profession any more. Hope is an important aspect for a newcomer in their settlement in Canada. A loss in hope can be devastating for the IEPs and their labour market integration. From the tone of his voice in relating his experience, Taj conveys a sense of
being subjugated with little he could do to overcome his predicament. He refers to the many requirements to get accredited and is more conscious in being politically correct by using more subtle words to describe the challenges as a “a lot” unlike Mary, the service provider who was more blunt in using the term “hoops” to describe the requirements. It is striking how both of them describe the same experience differently. The IEP who is new to the country and is looking for work is polite in their assessment, the service provider who is employed is more direct. Both however, refer to the complicated and multi-level requirements of getting their qualifications recognized which becomes problematic and time consuming. The longer it takes them to get accredited, the more distanced they get from their profession. The question about the various requirements to get accredited especially for those who are qualified and have wealth of experience under their belt is a valid one. Jasmine echoed similar sentiments concerning the requirements;

*You have to submit thousands of documents proving your education, your training, your skills to work, experience* (Jasmine).

Jasmine repeat’s the frustration and complexity of getting their qualifications recognized and accepted. She also points to the bureaucracy that is involved with the requirement to submit “thousands of documents”. It is common knowledge that the more complicated the process, fewer are the applicants because it is difficult for some to apply. Having these professionals go through “hoops” could be seen as one way of controlling the number of those who apply for accreditation.

Another issue with documentation is that immigrants to Canada come from all over the world and as a result Canadian employers, professional organizations, community agencies and education and training institutions often have to evaluate qualifications
they are not familiar with. Due to a wide range of qualifications and the lack of appropriate information, the qualifications are often misunderstood and undervalued leading to underutilization of their skills (Grant & Nadin, 2005). Over the years various procedures have been developed by the accrediting bodies to assess foreign credentials and qualifications. While there has been some progress made, there are however many IEPs who continue to face hindrance and barriers or being discouraged from pursuing to practice in their profession.

As issues around foreign credential recognition are many, they can be summed up to poor information on the accreditation process, lack of a responsible coordinated approach for the evaluation of foreign credentials and lack of agreed-upon national standards (Guo, 2009). There is no one set of standards, hence the inconsistencies in the information that could be available. Getting the right information to get their credentials recognized is a challenge. Rose an IEP highlights this along with the inconsistency of the information that was received:

> there is lack of information because if you go to one place you are told one thing and if you go to another you are told another and even if you go to one university they have one set of procedures and another will tell you another, there is no streamlined process (Rose).

For internationally trained professionals, getting the right information at the right time is important and the information that is available should not involve navigating a complex system with multiple players. Rose highlights that not only do these institutions not communicate with each other, they have their own procedures with competing interests. The IEPs as Rose describes, feel confused and neglected, not knowing what or who to follow. She points to a system that lacks coordination, consistency and continuity. It leads IEPs to loss of important time and frustration. These issues mentioned above are
systemic and to resolve them would require a response beyond a course through the bridging programs. If these issues of accreditation are to be addressed, the response will have to be one that requires a coordinated effort from all levels of government, professional organizations, educational institutions and immigrant professionals.

7.3 Resume and Interview Guidance

Although resume and interview guidance was not captured in Chapter 5 as one of the major challenges IEPs face in their integration into the labour market, it was one of the items that both the service providers as well as the IEPs found it to be beneficial as a result of the bridging programs. It is understood that in today’s labour market, jobs are scarce and competition is tight, with hundreds of resumes submitted for any job opening. The resume therefore is a tool that is utilized to provide relevant information about the applicant. In a fast paced environment, there is usually only a few moments to attract the attention of the employer. A well prepared or professionally created resume can make a difference in getting that important personal interview. Agha, a human resources professional identified how he was guided to change his resume when he first came to Canada:

*In the initial state, I used to write exactly what I had done. Generally we write all our achievements but okay we learn here that you write a resume which is only fit for that job* (Agha).

Agha acknowledges the difference in systems in Canada and his country of origin when applying for a job. He describes how he learnt to customize and tailor the resume according to the job requirements. He realized that he had to curtail his achievements and it was important to summarize his achievements. An exemplary resume that is crafted for a particular position can stand out and give the aspirant a chance for an interview and an opportunity to discuss their skills and experience. One should feel
proud to display the achievement but Agha had to down play his qualifications to get a job. He however appreciated the help he received in crafting his resume. Mumtaz also reflected on such help in crafting her resume and elaborated the importance of support in the preparation to apply for employment identifying that:

*resume needed work, cover letters needed work, networking, how to network, how to talk about yourself, all of that needed some work. We constantly were given “no” for an answer, which took a little bit getting used to (Mumtaz).*

A few different things can be interpreted from Mumtaz’s statement. She acknowledges that her resume needed to be updated and like Agha, got to know the difference in how employment is sought here in Canada as compared to where she came from.

Promoting self is one thing that new immigrants may not be familiar with, which is seen as an important aspect of succeeding in Canada. She stresses the importance of learning how to network as an important benefit from the program. While networking will be discussed in *Chapter 9*, Mumtaz highlights the constant negative responses she received from sending out her resumes which took her some time to get used to.

Receiving a negative response repeatedly is a difficult preposition to overcome and can impact a person’s confidence and self-esteem in a significant way. Mumtaz was one of the few participants employed in her profession as a social worker at the time of the interview. She reflected on her experience and recognized the importance of building a thick skin in terms of receiving “no” as the answer when sending out resumes. The bridging programs may focus on some soft skills, but these are issues that may require supports beyond the confines of a classroom. The resume and cover letter support was appreciated by Mumtaz echoed by Dilip:

*the bridging program had a very strong employment services and they definitely trained me in developing resumes and facing interviews (Dilip).*
As Dilip recounts, help in preparing for interviews was beneficial. For any IEP, a resume is possibly the only chance for them to capture the employer’s attention. Having a good professionally done resume could be the first step leading to an interview and a gateway to employment. The bridging program guided him to be more presentable and confident at the interview. The program Dilip attended had a strong emphasis on employment supports, however not all programs have a similar focus nor do they have the resume and interview component as part of it. The help and supports that are available in preparing a resume, cover letter or for interviews is not available through all bridging programs, nor is it consistent. Sarah acknowledges the differences in the programs and highlights that:

*Each one is designed and administered differently because the needs are different. Needs of lawyers is different, the needs of physiotherapy is different, health care is different, engineering is different, the market is different, the employers needs is different, learner’s needs are different. So some are more focused on placement, some are more focused on licensing. I don’t think once again that one size fits all (SP. Sarah).*

As a service provider Sarah charts out the various differences in the bridging programs, she relates that the programs are designed differently for the many professions and vary within the same profession. The way the programs are administered is also not the same. While Sarah may be able to reason why there are differences in the programs, I would like to argue that the professions may be different but there is one commonality that exists. For the IEPs, it is to be able to practice in their profession. If the bridging program is not meeting that goal, they are in a way failing the IEPs in the quest to be employed in their profession. The only consistency is the inconsistent focus of the programs. For some programs such as those provided by community-based agencies, employment is an important feature of their programs while for other programs offered by the universities the focus is mainly on the technical components. For instance, the
professional practice examination preparation course does not cover the resume or interview skills component and programs like laboratory technologist focus on the technical aspects of it.

Another important point to be made is that the help and guidance in preparing a resume and interview is also available through other community based organizations and City services. Toronto Employment and Social Services along with Employment Ontario agencies conduct regular workshops and provide resume guidance and interview practice at no cost to the participant. One therefore questions if these services are available at no cost through other programs, why should there be a cost attached for the same services through the bridging programs. It is also reflective of the duplication and inconsistencies that exist in the delivery of the bridging programs.

7.4 Support for Canadian Experience

Another important challenge IEPs continue to face, is that of being asked to provide Canadian work experience (OHRC, 2013). Until recently it was very common to observe job postings that emphasized the requirement of “Canadian experience” as an essential feature for job applications. There are two components to this issue. The first requires one to have Canadian experience to qualify for the job while the other requires it for accreditation purposes. Under many professions, having Canadian experience is paramount to get accreditation and be able to practice in Canada. Not all bridging programs provide exposure to work experience. There were some however that had a focus to provide the much needed Canadian experience. Jasmine recounted the help she got in getting much needed Canadian experience:

*I actually got a placement in a social service agency as a counsellor, so it got me this experience and knowing what it means to be a counsellor and it gave me the*
confidence. I was like, I can do it you know this is not much different from what I did back home (Jasmine).

Jasmine’s statements are profound in that they give us insight into her perception and the confidence level she carries with her. Getting a placement was an achievement for Jasmine which helped her understand the job here in Canada. It gave her the assurance in knowing that she had the ability to do the job. She also felt confident that the job here in Canada was no different than in her country of origin. Interpreting Jasmine’s situation, her statement, “the work being not much different”, affirms that it may not be much different in the practice of her profession from where she came from with an emphasis that there was not much learning that was required. It confirmed to her that her original learning was similar to what she learnt in the bridging programs.

However what was beneficial for her was the placement she obtained through the bridging program. Asha recognized the importance of Canadian work experience from the time she arrived here but was informed that she will have to start from scratch:

I have met people from the sector stating that you have to start from scratch again. You don’t have a Canadian experience although now I have heard that nobody is supposed to ask that whether if you have a Canadian experience or not. Its standard papers but I think that is what is being looked at. I started volunteering right from the third week I landed (Asha).

Although Asha recognized the importance of ‘Canadian experience’ and started to look for a volunteer position as soon as she came to Canada, she was misinformed at the beginning that she will have to start from ‘scratch’. Being told that one will have to start all over again is not unusual. There is a perception by some that when an IEP comes to Canada, their education is nullified and they will have to redo their education. Asha was similarly led to believe that due to lack of Canadian experience, she would have to start
from ‘scratch’, only to realize later, that it was not a requirement. Asha, through her own efforts started with a volunteer placement as soon as she came to Canada. Volunteer work can help in acquiring the necessary experience and be a stepping stone to getting employed. Getting volunteer work is a process that is similar to getting employed and may not be as readily available. Not all bridging programs have the work placement component as part of their curriculum although the demand for ‘Canadian work experience’ plays an important factor in getting employment. In her research on the impact of lack of ‘Canadian experience’ on immigrant women, Sethi (2014) identified that it was the most significant factor in their deskilling with other factors such as being disempowered, loss of identity and mental and physical health issues playing a significant role. This requirement is not limited to individual employers demanding it, but a systemic issue where the licensing bodies have made it a requisite as part of the process to get licensed to practice in their profession. It needs to be understood that the ‘new’ immigrant is new to the country, has not had the opportunity to work, may be geographically scattered with few if any networks in place. Yet, Canadian employers demand Canadian skills and Canadian experience from these newly arrived prospective employees.

“The requirement of ‘Canadian experience’ is most convenient and covert method, ostensibly productivity relevant, which Canadian employers use to discriminate against (or to politely refuse the job to) skilled immigrants, particularly those from the Third World countries, without violating the provisions of the Human Rights code” (Sen, 1978. p. 20). The Ontario Human Rights Commission has denounced the requirement of ‘Canadian experience’ as discriminatory (OHRC, 2013). Although this change is fairly recent, it is an issue that goes beyond just the individual employers. It implicates a
system where some accrediting and professional bodies have made ‘Canadian experience’ an important prerequisite before the applicants are granted permission to practice in their profession. For engineers who want to work in Ontario, Canadian work experience is extremely important. IEPs requiring engineering licensure need to have four-year work experience, with one year under the supervision of a licensed Canadian engineer (Shan, 2009). In 2012, fifteen of the thirty eight regulated professions had some form of Canadian-experience as a requirement (OFC, 2013. p. 16). Clearly, requirements vary among professions. It is an issue that goes beyond the need of an employer. It implicates the system where professional bodies are complicit to it as well. Since Ontario Human Rights requirement is a fairly new development, it remains to be seen how fast these bodies join the bandwagon and eliminate the discriminatory ‘Canadian experience’ requirements.

7.5 Reference Support

When looking for employment in Canada, it is a common requirement for references to be made available at the time of the interview. The names of references are submitted by the candidates and are usually of those who have worked with them in the past. For many IEPs, this poses a challenge as they are new to Canada and may not have anyone who could act as their reference. Having submitted the resume and gone through the interview but not having appropriate references could hinder their prospects of getting employed. Service provider Paul, who was an instructor of bridging programs both at the university as well as at a college, acknowledged that not having a reference could hinder the prospects of the IEPs in getting employment and made himself available to his students to be their reference if required. This is how he explained it:
so on the first day of class, I'll mention and say that you can use me as your reference and at any point of time if you need any reference, if you need anybody else, you are running short, use me and if you cannot find anybody else talk to me and I'll find you somebody in the department (SP. Paul).

When a person is so close to employment and loses the opportunity for not having a reference because they are new to Canada can be disappointing and demoralizing. Paul recognized the importance of having a reference and offered to be one, out of his own goodwill. It was not a requirement of the program, but as an instructor, he identified a gap in the program and took it upon himself to address it. Sarah was another service provider who said she would offer to provide references for her students:

(I tell them) there is no reason why I can’t support you in your job search, I can refer you, I can work with you, I can be your referee if the employer needs a referee (SP. Sarah).

Paul and Sarah both describe how they help students by making themselves available as referees. For new immigrants, this fills an important gap and increases the students’ social capital in the form of knowing someone who will provide some concrete support. Sarah and Paul got to know their students and went out of their way to support the IEPs in fulfilling an important requirement to get employment. When looking for work in Canada, references play a role that can turn an employment opportunity from prospective to confirmed employment for IEPs. But service providers like Paul and Sarah are few who could identify the challenge IEPs experienced and offered to address it through their own initiative. Both were passionately involved in the programs as they were immigrants themselves who understood the challenges and pain IEPs go through. This was not a requirement of the bridging program nor the intent, yet it turns out to be an unintended benefit for some who were in Sarah and Paul’s classes.
7.6 Profession Related Culture and Language

Language and culture can play an important role in understanding the work environment and help IEPs in their effort to settle in Canada. The importance of knowing the local culture is important wherever one goes. Norms that are commonly accepted in a culture or society may not be as readily acceptable or even considered to be disliked in a different one. For instance a simple handshake and how it is presented could be perceived differently by various cultures. While Canada gets immigrants from all over the world, not all Canadians are familiar with their different cultures, hence the perception of being different. As a result, IEPs could be disadvantaged by being see as different or as ‘other’ which can impact in getting employment. If cultural differences are understood, the ‘other’ will not be as distanced and the fear of the unknown could be minimized. Abdul describes a situation where in his culture they greet people with a handshake and two kisses, while here in Canada it could be seen as inappropriate. He describes how he learnt from the bridging program the differences in cultures and what is acceptable here in Canada:

*Where I’m coming from for example, we greet each other with handshake and two kisses and that applies for men or women. If I do the same here it would be taken in a totally different way… so it’s simply avoiding small stuff that are not really taken well here* (Abdul).

While cultural practices in general can be different, every workplace has its own intricacies. Abdul describes an example of difference in the cultures and finds them to be small but are taken seriously in Canada which he got to learn through the bridging programs. From what Abdul explains, it can be interpreted that differences in culture are not really accepted here. Although Canada has a recognized multicultural policy, what is usually accepted is the mainstream culture, while other cultural norms are seen as foreign and only acceptable under limited circumstances. Ameeriar in her study on
South Asian women titled “The Sanitized Sensorium” found two contradictory avenues of multicultural practice. There was one that celebrated “difference” such as cultural food and festival, while the other discriminated against “difference” such as for employment (Ameeriar, 2012). While “Indian” delicacies such as samosas and butter chicken may be popular and in demand, “Indian accent” may act as a deterrent for employment. These experiences expose the discrimination and dual standards immigrants experience on a regular basis. Being new to the country with few networks and a challenge to feed their families, there is not much they can do except to accept them to be the norm and adapt and learn the cultural practice at hand in order to succeed. Issues that revolve around soft skills have become broad and profound that even discriminatory practices are seen as normal. Jane, talks about the importance of addressing the cultural barrier:

*there is a lot of cultural barriers internationally professionals encounter in their work place, and I have actually observed a few of those barriers and we as an organization try to walk the talk and hire a lot of internationally trained professionals, so I do have first-hand observation of some of those challenges.* (SP Jane).

As a service provider, Jane mentions cultural barriers are important hurdles faced by IEPs. There is no denying that soft skills are an important component for the success of an individual. There is however a difference in how communication or occupation specific skills should be viewed as compared to issues that revolve around cultural practice. According to Petri, the most significant factor for integrating into the economic system was the ability of immigrants to adapt to the Canadian way of thinking and behavior (Petri, 2009). While observing a classroom on settlement in Canada, Ameeriar observed the focus to be on visible and cultural aspects. “Each participant had been subjected to intimate instructions: “make sure your clothes are clean, don’t wear the
shalwar kameez, and don’t wear headscarves. It was a barrage of regulatory proscriptions aimed at the immigrant body” (Ameeriar, 2012. p. 509). The focus on cultural issues reinforces the discriminatory behaviors that exist in the market place and places the training to be reinforcing those practices instead of challenging them. These institutions become tools in the effort to “Canadianizing” newcomers and perpetuating ‘difference’ to be distanced. Rose highlighted the issue of “Canadianizing” immigrants. According to her,

*It is the Canadian way or no way and it is a way of keeping a certain social status, of trying to keep it Canadian, and I do not know what Canadian is* (Rose).

There is no flexibility that is exhibited according to Rose. One has to conform or lose out. She talks about being Canadian but is not sure what it is. Take for instance, the culture in a Toyota assembly plant in Ontario which may be very different from a Ford assembly plant in the same province and both their cultures could be considered Canadian. What is being Canadian is a critical question that is difficult to define, and out of the scope of this thesis. I however argue that these are reasons utilized to veil the discriminatory facets of the labour market.

Many IEPs possess wealth of international experience and are able to speak multiple languages like the participants in this thesis. While some spoke more than four languages all of them spoke at least two and having worked under international settings were familiar with different cultures. Such expansive understandings that could potentially be beneficial to open new markets for businesses, carries little or no weight. Sometimes an accent that is different may also compound the ability to be gainfully employed (Hathiyani, 2006). Fluency in language or lack of understanding of the Canadian ‘jargon’ could pose an impediment in getting integrated into the labour market
as has been mentioned in Chapter 5. Amir explains how the bridging program helped him to be a little more aware of what he describes as Canadian culture:

*I got much benefit from this because I have understood the culture, the Canadian culture, the acceptable attitudes and the non-acceptable attitudes, the psychology of the people, the way they are thinking, the way they are talking which was very interesting. From this point of view, its little helpful* (Amir).

For Amir who migrated from Africa, Canadian culture was direct and to the point. He explains that he learnt that the bridging programs can expose the IEPs to the environment, attitudes and the psychology of people at the workplace, but these are issues that cannot be generalized. He stated he also learnt to identify explicit and implicit norms of a workplace. The bridging programs may help to address the cultural and language issues to some extent, however it is more complicated than what may appear. The question that arises is that, is this teaching of the dominant culture an effort of “Canadianizing” them. Workplace culture is not homogeneous and may differ within professions and organizations. It is only through working at a particular location that a person can be integrated into the culture of that workplace.

There is no doubt that soft skills are an important component in Canada’s labour market, but David shares his experience and finds them to be given more importance than they should:

*Your soft skills are given more importance. This is what I feel. Over the period of time I’ve seen that your soft skills are more emphasized here than your other skills* (David).

According to David, his experience shows that there is a lot of importance given to soft skills. It was not a one-time instance but his experience over time that has led him to form this opinion. It also infers that the importance given to the soft skills may not be that necessary and have been overemphasized. He mentions that as a result of the focus on soft skills, other skills such as the technical skills IEPs possess, may go
unnoticed. This raises issues as to the skills the employers should be placing emphasis on and how they should be measured. Technical skills may be able to be measured by testing technical knowledge but the emphasis on soft sills can remain subjective and difficult to measure. Another point of importance in this regard was brought by Amir, who acknowledged that he learnt some soft skills in class, but that they were not helpful as they could only be applied after and not before a job was obtained. This is what he had to say:

*it (the bridging program) will help me when I get a job, it will be helpful what I learned there, but it didn’t help me to get a job, But when I face a problem, I know how to deal with it* (Amir).

Amir stressed that these “*will help when I get a job*”. He describes what he learnt from the bridging program was not helpful at the time. The intent of the program as identified in Section 6.2 was to help IEPs be able to practice in their profession quickly. What they learnt as explained by Amir were things that could be helpful to them on the job and not before. Accordingly, the bridging programs consist of components that benefit the IEPs, but they cover issues that could be of value when one is working in their profession. For Amir and others the task of getting employment in their profession had remained an elusive preposition at the time of the interview.

### 7.7 Fulfillment of Employment Expectations

Most participants of this thesis expected that they would be able to get employed in their field of training after the completion of their program. The anticipation of getting a job was high regardless of their profession or their program. They anticipated to be employed by the end of the program. Asha was forthright in stating that the only reason
she took the bridging program was to get employed in her profession. She described it as follows:

*Purely it was all about getting a job. As soon as I do this and finish this, I will be in the job market. That was my only expectation, because that was why I was here for and I got the sense from the community and the people I met that this was the answer to it, you cannot do it by yourself* (Asha).

Asha identifies the only reason for taking the bridging program was to be employed in her profession. Like Asha, most participants identified the reason for taking the bridging programs was to be integrated into their profession of training when they came to Canada. To be employed in their profession and be able to utilize their skills was their main expectation. She also recognizes that it was not going to be an individual effort that could lead her to be successful. There were supports that would be required to get back into their profession. Salma also had the expectation of getting a job after completing the bridging program. While most participants did not have their expectations met as discussed in the next section, she was one of those who benefitted from the program she attended. This is what she stated:

*It met my expectation to a certain level. I got placement in community mental health field and after that I got a job in a shelter in a group home* (Salma).

The bridging program helped Salma get a placement which later led to finding employment in her profession. There were some participants who were working in their profession at the time of the interview. They attributed their success to the bridging program. Out of the participants who were employed in their profession, two were from the social service sector, one was an engineer, a health professional and a human resources specialist. A common feature regarding the bridging program for those who were employed in their profession was that it had some component of work placement or internship. It gave them the opportunity to be connected to their profession, not just in
a theoretical sense but in a practical way. They found it to be the most important factor to have helped them in getting employment. Mumtaz identified a placement she got as having helped her get employment. She also included employment supports as having been helpful and had the following to say:

*I got to do the two internship with two hospitals. Through the process of mock interviews I was able to translate my experiences from (back home) and speak in such a way that people would be able to identify the transferable skills, identify the skills set and that led to my first job and my second job* (Mumtaz).

From what Mumtaz and Salma have mentioned, placement played an important role in getting employed in their profession. They were able to get experience and a ‘foot into the door’ in their profession. By getting the opportunity to work, some challenges related to integration as identified in Chapter 5 do not seem to have impacted Mumtaz and Salma. By working in the profession, whether it was through a placement or internship seemed to have helped overcome issues of ‘Canadian experience,’ knowing the work culture or networking. These are among the many barriers IEPs experience which can only be addressed by actively working in the profession. An important observation to be made here is that some challenges identified in Chapter 5 can be overcome through a placement or internship. As mentioned elsewhere, IEPs who come to Canada are educated and experienced, having worked in international settings outside the country. They have been successful professionals elsewhere and need little guidance and help to prosper in their profession. If appropriate supports are available to the IEPs, we could see better outcomes for them and their integration into the labour market.

Most of those who were not employed in their profession completed the bridging programs that did not have a placement component. The programs they completed focused mainly on technical and theoretical aspects of the profession. There were
others however, who had completed a program with placement as part of the curriculum but had not found employment in their profession. There were some IEPs who got employed out of their own effort with no help or support from the bridging programs. This leads us to believe that the bridging programs whether they had a placement component or not may have helped a few IEPs in getting employment, but most were not as successful, highlighting their inconsistent nature and unreliable results. An important point to be made is that those who got employed at a place other than their own profession were in precarious type of jobs normally meant for survival purpose. Precarious employment affects immigrants and racialized minorities the most, and extends widely to professions related to the knowledge economy, education, health care and public sector (Lewchuk and Lafleche, 2014). The employers under such circumstances not only get highly qualified employees, but they do so at low labour costs and fewer benefits to pay for. Precarious employment keeps the labour force unstable and fragmented, leaving the employer with more power and profits, an accomplishment and reinforcement of neoliberalism which I continue to focus in this thesis.

7.8 (Un) Fulfillment of the Economic Integration

Immigrants come to Canada with high expectations. They uproot themselves to start a new life in their newly adopted country. They bring their life long savings with them. They expect the bridging programs will help them integratet and so they have high hopes. The expectation that they would be able to be employed in their profession after completing the program was the main reason IEPs gravitated towards it. It was their hope that the program would help them come to their “rescue” to obtain that eluding job
in their profession. David also took the bridging program with an understanding that he would be able to get a job in his field of training;

I expected this to be a stepping stone for me to success. I thought that if I take this bridging program, it will bridge the gap between me and the employers here in Canada. (David).

David had high expectations of getting employed in their profession after completing the bridging program. He emphasizes the main reason for enrolling in the program was to get a job and be successful. He realizes that there was a gap between him and the employers of his profession which the bridging program would be able to reduce and open the doors to employment. I would like to use his thought of a bridge and the metaphor of a conduit and a passage. When the IEPs come to Canada there is a divide between them and those who are educated here. Each with their own strengths and challenges. Most participants described themselves as successful professionals and holding high positions before they came to Canada. The expectation was that they would be able to practice their profession after they came to Canada. David expected the ‘bridge training’ to help him get into his profession but as he reveals it turned into disappointment. David further reflected on the raised expectations declaring that he was encouraged to send resumes but received little or no response;

You send hundreds of resumes but you would be lucky if you get one (positive response). So then you are left to do whatever you have to do to survive. To put, as I told you to put the food on the table. You need to support your family, you need to support your kids, everything. At the end of the day you’re the breadwinner. Most of the people as I saw have to work in a factory (David).

David relates his frustration of sending hundreds of resumes that did not receive any response, not even a negative one. It conveys the effort IEPs have to make in trying to get an interview for employment and how employers view prospective employees. It is an exercise that could lead one to give up and eventually take any job that comes their
way. David identifies his concern for his children and the struggle to bring food to the table. Sending out resumes without any results is not always the best strategy. It appears that the help and guidance in resume writing from the bridging programs was not adequate enough or that the program was showing indifference if a high number of resumes were being sent with no response. This reinforces the shortcoming of the programs where even repeated actions that were not bearing any result for the participants was allowed to prevail. For David who had a temporary survival jobs like many other IEPs, their main concern was to feed their family and for someone who has few options to choose from, getting any job that would bring some income, regardless of their education and skills becomes a fundamental alternative. With least of their intentions it adds them to the labour pool of highly educated individuals ready to take on any job, precarious or not. Dilip had similar aspirations that he would be able to get employed after the bridging program but felt disappointed. He looked forward to getting a job in his profession. He stated that:

*It was the same situation as it was before…I wasn’t getting interview calls after finishing the course. Also my friends were not getting interview calls* (Dilip).

Dilip expected his situation to change and that he would start getting interviews after completion of the course which did not materialize. The reality of Dilip’s situation was that not much had changed after completing the program. Completing the program did not have any positive impact in his search for employment. He had graduated from a program which may not have been known or recognized by employers. His situation had not changed much in terms of getting interviews or getting employed. Dilip augments the issue pertinent to getting interviews stating that it was not only him that was not being successful, his friends who had completed the program with him were in
a similar predicament as well, reinforcing the weak nature of the programs to help participants find employment in their profession. The bridging programs for many IEPs are an avenue of last resort and when they fail to get employed in their profession, they are left with little choice but to take any type of employment. They are left with less hope and little optimism, a situation that leaves them vulnerable and fearful for the safety of themselves and their families.

While most participants were expecting to get employment after completing the program, Behrang was looking for at least an internship position in his profession as an engineer. He went through four bridging programs looking for that internship position which remained elusive for him. Behrang describes his experience as follows;

*At the start of each one of them, my expectation was that before the end of these bridge training programs, I would be able to find an internship through these bridge training programs, to just get into the Canadian industry… I couldn’t find an internship through those programs* (Behrang).

Every time Behrang started a bridging program, it was in the hope of getting into his profession. He expected that it would lead to at least an internship position. Unfortunately for him, getting a placement even as an intern did not materialize. Expectations do not develop out of a vacuum. Behrang was made to believe that he would be able to get at least an internship position. Although he took four bridging programs, none of them was productive for him. After losing much time and being disposed of his savings, Behrang finally got employed as a professional. He found a job through his own efforts with the help of a mentor, an indication that, through right guidance IEPs could become successful, regardless of the bridging programs which were a disappointment for Behrang. Similarly for other participants, the bridge training programs did not meet the expectations of many in getting integrated economically. The
IEPs had little choice but to accept them as necessity to move forward in their settlement and integration into the labour market in Canada.

7.9 Conclusion

The challenges IEPs experience depend on many factors such as their line of work, the profession, accreditation requirements, Canadian work experience, profession related culture and language, guidance in looking for work along with employer attitudes, individual competencies, and systemic barriers as indicated in chapter 6. The primary expectation for IEPs before they took the bridging program was that these programs would get them employed in their profession of training. These programs were supposed to address and help overcome the challenges IEPs face. Most participants revealed that the bridging programs did not help them integrate into their profession of training as many were still unemployed or had taken precarious jobs. As a result of their experience, many IEPs were getting into the queue of landing any job to bring food to the table for their children and families. For the employers, a pool of highly educated persons were available for jobs that required low education and skills. However, there were some participants who stated that the bridging programs helped them get employed. They got work placement through the bridging program and acquired some ‘Canadian experience’ which led to employment, perhaps the most important benefit of the bridging programs. There were a few participants who appreciated the help in their employment search. However, these type of guidance and help could have been available through other programs that are offered under Employment Ontario and by the City of Toronto at no cost to the participant.
Chapter 8
Lack of Marketing, Inconsistencies and Unfulfilled Expectations

8.1 Introduction
Since 2003, the bridging programs have proliferated as an intervention strategy and increasingly been promoted as a solution to address the challenges immigrants face in getting integrated into the labour market. There are different outcomes that emanate from taking the bridging programs, some of which may have positive impacts while others could have negative consequences. In this chapter, I demonstrate using the responses from IEPs that the bridging programs are plagued with poor marketing strategies, positive but inaccurate marketing, inconsistent information and unfulfilled expectations. It is understood that the integration of IEPs into the labour market is a complex issue that has to be grounded on realistic expectations and needs to be extensively marketed to provide positive results. Expectations that are realistic and can be fulfilled have constructive and progressive outcomes while those that go unfulfilled could leave one with grave consequences. They impact IEPs who want to succeed and be integrated into the labour market leaving them underutilized, miserable and demoralized in their newly adopted country of Canada.

8.2 Marketing of the Bridging Programs
When new immigrants arrive in Canada, one of the first things they seek is guidance on what to do next in their settlement process and be integrated into the labour market. Marketing as mentioned in Section 6.3 is an important component of the
bridging programs in the integration of IEPs into the labour market. Making informed choices can make a difference in being successful or not, therefore appropriate and correct information should be made available when new immigrants arrive. Marketing of the bridging programs was one of the issues identified by both the service providers as well as the IEPs. Sarah an administrator of the program stated that, “I think access is a challenge for the participants… and reaching out, the outreach is a challenge for agencies (and) that can make a difference” (SP. Sarah). This statement by Sarah, a service provider acknowledges the challenges IEPs face. Access is of particular concern where the number of seats are poorly matched to the demand; especially for professions that have made bridging programs part of a mandatory step in the licensing process (Augustine, 2014). Not knowing such information, especially if it has been made a core requirement for the profession can create unnecessary hurdles.

Many IEPs lack the appropriate and timely information about the bridging programs and learn the hard way to get to know about them. For some, knowledge about the bridging program did not come through the official channels. It came through unconventional sources such as friends or acquaintances. David explained that when he went to seek guidance from a government funded agency, he was not informed about the bridging programs and related his experience as follows:

*When I came here, there was no sort of any guidance or anything. And some people said you can go to some of these community centers. Like one of them was xyz. So I went to this community center, but there was no sort of right guideline to show you what to do. They would say you must upgrade your resume, they will do your resumes… you send out your resume and sorry to say nothing came out it* (David).

After arriving in Canada, David reached out to a community center for guidance but felt disappointed in the type of service that was offered to him and the referrals he acquired. Had he received the appropriate information at the right time, he would have been able
to make some informed choices and cut down on the time he spent before starting the bridging programs. Some agencies may share information and refer to each other but the one that David approached did not. It can be interpreted that there is competition between agencies and not all agencies work collaboratively leading to inconsistent information. Studies in the past have raised the importance of consistent and reliable information for IEPs to be successful (Reitz, 2011). The issue continues to be identified and raised by the IEPs. The importance and necessity of supports for new immigrants for settlement purposes is recognized at all levels of government with millions of dollars given to agencies to run them. While some immigrants may benefit from these programs, the information that is shared is neither consistent nor is it reliable. For IEPs who come to Canada, it is crucial for them to be given the right guidance and be aware of their options in their settlement process. Lucine a professional person who could have benefitted from being offered a bridging program earlier describes her experience as follows;

*I would say that there is no settlement agencies, people would have their own way of finding out jobs. That would be better than the government having to spend money on them, because the people are not at all qualified to support and they don't understand and they themselves might have to struggle… and say that okay you don’t have Canadian experience you don't have the professional qualifications. They don't create a positive environment for the people who are meeting them which is bad* (Lucine).

Lucine raises the issues of not getting appropriate supports from those that are paid to do so. To provide appropriate supports and guidance for IEPs requires agencies to be knowledgeable about the resources that exist. Guiding newcomers to appropriate programs and what they entail is important. Lucine could have benefitted and saved a lot of time had she been informed of the pros and cons of the bridging programs. Lucine uses strong words regarding those who provide services stating that, it would be better
if there was no such service raising many issues such as those of accountability, measurement of outcomes and if the money was being appropriately spent by the government. She asserts that the staff at the agency were not qualified enough to guide those like her who needed help. The emphasis here is on hiring of staff who are qualified and knowledgeable to guide those who need help. According to her, the staff struggled to meet the demands of IEPs. The issue that arises relates not only with the hiring practices of these staff but also of the attraction of quality personnel based on appropriate remuneration. Knowledge and guidance appropriate to help IEPs succeed should have been an important requirement of those dealing with these professionals. If the first line of service providers are not aware of the bridging programs, how could they promote them?

Many participants of the bridging programs came to know about them through different sources other than the government sponsored service provider. Some IEPs got to know through friends while others through their own research. Promita a social worker with a Master’s degree echoed similar sentiments and highlighted that the bridging programs are not known in the community. There is a lack of marketing as she describes it:

This bridge training programs are not familiar in the community. I felt that many of them don’t know about this program. Every time I have had to explain about this program. The employers are also not aware of it. I think this is a negative thing (Promita).

For any programs to be recognized and easily accessible in the community, they have to be marketed extensively especially to the employers for them to bring meaningful outcomes. If the employers are not aware of the programs, how could they hire and appreciate someone who has completed them. As a graduate of the program, Promita had to explain about these bridging programs and had to act like a marketer to convince
the employer of its value. I argue that although the government has initiated these bridging programs, it is left to the IEPs who have completed them, to convince the employer of its value and importance. In such a situation they have little choice, having spent a lot of money and time to either promote the program or let their education and resources go to waste. The IEPs have been led to take the programs and after completing, they have to promote their importance whether they liked it or not in order for them to succeed. Other participants were enrolled in the program because they did not have a job and wanted to occupy themselves with something. This is what Lucine had to say:

_When you are sitting at home and you don’t have a job, you are looking for a job and you can’t find a job... you then start to doubt yourself and you see there is a program which helps you to upgrade your knowledge_ (Lucine).

Lucine’s reason for enrolling in a bridging program was not limited to getting a job. It was her concern about her health. Her situation was such that she was going through a difficult period with few options available for her wellbeing. Being unemployed impacted her psychologically as she started to doubt herself. These feelings can affect a person’s self-confidence leading them to a path of depression and mental health issues. It was therefore, out of desperation and not as a result of wanting to enhance her skills that Lucine and Samir enrolled in the program. With many participants getting to know about the bridging programs from non-official sources, and enrolling for different reasons, identifies the many gaps synonymous with poor marketing strategies. With the government having scrutinized the qualifications of IEPs before they come to Canada and possessing their records, it would not be difficult to reach out to them instead of leaving them to seek information for themselves. It requires being proactive in dealing with IEPs and their integration into the labour market if we would like to see positive
results.

With unfulfilled expectations and inconsistent results, an important question that arises is whether to promote these programs or not. It is a challenge of contradictory nature, more like a catch 22 situation. On one hand these programs are poorly marketed and if IEPs are to make informed choices they need to be promoted. On the other hand, promoting these programs will in essence be endorsing the shortcomings of these programs, outcomes of which will have significant negative consequences for the IEPs. This thesis is therefore advocating for a complete overhaul of these programs. Promoting a program that has significant gaps can only exacerbate issues around the integration of IEPs. This thesis highlights the gaps and issues that continue to exist and advocate that it is time to remodel this ‘bridge’.

8.3 (In)Consistencies and (Mis)Guidance

Knowledge about how the labour market integration functions plays an important role in the success of those who are new to the country. Lack of awareness of the systems and services as a result of language and economic limitations, social isolation, inadequate information from government or agencies, and newcomers' tendency to stay within their own socio-ethnic groups for support are major barriers in using formal supports (Stewart, 2009). Information that could help direct and guide IEPs can be scattered and depends on many factors such as their profession or what that person is looking for. There are numerous types of guidance and information available to the IEPs. Some acquire information through brochures and pamphlets, while others get it from the complex network of the web and yet there are many who prefer personal contact. Availability of appropriate and timely information is important for the success of immigrants in Canada (Owen, 2009). Participants of this thesis identified the importance
of such guidance and few identified the assistance they got through the bridging programs. But this was not consistent as some programs shared more information than others or none at all. Getting the right guidance makes achieving the goal easier. Zahra, a physiotherapist identified how the bridging program showed the importance of knowing the system and understanding the limits to her professional practice. This is what she had to say:

*they have helped me in understanding my boundaries as a physio in this country, ok they have made me understand my professional practice (here in Canada) and made me understand the patient physiotherapist relationship* (Zahra).

Knowing the system was one of the issues that some participants found they benefited as a result of the bridging programs. For Zahra it was not just knowing the process. She refers to knowing her limitations in what she could or could not practice. These boundaries also controlled and set limitations to her ability to be able to practice her knowledge and skills. Knowing the system for Zahra included guidelines to interpersonal relationship between a patient and a physiotherapist. While Zahra benefited from the protocols shared in the program, not all bridging programs are consistent with the way information is conveyed.

While all the necessary information may be available, navigating the system and sifting through the maze of data could be overwhelming and complicated to traverse. Availability of appropriate information at the right time is important for the success of immigrants in Canada (Owen, 2009). Lack of centralized information on accreditation, employment and professional guidance can lead to many internationally trained immigrants to lose valuable time and right direction. “Little information is provided to prospective immigrants with respect to the Canadian equivalency for their credentials” (Zikic et. al. 2011. p.3). Settlement agencies play an important role in providing such
information, however their resources are limited and a lack of proper fit between the needs of the client and the appropriate guidance that is required leaves a void the agencies cannot fulfill (Reitz, 2011; Hathiyani, 2006). Such shortcomings can be confusing and frustrating, placing on hold the progress of many in their effort to settle and integrate into the Canadian economic system. These issues continue to be raised with most support to help immigrants comply with the Canadian standards and be integrated into the labour market remaining ad hoc (CAETO, 2004). The inconsistencies exist at many levels as brought up by Rose and mentioned earlier. Consistent messaging and a streamlined process is essential for the success of the IEPs. While information on the many programs is available through numerous brochures and websites, immigrant employment statistics over a long period of time have showed an enduring and deteriorating immigrant situation with lack of equal access to occupations and skills corresponding to native born Canadians (Reitz, 2011).

New IEP’s face a “range of diverse advice and most usually figure out on their own how to obtain an informed, accurate and fair assessment of their credentials and experience. Rather than being able to consult a central source of information that will direct them accurately, they must search through a variety of “flags and pointers,” often without any frame of reference, until they find an appropriate body to help them” (CAETO, 2004, p.14). That “body” for some could be in the form of a bridging program. The difficulty is that each bridging program has its own focus and format with some focusing more on one aspect while others on something very different. Knowing where to go, and what to seek can eliminate the unnecessary frustrations and long delays. Exposing the discrepancy and the inconsistency in providing information, Rose a
psychologist from South America related her disappointment. This is what she had to say:

*If you go to one place you are told one thing and if you go to another you are told another and even if you go to one university they have one set of procedures and another will tell you another, there is no streamlined process* (Rose).

Rose highlights the frustrations she felt in not only getting inconsistent information but inconsistency in terms of process and procedures as well. Each institution has their own processes and when one considers the various types of delivery agents from universities to community based agencies, the focus, the method and the pedagogy of the programs are varied and not streamlined as discussed in *Chapter 6*. This systemic issue has existed for a long time with no solution in sight. It is not that immigrants come to Canada on an occasional basis. It is known to be a country of immigrants and so having streamlined and consistent information should have been developed and ready. The bridging programs also have been in existent for some years now and so appropriate systems should have been in place to share appropriate information. For any program to be successful, the processes and sharing of information should be efficient, reliable and consistent.

As mentioned above, getting the right information and appropriate guidance is critical to make informed decisions. The experience of some IEPs apprises us of the information that was shared to them was not only inconsistent but was not entirely correct, exposing a big flaw in how these programs are being promoted. Agha revealed how he was misinformed stating as follows:

*they say that we are putting you in (employment) in the profession… if you see the brochure for bridging program, any bridging program… they tell you that they are matching (you in your profession) when there is no matching happening* (Agha).

Agha discloses how he was led to believe that he was going to be matched in his
profession. He was given information that raised his expectations, which however did not materialize. According to Agha’s statement, it appears that it was a deliberate effort to attract his membership into the program analogous to how neoliberalism functions, where the programs are developed and marketed as a commodity glorifying the product to attract the best business. The benefits of the product or programs may be exaggerated to attract more customers. Such programs under neoliberalism allow exploitation of labour and use of purchasing power as a means of accessing higher education (Giroux, 2014). With reduced funding, the bridging programs are obligated to follow rigid business models. They are made attractive to enroll the most number of IEPs to meet the funding requirements. Agha’s statement unravels the neoliberal focus of the bridging programs of maximizing the available seats. The feeling of being enticed to the bridging programs was not limited to Agha alone. It was the experience of a number of participants who reiterated similar feelings of being misinformed into taking the programs.

Carmen also brought up the issue that the information and guidance that was being shared was not entirely accurate. “I mean giving information that’s not totally true regarding the courses” (Carmen). This was a serious issue of misrepresentation which under normal circumstances could have grave consequences and it was not limited to her. Behrang who had completed not one but four bridge training programs was forthright in sharing his views about not getting correct information. He completed all these programs in anticipation of either getting a job or at least getting and internship and described his experience as follows:

*And this program was interesting because when we had the orientation session, at the orientation session, there was representatives from the (program), and someone from (an agency) and both of them said, because we were the first cohort of this program,*
they said its 100% guaranteed that you will get an internship at the end of this program because internship is part of this program. They said that the government has realized that there is something that is missing in these bridge training programs and it is internship. Therefore an internship is guaranteed for this one. Yeah, we have a ton of resources and there are only 20 or 30 people who are, like at that moment witnessing this. And then later their wording had changed saying, it depends on you. It’s not 100% guaranteed. It depends on you. And so everything changed (Behrang).

Behrang brings to light the inconsistent nature of the program where the participants were informed of one thing at the beginning which later changed as the program progressed. The main reason for Behrang to have enrolled in the bridging program was to get internship or work experience. He was encouraged to enroll in the program with guarantees of a placement or internship. Participants were informed one thing at the beginning of the program which changed once they were enrolled in it. This change of course in the middle of the program exposes flaws where participants felt misinformed and misled into taking the programs. They felt helpless and could do little themselves after having paid tuition and invested their valuable time.

Based on what Agha, Carmen and Behrang have described, some institutions are more concerned about attracting the participants for their program. On one hand the laid out necessary competency requirements of enrollment are overlooked and on the other information on employment is hyped in an effort to attract the IEPs to get enrolled in the programs. Many IEPs in these programs are therefore treated like consumers where they have to go through the steps of completing these programs which may or may not benefit them in achieving their ultimate goal. This is similar to the commercial market where customers are enticed to buy or sell commodities. The bridging programs are adeptly marketed as a commodity to the IEPs, prospective students who are seen as consumers. This commodification of educational services transforms IEPs into customers where knowledge is left for the student to consume instead of having a
collaborative approach where the students and the teachers work together to resolve issues (Levidow, 2002). The dealings or interactions between the various parties is businesslike with each looking after their own interests. While the government is focused on the monitoring and audit requirements, the emphasis of the bridging programs is on fulfilling the funding requirements instead of helping IEPs realize their goals. Even during the programs, they are left on their own as described by Behrang when he states “And then later their wording had changed saying, it depends on you”. Under the neoliberal project, social relations are relegated to relations between things. Their relationship and connection is not one of a social association but that of material existence (Marx, 1976). Human relations take a back stage leaving all transactions to be focused on capital interactions. With an increasingly neoliberal agenda of the government, the universities and colleges have become accomplices to their interests, values and power and in the process place less attention to social problems and issues of importance (Giroux, 2014). As a result, the underutilization, unemployment and underemployment of IEPs is not seen as an important responsibility of these programs. Their focus is more on meeting the quantifiable program requirements instead of addressing the inequalities that exist. Such examples identify neoliberalism along with other discriminatory frameworks as being dominant at the various stages of labour market integration including those of the bridging programs.

**8.4 (Un)fulfilled Expectations**

Participants of this thesis highlight the high hopes and expectations IEPs had to be gainfully employed after completing the bridging programs. These were educated people with most of them having a Master’s degree, had travelled widely and considered to be able to handle the reality of issues facing them. They were among
those who have held important positions in their country of origin and had years of experience under their belt. For most IEPs that participated in this research, the expectation of getting employed through the program could not be realized which led them to more challenging times. David an Information Technology professional stated that:

*For many in the bridging program, there was no guarantee of getting a job. I'm in touch with my friends and they also did not get jobs. Some got jobs on their own. (The program) helped you to gain some more knowledge but it did not help you to get a job of your own (David).*

The expectation of getting a job in the profession remained unfulfilled at the time of the interview for David and his colleagues who had also completed the bridging program. Those who got employed in their profession was as a result of their own effort and not through the program they had completed. David acknowledged acquiring more knowledge through the program but that was not the reason for him to enroll in the program. He was disappointed in not getting employed, the main reason for completing the program. Others in his class were also dissatisfied and were looking for work in their profession. Agha one of the participants from Asia anticipated getting employed by the end of the program and shared his expectations about the bridging program in the following words:

*I thought let me try the bridging program because that will give me some job and that for me was like the last resort. When I completed this (program) after six or seven months, I realized that I was not going to achieve that, I was completely (heart) broken (Agha).*

Taking a bridging program was a last resort for Agha who expected to get a job in his profession. These expectations however could not be fulfilled for Agha who was a Human Resources professional with a Master's degree. With an emphasis on the word “completely”, he ardently revealed he was heartbroken and demoralized. He felt
hopeless and dejected. The outcome identified by Agha was opposite of what the bridging programs set out to achieve. Not only was he not employed, he felt ‘broken’ as he had spent money, lost six or seven months of his time and felt disheartened. Carmen who also possessed a Master’s degree expected that she also would be able to find a job through the program. This is what she described about her expectation:

*My expectation was that at the end of the third course, we will find a job for sure through the program. That was my big expectation. I didn’t need a diploma, no. No one needs more diplomas, believe me, no one* (Carmen).

Along with Agha and Carmen, other participants were very clear about their expectations with almost all believing that they would be able to get a job in their profession after completing the program. As Carmen mentions they were not in need of more certificates as they were already qualified in their profession holding degrees and other professional certification. They expected the program would bridge the gap between them and their employers and get them employed. Agha further elaborated that not only was he disappointed in not getting a job in his profession but revealed that the bridging programs encouraged him to take other type of precarious employment:

*They will compel you to do some odd jobs which is not your profession and by end of the year they have to prove that I have got a job so they can say that he got employment. It is their KPI (Key Performance Indicator), but it’s wrong. You are forcing me to do something which I am not supposed to be doing after eight months then why you wasted my eight months I would have start doing that labour job from the first day and I would’ve moved happily. You know you put me on my knees for the first six or eight months and then you are saying that I am bound to joining any job. So this is the thing which they are doing* (Agha).

Agha compellingly talks about his disappointment on a personal front of not being able to get employment in his profession, but also elaborates on what he thought was the attention and emphasis of the service providers. According to him the service providers are focused on meeting their key performance indicators of achieving their targets. This
requirement has been emphasized and elaborated in *Chapter 5*, where one of the obligations of the service providers in order to acquire funding was the strict adherence to quantifiable outcomes. As Agha mentions, this adherence could impact the way service is provided and how the programs are delivered. Funding for the programs for the service provider is tied to the number of participants at the beginning, to meeting the program requirements and emphasis on measurable results leading the IEPs into taking any job at the end. These are issues at both the systemic level, as well as operational stage which impact the delivery of the bridging programs. This was not the experience of one individual in this study. Lucine also experienced not just lack of supports but was steered into taking precarious employment:

*Because from my experience when I was going to those organizations, employment organizations who were getting funding from the government… and asking them to find a job for me, the only job they were able to find for me was the customer service in a store... which I did not want to get... For qualified jobs they are not prepared, those organizations are only helping to find non-qualified jobs. I think yeah… that was the problem* (Lucine).

Lucine emphasizes the lack of ability and knowledge on the part of those who have been funded by the government. While IEPs may come from different parts of the world and from different professions, it should be the responsibility of the expert to guide those in need in the right direction, to the right place, within the most appropriate and reasonable timelines. If there is a gap in knowledge, the IEPs could easily be referred to the right place instead of being coerced into taking precarious employment. From the above discourse, it is evident that the guidance that was provided helped IEPs into low paying precarious jobs, perpetuating the cycle of underemployment and underutilization of immigrant skills. With strict funding and program requirements, the service providers are seen as an extension of the government and if the IEPs are being guided to
precarious employment, it can be interpreted that the government either overtly or covertly is linked to such activity or simply turning a blind eye to the situation. With all the reports which the service providers have to submit, it can also be inferred that the government by its inaction supports such precarious employment making highly qualified and skilled pool of labour available for low wage jobs. Based on Lucine and Agha’s experiences, the seriousness of guiding IEPs out of underemployment becomes an issue of importance if the IEPs are to be integrated into their profession and in Canada’s economic system. Canadian policies have allowed open competition and more freedom to the markets that constantly seek to minimize costs and maximize profits. Under such situations, labour is seen as a commodity that should be readily available to produce goods at the lowest possible costs. The neoliberal strategies view wage as a cost of production which needs to be brought down leading the government to implement policies that allow hire and fire practices, temporary jobs and flexible wages (Shields, 2004). Labour markets are hence designed to promote the mobility of labour and encourage migration (Gill, 2000). They are seen to encourage the relocation of skilled labour across boundaries or even continents for conscription as cheap labour. IEPs come to Canada from all parts of the world seeking opportunities. Such movements of people can leave them exposed to exploitation leading to growth and prosperity for only a privileged few while having a devastating effect on others (Harvey, 2000). Bridging programs do not address such challenges faced by IEPs. On the contrary, as expounded by Lucine and Agha, they may be fueling the precariousness of the labour market, leaving many who have completed the bridging programs in a similar situation to the one before they had enrolled in it, underemployed and underutilized.
8.5 Conclusion

Based on the responses of the IEPs who participated in this thesis, the bridging programs are beleaguered with poor marketing strategies and lack of appropriate information to make informed decisions. It remains an issue of concern when new IEPs come to Canada and have no knowledge about the bridging programs. It is even more concerning when the service providers who are involved in the settlement of immigrants share information about the bridging programs that is inconsistent or provide guidance that is unreliable and inaccurate. The purpose of the bridging programs as indicated in Chapter 6 is to help IEPs integrate into the profession they were trained in. The experience of some IEPs indicate otherwise, leaving them with expectations that remain unfulfilled. Many participants were still engaged in precarious employment and working hard to bring food to the table for their families. Such negative outcomes from programs created to help IEPs overcome the challenges they face, illustrates that immigrant underemployment is rooted in its economic structure and the systems that have been created, fueled by the neoliberal machinery of providing cheap labour for the markets. Danso (2007) emphasized that the Canadian labour market “does not allocate jobs on the basis of skills and education alone” (p. 5). It does not take into consideration other relevant and significant social inequalities such as class, gender, race and ethnicity which also play a role in getting employment. If completing the bridging programs do not produce positive outcomes, it begs one to ask if these programs are delivering what they are supposed to and if not how else can we explain these inequalities and what factors influence such disparities.
Chapter 9

Networks, Social Capital and Alienation

9.1 Introduction

The challenges IEPs experience are complex and unique with an overall expectation of getting employed quickly in their profession of training. Bridging programs vary considerably in length, composition, format and focus but are meant to help overcome those challenges. One of the common challenges for new immigrants as identified in Chapter 5 is the lack of social capital and networking. An important positive experience of the bridging program that was frequently mentioned and appreciated by many participants was to do with making friends and expanding their networks. This chapter acknowledges the benefit of the friendships that were made through bridging programs. It however highlights that these relationships are not enough to help IEPs get employed in their profession. The new friends they made were in a similar situation of being unemployed and not with those who were already established in their profession. While they made new friends, their unemployment made them feel alienated from their profession, experiencing exclusion with some questioning their own identities, an issue that affected their confidence and wellbeing. The participants also felt that the programs created a culture of fear with IEPs being let go if they did not conform to the requirements.

9.2 Networks and Social Capital

Most IEP’s in the study had no relations or friends in Canada and knew few
people, if any. Enrolling into a bridging program was a new beginning of rebuilding their social capital for them and their families. Having left their previous networks that may have taken years to build, starting all over again for new immigrants is an arduous task and an experience they will cherish for a long time. As highlighted in Chapter 5, lack of social capital and absence of developed networks was found to be one of the challenges that impacts IEPs in their integration into the labour market (Akter et al., 2013; Block and Galabuzzi, 2011; Lee, 2010; Reitz, 2011). Networks are relationships that have developed between people. Expanding on the notion of capital, Bourdieu (1986) explains that it is the utilization of these connections to produce a benefit which transforms them to being social capital. People gain access to benefits through utilization of their connections and their work of sociability is highly productive if exerted (Bourdieu, 1986). Networking therefore is more than just making friends, it is making these relationships work for you. For an immigrant, social capital helps in the settlement process, economic prosperity, getting a job and improving their overall happiness (Nakhaie and Kazemipur, 2013). One of the most positive aspects of the bridging programs that was repeatedly mentioned was that of networking, making friends and building social capital. Coming to a new country and not having many friends can be a daunting task. Many participants in this research indicated a sense of comfort to know that they were not alone in this journey, that there were other professionals like them who were also experiencing challenges and going through the steps of getting integrated into the labour market. This is what Abdul who used to be a Bank Manager in the Middle East had this to say:

*My social life was very positive because I had the opportunity to get introduced to a lot my colleagues, new immigrants who were facing similar challenges like finding a place*
to rent or to buy, commute, you don’t know the roads or where to buy the stuff those problems that any person faces once he’s moved to a new country (Abdul).

Abdul identifies the benefit of having a network in the settlement process. Being new to the country, they were in a similar situation of looking for work and practicing their profession. The learnt how to navigate the roads and the system. There is no doubt that these are important things to be aware of and be guided when one settles in a new city. Experiencing and overcoming the challenges together can ease the transition and lighten the encumbrance. Socializing and making friends helps one to overlook the challenges they are facing. Amir also mentions he has made many friends:

*I have made 20 friends from all over the world, very nice people, we are supporting each other, we are helping each other, when we find a job we just share, we meet from time to time, have coffee, I have started getting a community through this program, so socially it was very good* (Amir).

As Amir explains, the friends that he has made are from all over the world who were going through similar situations of looking for employment in their profession. They seem to have formed an informal support group as he indicates to help them talk about the problems and issues they face and share any new information they may have. Although this group may not have professional therapists to guide them, Amir seems to be satisfied on how the group has developed into a small community for him. Socially he may benefit by sharing some time together but how far these connections can help to integrate the IEPs into the labour market remains any ones guess. Jasmine, a psychologist reiterated similar sentiments in getting to know others who were also experiencing challenges of integration into the labour market:

*My social life felt very much improved in the sense that I got to know other mental health professionals, internationally trained mental health professionals who were going through the same experience and that was very helpful because then I felt I wasn’t alone anymore in going through this and in fact we were helping each other emotionally*
and also in terms of practically telling each other about different job options and just helping each other, supporting each other through looking for jobs (Jasmine).

Jasmine gives us a glimpse into some of the problems IEPs face as a result of not working in their profession and the type of supports they provide each other. She informs us of emotional problems they endure but also experienced isolation and alienation. Most participants as mentioned above identified making friends and getting to know others as a big takeaway from the bridging program. While there has been no requirement of the bridging programs to form such support groups, it appears that there are some unintended and indirect benefits that have developed as a result of them. New immigrants need support in their settlement with IEPs requiring the extra guidance in relation to their profession. The informal networks IEPs have formed act as substitutes to the formal structures that should have been established with years of immigrant influx into Canada.

There is no doubt that having good and appropriate networks can be beneficial in the integration and settlement process. Asha, a social worker with a Master’s degree saw the bridging programs as a government effort of trying to integrate IEPs. This is what Asha had to say:

*I think it is definitely useful if we see this as a step from the government of integrating internationally trained professionals into the system, from that perspective* (Asha).

As Asha explains, she saw the programs as a ‘step’ towards integration. If assessed closely, the significance of what she has stated reveals that there could be other options as well, with this one being a ‘step’ amongst others in the integration process and that it was not the only one, and not a solution by itself. Suffice it to say that, it was not the networks that led Asha to employment. The positive feeling exuberated by Asha and Jasmine can be attributed to them being employed in their profession. Those who were
already employed at the time of the interview were positive in their response. Jasmine was employed as a psychologist while Asha was employed as a social worker at the time of the interview. It was therefore no surprise that their responses were positive while those who were not employed or employed in precarious work, felt less enthusiastic with little hope of improving their situation. The programs as identified by the participants helped make some good friends and increased their network, but in most cases these friends did not lead to employment. Agha acknowledged such friendships but reveals that such networks do not always lead to positive results. For Agha, the networks did not meet his expectations of helping him get a job in his profession. He stated:

_I am at the same place where I was (before taking the program). Nothing has happened. I was hopeful that after having the bridging program, I would have networks and connections, and (thought) I could get in the (labour) market immediately, but it did not work, it did not help get a job_ (Agha).

Agha recognizes that he formed networks and connections but it did not make any difference on his professional front leaving a gap in getting leads to employment. It needs to be understood that the friends they made were also in a similar situation to them; IEPs who were looking for employment in their profession. They were also desperate, seeking a break in their profession. The social capital to be gained can therefore be limited in such situations. On the contrary, it can act negatively on the person by having problems of others such as negative attitudes impact them. Good networks play a big role in finding work by leading them to where the jobs are available (Hathiyani, 2006). It is commonly understood that a large percentage of jobs are not advertised. These are jobs that are not publicized but staff in the organization could be aware of their existence. Having an extensive and appropriate network of those who are
already in the profession can give one an advantage by letting them know where jobs have opened up, or expose them to the way organizations function. Not having the appropriate networks which manifest into social capital could lead to reinventing the wheel and learning the hard way of getting integrated in the labour market in their profession of training.

9.3 Alienation

The IEPs related their experience of alienation under various circumstances and in varying degrees. While some were not so open about discussing it, Carmen was forthright in her response when it came to the bridging programs. She clearly stated that the bridging program alienated her:

_They have not integrated us, they have separated (alienated) us because we are studying with immigrants we are not studying with Canadians_ (Carmen).

According to Carmen, integration should happen with fellow professionals who are the dominant group and not with those who are struggling and are themselves already alienated. When we talk of integration, it is bringing those who are new and distanced closer to those who are in the mainstream. As Carmen has indicated the IEPs need to integrate and get closer to those who are in the mainstream. The bridging programs that are supposed to integrate the IEPs into the mainstream manage to bring together immigrants who are in a similar situation. They are distanced from the mainstream professionals who they are supposed to integrate with. Such experiences identify the contradictions that exist with bridging programs.

While Canada’s multicultural policy encourages integration and promotes immigrants to maintain some degree of their cultural values, a study by Petri identified that the Canadian job market prefers cultural assimilation instead of integration. Assimilation promotes the blending of the immigrant’s cultural identity with that of the
dominant one (Petri, 2009, p.19). It entails that the person has to let go of their own culture and identity to conform to that which is prevalent. The level of assimilation into this ‘mass culture’ varies with individuals with some having changed significantly compared to others. The way they speak, the way they present themselves, the way they express their feelings is different reflecting the awareness of the code of power that had been learnt from a class context and is generally subtle (Orelus, 2011). It is in a way sending a message that one’s identity is not good enough and has to change to conform to the dominant one. Antonia Darder, a poet, scholar and activist describing her experience as an immigrant child arriving in a new place states, “All of a sudden, the familiar culture, language, way of being, way of feeling, and even the scents of life, which had all been mine, were gone” (Orelus, 2011, p. 130). This can lead to a feeling of inferiority and lack of confidence in one’s own abilities. The process of alienation could start with distancing oneself when things are not going right and for professionals if they do not have employment. Samir explained his experience as follows:

So, it creates a lot of conflict within the family, within the spouse, and we may not be able to see the friends or talk to them or if they are coming to your home, we may not be able to spend time with them, so we will be avoiding others in our daily life. It (has) created a type conflict and isolation from the society (Samir).

Samir in his experience related the steps to the process of alienation. For him it started with distancing himself, followed by isolation that led to alienation. Not having a job led him to withdraw from public activity affecting his family life and the relationship with his spouse and children. It led Samir to withdraw from active participation with his family, his friends and society in general. The impact of alienation therefore, is not confined to one person but affects the whole family including children and has ripple effects on the community around them. As mentioned in Chapter 2, feeling alienated could lead to
isolation and being powerless (Israel, 1971). This was not an experience of just one person but many. Jasmine also explained how being unemployed affected her self-esteem and identity. She found it difficult to be part of the society and felt ashamed of not having a job. She passionately explained her situation:

Coming from someone who’s always had a job back home and coming here not having a job, it really felt like a blow to your self-esteem, and also your identity because you don’t know how to identify yourself. Like even if you want to meet people, they say so what do you do and you say I don’t do anything because I don’t have a job. So that also I feel apart from the fact you come here, you feel isolated because you don’t know any people. It also keeps you from connecting to people, because there is this shame that, what do I tell people? I don’t have a job? (Jasmine).

One can sense a feeling of shame and guilt as a result of being unemployed in Jasmine’s statement. There is desperation in her voice as the issue becomes even more complicated when she starts questioning her own identity and her relationship with the people and the society she is part of. She withdrew herself from meeting people. Although there were some participants who felt that the bridging programs helped them make friends and increase their networks as mentioned earlier in this chapter, there were others like Samir and Jasmine who stated they felt isolated which led to a feeling of alienation, questioning their own identity and feeling depressed. Alienation as experienced by the IEPs and related in this research happens under various circumstances. For some, their alienation is as a result of being unemployed. Many IEPs have never experienced being unemployed in their country of origin. According to Marx, work is more than an economic activity. It is the source of human identity, dignity and inspiration (Prasad, 2005). The longer they remain unemployed, the more alienated they become. They are estranged from their own qualifications and training, stripped of all pride and dignity in their work and left in a condition of alienation and loss of skills that they originally possessed. Mumtaz explains that she came to Canada with some
skills and as time passed she felt she had lost some of those skills. This is what she said:

*When you come into the country you think you can do “x” kind of work, by the time five years have passed by, you think you are not able to do that because you think that you are not able to communicate in that way so your conversations, your skills, your abilities start depreciating* (Mumtaz).

The deskilling Mumtaz is referring to can happen even after completing the bridging programs, an indication that there was no benefit in taking them. The IEPs as discussed in earlier chapters come with a lot of experience and skills. Not being able to utilize those skills could lead to losing them. She also raises the issue of losing confidence by not being able to communicate and losing skills that were gained over a number of years. They start questioning their own abilities after years of education and skills. Being unemployed leads to alienation followed by loss of self-image and an identity crisis. It leads to withdrawal from society can lead to deskilling. For many IEPs having to go back to school as an adult and to complete a bridging program impacts their confidence and identity. For someone who completed their schooling years ago and comes from a recognized and respectable professional position would be difficult to go back to a classroom as explained by Dilip:

*The immigrant has to provide for his family, he has to take care of housing, we come with small children, we have to take care of things back home. We are not fit to be a student again. We cannot be treated like students. That was a huge compromise for us. I know my friends also compromised. Right now I know half of the class is employed and the other half is not employed. They have under gone all this and they are still not employed* (Dilip).

Even when IEPs use these bridging programs as a process of validating their education and skills, it could have a negative effect that further alienates them by identifying them as having their education from a foreign university and presenting them as having skills
that were not adequate enough. The program that intends to integrate IEPs seems to be producing opposite results. It identifies them as those that are foreign trained and by going through the program validates that their education was deficient and not adequate enough hence the requirement to enhance their knowledge and skills. As Dilip mentions, it affected his confidence and felt demeaned in going back to class. For a person who has completed university education long time ago when they were younger and then asked to go back to class at a later age may not be easy and could make them feel alienated and feel out of place. It impacts their confidence and demoralizes them.

Behrang refers to the alienation as follows:

*I felt going through the bridging program would alienate me from the industry, from the market* (Behrang).

The alienation Behrang is referring to, is to do with his profession. He raises concerns of being isolated from the industry and the market. Those who participate in the program are seen to be deficient and not as “equals” to those who are Canadian educated, although they may possess more education and experience. Behrang was expecting the bridging programs to integrate him into his profession, and if he was going to be alienated from his industry, how could it benefit him. This notion of being identified different as a result of taking the bridging program was also brought up by Dilip who referred to how the programs are named as being problematic as they create a distinction of being internationally educated from the very beginning. He states that:

*So the name of the course itself says that we’re internationally educated. Like, it is creating a distinction... It starts with the basic idea as it creates a distinction at the very beginning* (Dilip).

As Dilip mentions, the bridging programs create a distinction and creates an impression of us versus them for those who are internationally educated professionals. The names
of the bridging program are marketed as “xyz bridge training programs for internationally educated professionals” which identifies all IEPs as being different. It creates an image that their education and skills have deficiencies and are different from those who are educated in Canada. It places all of them in the same basket without distinguishing their individual education, experience and skills, alienating them from the rest in their profession.

As indicated by Marx, alienation is based not only upon certain images of nature or society, but also upon the relationships between the individual and society (Israel, 1971). For Samir and Jasmine, their alienation was not only between individuals but it was within the family and also with the society they were surrounded by and living in. Their alienation was at all levels in their day to day living including their home, having a perilous impact on their identity and a negative impact on their integration into the labour market. The issues identified by the respondents as mentioned above are not those that are as a result of an action by an individual or a group. What they and other IEPs experience regularly is embedded in the system that exists. As discussed in Chapter 2, these are systems that are neoliberal in their approach and by identifying the internationally trained professionals as alien, are in essence distancing them creating discrimination in their practice. Issues of alienation can only be addressed by closely assessing the direct and indirect impacts of such programs and ensuring that the results are true to their intent. The bridging programs that are supposed to integrate, produce results of alienation, contrary and detrimental to its intent.

There are other varying situations of alienation experienced by the IEPs. When they come to Canada, their inability to get work in their profession of training leaves them no choice but to take jobs that require less skills or knowledge. The precarious
employment they have to undertake is not out of their own choice, but to survive and bring food to the table. It may not be the job they were interested in, creating a distance between them and the work they were trained for. They are detached and alienated from the work they are normally engaged in. The IEP’s are professionals who have been attached to their profession for a long time before they came to Canada. For all participants, it had been their interest, profession, their love and their passion as they continue to pursue it. Alienating a professional from their profession can have devastating effects. As Zahra, the physiotherapist passionately explains:

*I am just waiting to see patients and waiting to treat my (patients) physiotherapy conditions. I was immersed into that for 7 years and was teaching also. It is like if an artist does not get to paint, how restless would that person be, it is just like that for me* (Zahra).

Zahra who was working at a Tim Hortons in a survival job expresses that she just wanted to get back to her profession, start seeing her clients and be able to practice what she was trained for. She paints a picture of restlessness and pain, eager to get back to her profession. Taking a bridging programs adds to the challenges they experience as they have to usually accept precarious employment to bring food to the table and at the same time attend classes, thus leaving them little or no time to get involved and stay connected to their profession. For a professional person, the work they do is also their identity and reflects their commitment to their profession. Jasmine affirmed that;

*A big part of my identity was my career, it was what I do, and also the sense of fulfillment that I come from being a counselor. So coming here and for the last 3 years not having a job in the mental health field, I feel like I have lost my sense of identity, and also my sense of fulfillment* (Jasmine).

Feeling the loss of identity can be a devastating experience for many. Identity gives the person character, personality and individuality making them stand out from others. It is
how people are recognized, their uniqueness, their culture, their profession. It is their pride, their dignity and their community. Taking away these items that relate to their identity can lead to a loss of purpose. When immigrants come to Canada, they have high hopes and do not expect their identity to be at stake. Canada encourages diversity and so does Toronto with its motto that emphasizes it as its strength. People of all identities and backgrounds are encouraged to respect each other in a pluralistic society. The loss of identity as Jasmine mentioned, even after completing a bridging program, leads to further alienation from her profession and her community. Some IEPs may transform themselves in order to ‘fit in’ and toe the line to be accepted. There are however others who have no choice and are even obligated to change out of fear. This is however contrary to the intent and the spirit of Canada’s multicultural policy. Dilip spoke on behalf of his colleagues on how ‘fear’ was used during the bridging program to obligate the class ‘to behave’.

*Being a new immigrant one thing is that we’re not sure about the system and we have our own fears. We fear for our family, we fear for our survival and that leaves us vulnerable. When I was in this bridging program for immigrants three or four of my classmates were asked to drop out from the course (after a few weeks). They were told they do not meet the requirements for various reasons which I do not think was fair. What I think is really criminal to ask an immigrant to get into a bridging course. We knew that we did not have something and we wanted to fulfill that gap. So we went there, but some of us were asked to leave and that cultivated a culture of fear amongst us. Some of my other colleagues share my views but are not so candid to saying it (Dilip).*

Dilip reveals that IEPs who had concerns about the bridging program were asked to leave in order to curtail and stop any issues from flaring up. Many of them had concerns about the program which they wanted to bring up. Any questions that were raised were dealt with sternly. Enforcing authority and power on a few, delivers the message for the rest to ‘behave’ accordingly. “Some of the most effective use of power involves the
prevention of decisions, the muting of issues, the avoidance of conflict by pre-emptive advantage, by limiting the agenda to suit prevailing interests” (Parenti, 1978, p.30). Little room is left for much discourse or any discontent in the classrooms. Silencing dissent was not just experienced in Dilip’s class. Samir also saw one of his colleagues being let go from the bridging program he attended:

*I found out that one of my colleagues who was explaining his own experiences in his country and trying to explain how he didn’t find any difference in social work practice and policies he had back home led to some conflict with some teachers. It gradually developed and they had some arguments between them and after completing one semester, he was completely out of the program* (Samir).

Samir explains how his friend was dismissed from the bridging program for having views that were disparate from the instructor. In a class that comprises qualified and experienced people from all over the world, there will be instances where certain practices could be looked at from different angles and possibly challenged. Suppressing legitimate discourse can only lead to discord. Expressing one’s views resulted in Samir’s colleague having to leave the program. The experiences of Dilip and Samir demonstrate how IEPs felt powerless and isolated which mirror the discussion on alienation in Section 2.5. These instances exhibit the subtleness and impact of power in alienating the IEPs in their integration into the labour market in Canada.

Participants of this thesis experienced the use of power by being urged to take options that were of lower professional requirements and status. Power as discussed in Chapter 2 is utilized in different ways. Both racism and neoliberalism have to do with power, control and privilege. Guiding IEPs to less skilled options and limiting their skills can be seen as one way to safeguard the power and interests of those already established. It alienates the IEPs from the profession they were qualified to practice. Such tactics as seen from the response from Dilip are effective in silencing or controlling
a larger group at the expense of a few individuals. Under neoliberalism, the culture of fear is often heralded as a practice where the voice of the ‘common man’ is often muzzled under those who have the power (Giroux, 2005). This politics of fear has been witnessed frequently at the federal or international level post 911 but such replications as experienced by Dilip have become a day to day reality for the IEPs. With the domination of the culture of fear, the democratic principles of being able to voice one’s opinion, self-reflection, freedom of choice and collective empowerment are diminished or suppressed (Giroux, 2005). With fear, classroom discourse becomes impotent as students try to appease the teacher or remain silent to avoid repercussions. These experiences of IEPs make it evident that neoliberalism is the cornerstone of how the bridging programs have evolved as we continue to discuss in the later chapters the interconnectedness of it with other concepts such as discrimination and racism.

9.4 Conclusion

When new immigrants arrive in Canada, they look forward to being integrated into the Canadian society at various levels such as socio-political, cultural, labour market, etc. Through the bridging programs, IEPs expect to be successfully integrated into the labour market, especially in their own profession. The experiences of those who participated in this research touched on some positives of the bridging programs such as forming friendships but also identified challenges such as alienation that emanated as a result of them. The friendships that were formed through the program were mainly with those who were in a similar situation of trying to get integrated into their profession and less with those who were already established in their profession. The participants also felt alienated from their profession, their families and their community. A culture of fear was created by getting the students to conform to the requirements of the class.
They were led to question their own identity which impacted their mental and physical health. Bridging programs that are supposed to help overcome the barriers IEPs experience in their integration into the labour market become not a solution but a source of the challenge.
Chapter 10
Experiencing Racism and Class in the Bridging Programs

10.1 Introduction

Immigrants to Canada have historically witnessed and experienced discrimination at individual as well as systemic levels (Kelley and Trebilcock, 2010). Some key guiding principles such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms have been enshrined to ensure equal opportunities for all. In spite of these safeguards, immigrants continue to experience discrimination and underemployment as illustrated in cases that have come before the Canadian Human Rights Commission (Reitz, 2011). Racism and class were identified in Chapter 5 as some of the key challenges IEPs experienced in their effort to be integrated into the economic system in Canada. Research shows that social characteristics such as race, culture, gender and other qualities affect immigrants in their assessment and discounting of their skills (Reitz, 2011). This chapter demonstrates that while these were issues that impacted IEPs when seeking employment, they have continued to persist even when enrolled in the bridging programs. These programs that have been created to help integrate IEPs into the labour market fail to address the challenges related to discrimination and racism. In most instances these challenges are overlooked by the programs with few knowing how to address them. Discrimination as discussed in Chapter 5 takes various forms with the most common one identified by participants in this thesis as being related to race and class which the focus of this chapter. Response from both the service providers as well as the IEPs recognized discrimination as being both overt as well as subtle with grave
consequences to the IEPs who have adopted Canada as their new home. More concerning was the discrimination experienced by IEPs as a result of the bridging programs that were supposed to break down the barriers.

10.2 Racism and Discrimination as Experienced by IEPs

Discrimination as experienced by IEPs, manifested with the participants of this thesis under various forms. Some experienced it openly, while others recognized its covert nature. Regardless of its practice, the discriminatory form is interconnected and intertwined with other complex systems such as neoliberalism to create unwarranted hegemony and unequal distribution of power. Behrang, a civil engineer by profession who was now working in the government sector, brought to the fore how power dynamics played out in the classroom through the discriminatory and biased mindset some teachers brought to the bridging programs. He described it as follows:

*Actually, in a couple of these bridging programs, I experienced people who were working (with) newcomers, they had kind of preconception, they were thinking low of people coming from developing countries.... (A teacher) was getting frustrated by having some students use “I” instead of “we” and the way she was treating them was not acceptable and overall from my feelings, she had this image in her mind that these people are not civilized and they have a lot of problems (Behrang).*

According to Behrang, there was lack of respect and understanding on the part of the instructors. Instead of making the students understand the local communication style the instructor was enforcing upon them concepts that may not have any bearing on one getting employment. For Behrang who had completed four bridging programs, his assessment carries a lot of credibility in his analysis of prejudice that existed against people from developing countries who formed a majority in the bridging programs. He relates that the preconceived mindset of the instructors affected all those who were in the program. Behrang may be one of the few IEPs who had completed many bridging
programs from various institutions and although he was employed with a good job at the time of the interview, he could articulate what IEPs go through. The behavior of the instructor as he describes it, was seen as a way of putting down the IEPs and discouraging them to move forward with their careers. They were made to believe that they were not capable of succeeding. Such reinforcements lead the IEPs to internalize the belief that they have not been successful because of their own fault by not having the right credentials, appropriate language skills, cultural knowledge, right accent etc. Systemic failures and discriminatory issues are far from their consideration. These students come to the bridging programs out of necessity as they already possess years of education and experience behind them. Instead of enhancing their knowledge and building a positive outlook for them, their negative experiences are solidified. Being respectful, encouraging and sensitive to the various cultures should be the cornerstone of such classes as remarked by Carmen: “I mean they need to be better trained, more culturally aware” (Carmen). Those who deliver the programs should be aware of the different cultures and treat others with respect. Knowing other cultures especially when the students are from different corners of the world is of extreme importance. Having some understanding of where they come from could unravel the nuances of their culture and help guide them to understand the Canadian practices easier. Agha also displayed his annoyance and frustration on his experience and expressed it as follows:

I would say that Canada is the most discriminating country than any other because you don’t treat human as a human… because I have studied outside and (in other countries) they would treat me (better) (Agha).

Agha makes a strong statement regarding discrimination in Canada. He had completed two bridging programs and had vast international experience. He expounds his frustration and anger in being made to feel disgraced and mortified as a result of the
discrimination he felt in trying to get employment in his profession. It is important to understand Agha’s standpoint for making such a statement. He holds two Masters Degrees in two different professions, one in Social Work and another in Human Resources and got them accredited in Canada. He was a director of an international not for profit agency and his spouse was also a professional in the medical field who was going through difficult times in getting employment. His family was going through challenging periods of separation. As a Human Resource (HR) professional, he had hired and trained hundreds of staff before coming to Canada. He could therefore sense and identify any unusual or discriminatory hiring processes. At the time of the interview, Agha was working in the HR field but in an entry level position. With all his education and experience, he felt he was being discriminated, underutilized and underemployed. He related his experience in other countries and found that he was treated better than in Canada. Using Arat-Koc’s (2014) understanding, the new racial domain in Canada is based on underutilization of skills, poverty and underemployment of immigrants. When it comes to such attributes in Toronto, these are mostly associated with immigrants. Most immigrants who come to Canada are from Asian and African countries and it is where race and neoliberalism intersect. Under the emergence of neoliberalism in Canada, the cheap immigrant labour from the South is seen as a necessity to augment the markets (Gordon, 2006). Response from participants such as Agha validates what previous research has shown, that racialized immigrants experience greater problems in getting integrated into the labour market (Akter et.al, 2013; Hathiyan, 2006; Reitz, 2011).

Along with the discrimination Behrang and Carmen described in relation to the bridging programs, another important finding of this research was the experience of racism in the placement component of the bridging program. Promita stated she was a
victim of racism when she did her placement through the bridging program. She grudgingly stated the following:

*When I did my placement I was a victim of racism… I was under two supervisor’s supervision… one of my supervisors… committed a very… racialized language about me… very racialized… I don’t want to comment (more) on it* (Promita).

Even with the two supervisors, the racism Promita experienced must have affected her so significantly that she declined to talk further about it. She later reported the incidence to her program manager, but nothing came out of it. Her reluctance to comment indicates the bitterness she continued to feel. Respecting her privacy, I did not delve much into it as discussing the experience could have re-kindled the negative memories. These are issues that can impact a person and their confidence in a significant way to integrate into their profession. The bridging programs are supposed to help IEPs be integrated into their profession and create a positive experience but for Promita it generated negative memories. Rose also recounted her experience of discrimination stating the following;

*I think it is the higher up stratum of people looking down on IEP’s…. I am referring to both race and class because it is an important issue but it is not overtly expressed and implicit… I know it impacts me every day but I keep away from such issues* (Rose).

Rose explains the discrimination that exists which is subtle and implicit and difficult to be challenged openly. She reveals that it affects her on a daily basis and even though it is an important issue, yet she keeps silent and turns away from it. Based on what Rose describes, the discrimination she experienced was both based on class and race. It is difficult to confront discrimination that is subtle and cannot be identified openly, especially when it comes from people who are in important or superior positions. These were issues that impacted Rose and others like her on a daily basis. Constant experience of these type of discriminatory behaviors’ leaves them few options to turn to,
leading them to believing that they are inferior (Pyke, 2010). They also accept the inability to get employed in their field of training to be a result of their own deficiencies leaving little room for real reasons to be explored or examined. Most of the programs are geared towards providing more training to the already qualified individuals. They however, do not address the core systemic problems of racism and discrimination nor do they emphasize on addressing them.

It is not uncommon for IEPs to experience either openly or covertly discriminatory struggles in their day to day dealings over opportunities and they accept them as a necessity for survival. Jasmine unravels the silent torment some IEPs experience without realizing it. She mentioned that it was only after two to three years before she realized that her racial identity was an impediment in getting a job.

*Regarding my racial identity, if you had interviewed me 2 or 3 years ago, I would have given you a different answer. I would have probably been a little more idealistic and say, oh it’s not an impediment. But now, for sure I am going to say, yes! Because I have experienced discrimination in my work place. So yes, it is an impediment* (Jasmine).

What Jasmine recounts is an indication of expectations that tend to shroud the discrimination that may exist but take some time before it is actually recognized. With all the equality laws in place, it is not uncommon for new immigrants to believe that there is less discrimination in Canada compared to those who have been settled for some time. “This may be an indication of the fact that although newly arrived immigrants face considerable disadvantage, their terms of reference are still individuals in their home country, rather than Canadians. On the other hand, longer-term immigrants likely have greater expectations for success and awareness of their rights, and therefore may be more likely to perceive discrimination” (Bannerji, 2008, p.111). Many also come from a culture of silence, where speaking against authority or the government is a proscribed
preposition, hence the caution when raising their voice here in Canada. Unless they get to know of their rights, they silently endure the oppressive nature of these discriminatory behaviors.

As described above, many IEPs continue to suffer racism as a result of who they are. Only seven out of twenty participants were employed at the time of the interviews with 65% still seeking employment in their profession. “Racism intensifies the problems of poverty, and poverty aggravates the problems caused by racism” (Parenti, 1978, p.71). A majority of the IEPs are of racialized background and the study by Stapleton et al. (2012), validates that a high proportion of those who were working poor were immigrants. Participants in the research identified many instances where they had been screened out for employment. Some experienced discrimination due to their names. Asha related her observation about a group who succeeded more than others when it came to applying for a job. According to her, those with the Christian sounding names succeeded more than others. This is how she explained her experience:

*I feel that whether it’s true or not that when they see my name they don’t except my resume. I get that sense and I even got feedback from others who have applied for jobs and others who have Christian names and they feel that they got the job because of that which I feel is ridiculous* (Asha).

Asha was disappointed at not getting an interview because of her non-Christian sounding name. She was non-Christian and non-white but her friends who had Christian sounding names got employed which she felt was unreasonable and unfair. Sheila Block and Grace-Edward Galabuzzi’s (2011) research on the colour-coded job market in Canada shows that racism exists in the systems and work to the advantage of white people. White privilege needs to be acknowledged so that we can better see how different types of racism functions. Drawing on critical race theory, Harris (1993)
explains that whiteness is considered to be the property of only the white. This mentality assigns a historical and everlasting privilege for the white. It also segregates the IEPs who are mostly from countries that are non-white and when they cannot integrate into their profession, they have little choice but to accept any employment, creating a large pool of labour. It also creates a segmented labour market where one group is privileged having high end jobs while another despite their qualifications have to settle with low end and precarious jobs. I argue that such discriminatory attitude condones ongoing oppressive behaviors’ and should not only be opposed but challenged. “White people refuse to engage with race-sensitive analyses for many reasons. The most obvious reason why white people refuse to see race is that it is in their interest to do so. White people gain from their Whiteness in countless ways. Of course, not all White people are equally privileged, but they do all gain to some extent. This is a point that most White people refuse to acknowledge” (Gillborn, 2011, p.20). There are a myriad of advantages that go with being a person of privilege. As discussed in Chapter 2, Yee and Dumbrill (2003) summarize “whitenes” as a form of “hegemony” that allows one group to use its power to dominate a group in a position of less power (Yee, Dumbrill, 2003). Expecting bridging programs in their current format to address and resolve them would be unreal. In our daily experience we observe that those who are “white” are rarely considered as immigrants. Asha describes her feelings as follows:

*there is a sense of how the system is still being dominated by the white which is invisible and when I saw the picture of the parliament and the federal government that’s when I felt, oh this is real, it’s all white, even though here in Ontario there are lots of people of color. This is from my experience, it might be something different but this is what I felt* (Asha).

Although, it may not be discussed openly, being Canadian as described by Asha is synonymous to being “white”. They are neither prepared nor have the capacity to
address these issues. Analyzing various meanings of “whiteness” Arat-Koc (2014) links it to class identity and global capitalist modernity. She focuses on pushing the concept of “whiteness” beyond race and analyzes new meanings of “whiteness” establishing throughout the world. Whiteness seems to be specifically associated with the global capitalist modernity. Race therefore needs to be looked at in relation to and independent of class as we discuss later in this chapter to fully grasp the IEP experiences (Bakan and Dua, 2014). This domination continues to manifest itself through the unemployment or underemployment of IEPs as recognised in this thesis.

Even when one is already employed and it comes to promotions in the workplace, those who were White employees regardless of whether they were Canadian-born or recent immigrants were found to have a much higher likelihood of getting a promotion than those from other ethno racial groups (Fang et al, 2012). With the various forms of discrimination that exist, the question that arises is what role are the bridging programs willing to play to resolve them?

- Discrimination was also experienced based on one’s name and as a result of the difficulty some people had with pronouncing it. Agha describes is as follows;

  People find it difficult to pronounce my name. So when you cannot pronounce the name you don’t feel familiar to that person and feel rejected you know. Many people suggested to me why don’t you change your name and make it something like a Canadian name to which I said I don’t want to do that, why should I do that, it has been my identity for so many years and I’ve been living with that identity, so this is something… whether it is discrimination, but this is (like) you are forcing somebody to put themselves in a (particular) jacket and they are, it’s nothing but discrimination all the way, not accepting people as they are, but they want you to wear a particular suit, a particular jacket, a particular way, that’s all (Agha).

Agha’s experience regarding pronunciation affected not only his confidence but questioned his identity. Discrimination has many facets. With more and more immigrants coming to Canada from all over the world where cultures and religion are
different, the names of people are also different and not common to what majority of Canadians are familiar with. Instead of embracing diversity it is sometimes spurned selectively. Having an unfamiliar name can not only lead to difficulties in pronunciation for those who have not been exposed to them, it could result in being discriminated against and rejected from any consideration for opportunities such as employment. The paradox of this situation is that, the inability of a person to pronounce the ethnic related name is not considered a weakness of that person, instead the person who is really disadvantaged is the one who owns the name.

Another issue mentioned by Agha above is that of identity as related to the name of a person. There are many instances where IEPs have changed or shortened their names. The name as Agha mentions is the identity of the person which has been attached to them since birth. Changing the name at this stage of their life is an attempt to change their identity. While I have touched on the subject earlier, suffice it to say that such change of identity is in essence assimilating the IEPs like a “melting pot” unlike the principles of multiculturalism that Canada is known to uphold. In order to avoid being discriminated against, many seeking employment hide their identity. A two year study by Kang et al. (2016) that focused on ‘resume whitening’ where job applicants hide their identity, concluded that discrimination is still a reality. It found that while only 10% of black job applicants received a positive response for an interview, the number increased to 25.5% if their names were changed and made to appear ‘white’. The study also found that as many as 40% of racialized immigrants used a practice known as ‘resume whitening’ to downplay their racialized backgrounds and anglicize their names to overcome discrimination. Immigrants who are of racialized background downplay their qualifications or experience in the hopes of getting an interview. Ameeriar in her study
“The Sanitized Sensorium” states that “the integration of foreign labor is ultimately not about getting employers not to discriminate. Rather, it is about making yourself into someone who will not be discriminated against” (Ameeriar, 2012. p. 510). These are strategies new racialized immigrants adopt to hide their background and overcome discrimination. Such misgivings illustrate how deeply ingrained racist and discriminatory practices can be for new immigrants. These are real challenges faced by IEPs on a regular basis. The bridging programs are not equipped nor have the desire to address them.

When the discriminatory tendencies become obvious, frustrations increase as Rose a psychologist with a Master’s degree annoyingly described:

They don’t see foreign credentials as being equal or I don’t think they even consider that you can have proper standards to practice… which is very biased and racist and classist… because they think they are on top of the world… it is kind of like the America’s little brother who they think they have everything worked out… and they think they are intellectually more involved than other countries and so I think it is a bias, it is a big bias and I think it is also protectionist measure because it is contradictory also, even though they invite foreign professionals to come and build the country yet when you come here you know… no… you are not good enough to call yourself whatever it is that you want to call yourself… because you were not trained here. You don’t have Canadian experience… how are we going to know that your credentials are even real… it is very demeaning (Rose).

Rose highlights many issues associated with discrimination. She talks about the bias towards foreign credentials where qualifications from other countries are looked down. It infers to the arrogant nature of the professional bodies that are not prepared to examine or consider foreign qualifications. Instead, she refers to the protectionist structures that are placed against IEPs to safeguard the interests of a few. Rose attributes this experience to racism and class where one cannot but closely observe the challenges and obstacles internationally educated immigrants have to face, in order to practice their
profession which they had accomplished for many years in their countries of origin. She raises the issue of hypocrisy where professional associations have placed legal barriers to practice, even though the Federal government has accepted the qualifications and experience for these IEPs to come to Canada. Such is the power of the institutional players that contradicting the Federal government in rejecting the assessment and acceptance of IEPs when they applied to immigrate to Canada is of no consequence to them. While neoliberalism may appear not to encourage racism at an individual level, it continues to encourage the replication of the very structures and systems that were created as a result of it reflected in the experiences of IEPs in the bridging programs. Such structures could be in the form of institutions, programs or even laws. With such influence yielded by the institutions, the bridging programs have little in their power to make any difference.

10.3 Racism As Observed by Service Providers

Along with the IEPs who attended the bridging programs, the service providers also identified racism as an issue that impacted IEPs in their ability to integrate into the labour market. Karen, who taught a bridging programs at a university and a person in a position of privilege recognized and identified discrimination and racism experienced by her students:

_I’ve had students tell me that they sensed a difference as soon as they walked in the room; they sensed it from their teachers the ones who are supposed to be teaching them, they sensed it from the other members of the professional team and they even sensed it from the clients that they were supposed to be working with_ (SP. Karen).

Karen recounts widespread discrimination experienced by her students. Her students were involved in a professional program that involved a practicum as part of the program. Along with classroom instruction, the IEPs worked with qualified professionals
in their field to gain practical experience. The IEPs felt that they were being looked down by their instructors from the bridging programs. Such type of discrimination is difficult to openly identify and was experienced at different levels by the IEPs. According to Karen, some IEPs experienced it with their professional colleagues who they were practicing with, to gain experience and also with their clients who they served. They sensed it as “the tone of voice was different, and even remarks that were being made (were different) and sometimes someone would chose not to work with them” (SP. Karen). Discriminatory and racist practices were observed at the professional, instructor and client level. Such revelations identify the various intensities of discrimination and reinforce that it is deeply rooted and endured silently on a daily basis by racialized immigrants. It is evident that Karen’s students felt a level of comfort and confidence to reveal to her about discriminatory behavior from other teachers in the bridging programs. One interpretation for it can be attributed to the fear of reprisal from other teachers. Karen identifies that the instructors of the program, professional colleagues and even clients condone such behavior or remain silent alluding to the issue to be more of a systemic nature. The experience of IEPs is not about perceptions or one off experiences. They are structures of oppression that have been deeply entrenched (Gilborn, 2011). The bridging programs do not address these critical issues of discrimination and racism, nor do they prepare the students on how to address and challenge them. If the institutes that are supposed to help overcome the challenges IEPs face, are themselves perpetrators of it, how could they help resolve and overcome these discriminatory behaviors.

Paul, another service provider of a bridging program based with a local university felt remorse on the situation of IEPs in Canada. Like Karen, he was also vocal and open
about the plight of immigrants. Speaking about the challenges IEPs face in being able to practice their profession he stated that:

(It is like) stopping newcomers from entering these professions and making their voices heard and of course there is a little bit of racism involved there too, the mainstream society, the Caucasian, the white is basically controlling these top professions. Again if you want to dig even further, it’s the male heterosexual who basically are controlling our entire system (SP. Paul).

Paul identifies discrimination as affecting those entering the professions and is explicit in describing where racism is coming from. Paul affirms the notion that “Caucasian white is basically controlling these top professions” (SP. Paul). These service providers have a good insight on the challenges IEPs face and talk about racism and how power lies with certain groups but as insiders who yield some form of power seem to disassociate themselves from the higher echelons and structures where power and decision making lies. Other than mentioning it to me, service provider Karen did not appear to have leverage to do much to address the situation or have the power to bring about any major changes in the program while the most Paul could do was to make his students aware of the anti-oppressive framework. An important observation to be made here is that both the instructors recognize the extent of discrimination. Karen taught in a medically linked profession while Paul in a social science related one. For both of them however, they could do little to bring about a change without jeopardizing their jobs. In a way they were powerless and dependent on the programs. Both had short term, temporary employment. They were passionate about the issue but had to take care of their own interests as well. These are individuals with limited power and authority trying to make a difference in their own way. The power structures that deal with the bridging programs and the IEPs are those at higher levels within the institutions and the
government who have the ultimate control over these programs. They dictate the programs and the systems that have been placed as audit mechanisms.

IEPs can successfully integrate into their profession if given an opportunity. Getting exposure to their profession and the industry is important for a new immigrants. IEPs need an opportunity to practice in their profession and prove themselves as indicated by George:

*A person who has worked for 20 years in a profession out there and just for the sake of saying you don’t have Canadian experience… I don’t think it is justified to say that you cannot get the license. Give them some opportunity to work, somebody has to give them that opportunity* (SP. George).

Coming from a service provider, George raises issues of IEPs not being able to get a license to practice without Canadian experience. He recognizes the requirement to be an injustice on the IEPs and suggests that someone should give them an opportunity. Strict regulations on who can practice in a particular profession and who cannot, can be seen as one way of controlling IEP talent and impede their ability to practice in their profession. “People who are powerful are in a position to influence and control what others do” (Orelus, 2011, p.119). IEPs who are new to Canada with little or no clout are relegated to a level of constant control and limit, taking away from them their ability to utilize their education and skills. Governments and regulatory bodies must be clear that licensing is about ensuring public safety, and not about intervening in labour-market supply and demand. Bridging programs do not address these challenges which impact IEPs on a daily basis and to portray that they can integrate them into their profession is a misconception. George however distances himself placing the responsibility and blame on the authorities who make decisions. He alludes to “someone out there” making those decisions that impact the IEPs. The regulations that govern them have
been placed by those who have been in power. Such notions of power and
discrimination can be hidden under “official processes and requirements” that could be
discreet and subtle or could be open and visible. These instruments of power shroud
the inequalities experienced by the IEP’s in an insidious manner. Systems may appear
to be equal to all, but not necessarily equitable. The bridging programs do not address
this important challenge and remain silent on the issue allowing the discriminatory
practices to continue. These programs have been developed to address the challenges
IEPs face and integrate them into the labour market, but there seems to be little
acknowledgement or willingness to help overcome them. The existing systems and
structures are well established and emphasized as the natural way of doing things, but
do not necessarily recognize that power can operate within policies for privileged groups
while having a negative impact for others (Ball, 1993). When organizations or
professional associations are created, it is not uncommon that the dominant community
at the time administers more power and influence decisions in their favour. Power
revolves around individuals and communities that form the systems and with it is
attached some privilege. When most professional associations were taking shape in
Canada, there were fewer immigrants from non-European countries. It can therefore be
argued that the current systems in place affords those who created them some sort of
privilege. Being a gate keeper to the profession is one such configuration of control and
power that needs to be looked at closely. While we recognize the existence of racial
inequalities and tensions that exist in relation to the IEPs and bridging programs, it
should not be lost that it is one of the reasons that intersects with other concepts such
as class and neoliberalism which we continue to discuss below.
10.4 Class in Class

“Back home I was a king, here I am not even a beggar. That’s (my) status” (Agha).

These are strong words with which Agha, an HR consultant with a double Master’s degree describes his status in Canada at the time of the interview. According to him, even beggars have some status. The statement encapsulates class as a socio economic status and depicts his condition as having taken a drastically negative turn in terms of his economic condition and standing in society after coming to Canada. Class issues are essential in understanding the material inequalities that surround us (Orelus, 2011). The concept of class and class struggle developed by Marx and Engels is built around group identification and intergroup conflict that is grounded in a strong economic foundation. The groups in our discourse are the IEPs like Agha who are usually identified as “immigrants” while others are considered as “Canadians”. New immigrants have to constantly prove themselves and are looked down by various assemblies of authority. Some however experienced embarrassment in their classrooms as Amir describes:

The people who are coming to give lectures (at the bridging program) are having too much ego of being Canadian which increased my feeling that I’m not from here, they don’t welcome although many people other than them are saying so, even at the borders when you come, they welcome you to your new home or something like that, but these people are living somewhere else, like we are Canadians and you are non-Canadians (Amir).

According to Amir, those that teach in the bridging program classes felt that they were better than their students without realizing that they probably had more education and more international experience. The teachers made him feel he was a second class citizen compared to them. A big difference between the two was that the teachers were privileged and had employment while the students were not. Class works in a way
where people having less privilege are made to feel inferior and worthless. The teachers here had privilege and it was being made evident. Rose who was a psychologist echoed similar sentiments. This is what she observed:

*I noticed in the Bridging Program that the people (instructors) who came to our class spoke at us, not with us, so they were kind of belittling us and they almost treated us as if we were intellectually challenged because you were coming from another place and I think a lot had to do with (feeling of) security because (they think) these are people who will be your competition* (Rose).

As a psychologist, Rose went a little further and analyzed the situation as to why this was happening. She explains how the instructors “spoke at us and not with us” where the students were talked down upon, usually done with language that segregated the ‘you’ from ‘us’. They isolated and belittled ‘you’ by creating a feeling that they had less intellect. She also suggests that this was happening as a result of insecurity the instructors felt with their employment and a fear of having competitors for their jobs in the future. Her analysis helps us understand how relationships are played out, identifying the motives and decisions of certain groups. Such relationship between the instructors and their students was not always positive. The IEPs felt belittled and undervalued and being led to taking jobs that were of less value. Behrang voiced his experience where the instructors or facilitators made the IEPs feel they had sub-par education who would find it difficult to integrate into the labour market in Canada:

*I experienced people who were working for newcomers (bridging programs) had kind of preconception, they were thinking low of people coming from developing countries… Yeah, professors or facilitators of different workshops who were working for these organizations and who worked with newcomers, they had the kind of mindset that people from these countries are not civilized enough to integrate into the country, you know, because of all the communication barriers and cultural barriers, it was difficult for them to work with these people* (Behrang).
Behrang highlights issues related to class and power. The instructors or professors in his classroom had a preconceived notion of superiority over newer immigrants. They had a mindset that those coming from developing countries were uncivilized, hence of a lower economic and inferior educational status. According to the instructors, as Behrang describes, IEPs lacked the necessary “class” to succeed in Canada. Class here is used to denote people of certain racial and economic background. Rose calls it an effort to “keep working class as working class and higher class as higher class” (Rose). These were not isolated experiences. The oppressive behavior Amir, Rose and Behrang have articulated were repeated occurrences that took place at separate times, different classrooms and were independent of each other. Even though the IEPs who are qualified in their field of training experienced oppressive behaviors, the development and augmentation of the ‘bridging’ programs has left little recourse for new immigrants other than to take the courses.

Rose elaborates succinctly how the speakers in their classroom discouraged them to pursue their professional designation and consider positions of less importance. She recalls:

*I remember a speaker who came to us who was a psychologist who said, you will never be able to do this so you might as well just do case management or be a support worker and that this is way too big for you and in that sense it was very belittling and looked down upon us and kind of did not see us as equals and that was horrible and made people feel even worse* (Rose).

As described by Rose, she was not only belittled but ridiculed and discouraged into utilizing her skills to the fullest. Along with exercising power, this incident identifies security and the fear of having their job and privilege taken away by an IEP as the main reason of their behaviour. Through her statement, Rose reveals a mindset that exists among many people including professionals, that, IEPs possess deficit in their
education and experience in comparison to those who have studied here in Canada. Their qualifications are somewhat lacking and that they are not up to par. When the professionals who are supposed to encourage and guide newcomers are themselves not confident or supportive and look down on newcomers, they can neither guide nor advocate for any change. Furthermore, if they saw IEPs as competitors in the future, the necessary support would be questionable. Accordingly, this was the reason for misguiding IEPs into taking less demanding jobs.

Immigrants in Toronto rank amongst the most marginalized groups, often experiencing underemployment and underutilization of skills. A study by Hulchanski (2010) looked at the socio economic trends in Toronto during a 35-year period leading up to 2005 and found a dramatic transition of Toronto into three distinct cities with a rapidly decreasing middle class. He identified the polarization of the city into wealthy neighborhoods that comprised of a population that was mainly white (82%) whereas neighborhoods that were disadvantaged comprised of 61% immigrants most of who were of non-European background. With an increase in the number of recent immigrants to Canada from non-European countries in recent times, the intersection of race and class has taken a new meaning. Such intersectionality is explained succinctly by instructor Paul:

*from the theoretical perspective it is the theory of elites you know both are elites in race, in class, and all of that intersect at the top, and target newcomers, again race does come in, who are the newcomers, they’re all Asian they’re all African, they’re all Caribbean, these are the people, 30% of all newcomers are Asian right, so there goes that. In terms of class, most of them don’t come with properties, most of them don’t come with lot of cash in their pockets, and most of them are required to bring in one year worth of money, so that’s where the class intersects and most of them if they don’t find a job within the year, they’re basically on the streets, they are below poverty line, so there goes your class (SP. Paul).*
Paul summarizes the predicament of the IEPs and how class, race and neoliberalism intersect. As an instructor, he asserts that these are issues that take care of the ‘elite’ and highlights new immigrants as coming from countries in Asia and Africa. He further asserts how class interplays in the situation where IEPs bring savings which get dispossessed within a year, relegating them to an economically underprivileged status. The influence of neoliberalism creeps into this discussion with the interest and focus to maintain privilege for the ‘elite’. According to Arat-Koc (2014) race is classed and class is raced. These are closely intertwined with the neoliberal governmentality and hegemony when it comes to the IEPs. Arat-Koc (2014) explains that neoliberalism produces subjects who see themselves in progressively culturalized ways, linking race-thinking to technologies of power. Those who are powerless are considered culturally alien, leading to their exclusion. Accordingly, this approach to race makes it possible to identify how race-thinking is used in the exclusion of people along their colour line.

Nineteen participants in this thesis were from racialized backgrounds and their daily experience resonated an inter-twinning of race and class in their social and economic activities. As Roxana Ng (1996) explained, class is a theoretical concept experienced in the day to day reality. In the case of IEP’s, such experiences are embedded at various stages of their living after their arrival in Canada; from the time one lands at the airport, in their settlement, taking of bridging programs, seeking employment and beyond.

### 10.5 Conclusion

From the evidence of the IEPs mentioned above, not only did the bridging programs fail to address the challenges related to discrimination and racism but in some instances such hurdles were experienced by the students in their classrooms and placements associated to the programs. The IEP concerns were echoed by the service
providers who also identified instances of racism that were reported to them. These results have been further validated through another study commissioned by the Wellesley institute where over half of the respondents identified discrimination as a barrier to obtain work citing that these findings are significantly higher than those that have normally been reported (Akter et.al, 2013). The jobs that are available for immigrants are labor-intensive jobs that require little use of education or skills.

*If the labour market continues to relegate workers from racialized groups to the back of the pack, the number of Canadians left behind will only accelerate calling into question the promise that Canada is a fair and caring society committed to equal opportunities, no matter who you are and where you come from* (Block and Galabuzi, 2011. p. 3).

Canada needs young and well educated people to sustain its economic growth and compete on the global market. It needs to make full use of the readily available immigrant talent and skills that exist. Some internationally trained professionals may get good jobs but many have no choice but to take low end jobs, unrelated to their education and skills. “(The) economic coping strategies are at best interim stepping stones to the formal labour market but, at worst they are a source of prolonged exploitation and abuse where people remain trapped” (Akter et.al, 2013. p7). Bridging programs that are supposed to help overcome racism and class become not a solution but a source of some of these challenges. The IEPs were put down in their classrooms leaving them in a state of despair and hopelessness, making them believe that it is their own fault for not getting integrated into their profession. With this internalization it impacts the individual IEPs by diminishing their aspirations leading to survival jobs and creating an army of highly educated laborers.

The model of the bridging programs is such that education is represented as an economic production function with little to address the oppression experienced by IEPs.
While it is possible that the perpetrators may not recognize reasons for their behavior or the power they yield, the victims on the other hand who are impacted the most, continue to struggle to prove themselves by overlooking the oppressive behaviors they experienced. Such notions of injustice need to continually be exposed and challenged for a just society. Troublesome is the subtle discriminatory behavior mentioned above that impacts IEPs on a daily basis but because it is masked it cannot be identified as such. When a person cannot be considered or given an opportunity to prove themselves as a result of their name, accent or colour of their skin, what other obstacles could they anticipate to overcome before they get employed in their profession?

There is disconnect between how the government views economic integration. On one hand, it is to do with what the bridging programs can achieve, and on the other how IEPs experience it on a daily basis. Instead of perpetuating a feeling of difference, the bridging programs should respectfully be engaged in breaking down barriers and empowering the IEPs to challenge the marginalization that exists, supporting equal opportunities for all and a fight for social justice.
Chapter 11

Bridging Programs: A Neoliberal Model and Who Really Benefits

11.1 Introduction

Imbued with an invariant essence of providing support for the Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) to overcome challenges in their integration into their profession, bridging programs as identified in earlier chapters have anomalies that have been brought to light. This chapter highlights the impact of neoliberalism as a guiding principle of the Provincial government in its development of bridging programs and exposes it to be an issue that is not only confined to the individual or local level but is more pronounced and remains systemic. The experiences and narratives of participant challenges discussed so far have identified some key issues that impact the success of such programs. There are other important ones such as to do with funding that we continue to discuss in this chapter. The funding model that revolves around the neoliberal principles is unstable and curtails both the service providers to make plans over the long term while having limitations for IEPs to access such subsidies. According to the participants, there does not appear to be a consistent, organized and concerted effort to address the challenges and barriers faced by IEPs and the response of the bridging programs to address them is like a band-aid solution. With unreliable outcomes, an important question on who really benefits out of all these programs is a natural consequence. Findings highlight the business sector, IEPs and the service providers as being among the benefactors.
11.2 Market Based Approach

The service providers who developed and ran the bridging programs had to overcome the strict funding requirements leading them to compete amongst themselves. When resources are scarce and limited, the system works more like a capital market where those who are more established have a better advantage than others. With funding for the bridging programs open to almost any type of non-profit institution ranging from community agencies, professional organizations, or universities and colleges, competition for the limited resources is inevitable. Mary gives us an insight into the differences that exist between the various types of service providers;

In the non-profit sector, there is some concern about bridging programs now going mostly to universities and colleges. So they do have the technical expertise but the community aspects, the counseling, case management, the understanding of the issues and barriers faced by immigrants, the non-monetary purpose behind supporting them is lost when there is more funding to colleges and universities…We had a partnership and it was successful, but now after two or three years it’s a fee for service…all the stakeholders to be at the table is important, because they may have the technical expertise but the other areas of understanding the barriers, support, counselling, coaching maybe more readily available with the community (SP. Mary).

Mary raises a number of concerns in terms of competition between community-based institutions’ and academically grounded establishments of higher learning. She highlights the strengths of the community-based agencies in comparison with established educational institutes like universities and colleges. Mary identifies the differences in the type of services these two streams of establishments provide with a big contrast in their focus, delivery and expertise that is available to the participants. There are glaring inconsistencies that are acknowledged by Mary. According to her, the strength of the universities and colleges is to do with technical skills while the community-based service providers’ focus more on the soft skill challenges IEPs face such as counselling, coaching, case management etc. Mary complains about
competition between universities and non-universities in providing bridge training and feels disappointed at losing out to universities when it comes to funding, even though they may have been more effective with their participants in getting them employment.

After completion of the bridging program, certification is usually presented to the participants, which may or may not have any bearing on an IEP getting employed. A certificate from the university could however carry more weight due to the name recognition of the institution, as compared to a community agency, even though their program may have been more effective. While there is competition between established educational institutes such as colleges and universities on one hand and the community agencies on the other, one thing that has become evident is that they all have become willing accomplices to the government and corporate interests and in the process relegated the integration and social issues faced by IEPs to the background.

The economic direction and intent of the government is reproduced through the policies and instruments it has under its control. According to Marx as summarized by Prasad (2005), there is a strong connection between economic conditions and institutions in the society. The practices and culture of the government is reflected in the institutions or machinery of the government which in this case includes the service providers. Through the bridging program contracts, the government outsources its obligations to the service providers. The service providers have to meet the contract obligations diligently to continue receiving funding in a way that they almost become an extension of the government. Universities have traditionally paved the way for free thought and open discourse that brings about a transformation. However, with the reality of low wage jobs as we emphasize later in this chapter and erosion of social provisions, the influence of neoliberalism emphasizes market relationship that severs
the link between education and social change while limiting the agencies to oblige to the markets (Giroux, 2004). The focus of the institutions is on meeting the program requirements which curtails the ability of service providers to be flexible and transformational. McLaren argues that the universities should be challenging the abuse of civic, public, and the institutionalized power but instead are “abandoning the public sphere and embracing the market based neoliberal rationality that powers the private sphere” (McLaren, 2011, p.102). Under such a notion both the universities as well as other service providers that deliver the bridging programs become enterprising opportunists who are more focused on meeting the program requirements and developing various types of ‘quick fix’ programs that may assist a limited few while disregarding the systemic challenges that most IEP’s face. With this neoliberal approach the universities and educational institutes that could play a front line role to fight the challenges IEPs face have become complacent and partners with the government in promoting their agenda.

11.3 Unstable and Insecure Funding

A stable source of funding is key to the success of any programs. There was however concern identified from both sides of the spectrum; the service providers who have been delivering the programs as well as the IEPs for whom the programs have been created on funding model. The service providers who included universities, colleges and community agencies brought to the fore how funding for the bridging programs was unstable, short term, inconsistent and insecure, impacting their delivery of service. These institutions have become enterprising to create programs that fit the funding requirements even though there were issues with the structure of the programs.
These programs are short term and different from the usually established courses where funding is stable and long term. The short term funding as Paul mentions, affected the long term planning of the programs. This is what he stated:

*There is no secure funding in place, so if there’s no secure funding. There’s no long term planning that you can do (SP. Paul).*

Paul highlights that as a result of not having secure funding, they were not able to do any long term planning and are at a loss to utilize the learnings and experience from previous years. These programs are fairly new and the experience of delivering them should be helpful in making them better in consequent years. A sound and stable funding base is therefore extremely important for the programs to be productive and successful. Funding for the bridging programs is limited in duration and is based on a model of a three year cycle. Any new programs that have been created are limited to three years of funding (MCI, 2011b, p. 4). There is no guarantee if a particular program will last beyond those years. “This mentality puts a strain on organizations since organizations must constantly apply for short term funding, in a world of uncertainty, with tight time constraints and heavy administrative details” (Goldberg, 2005, p.46). With such uncertainty, programs cannot be fully developed and institutions have to play a guessing game on whether they could get funding on a long term basis and on how long the program could last. Any subsequent extension has to be reapplied and reassessed with no guarantee that funding could be renewed. A program could potentially last for up to three years or less and not be offered again. This can create doubts about the consistency, effectiveness and the success of the programs. It especially has an impact on the ability to develop important networks with institutions, industry links, and mentors etc., who play an important role in getting people employed. Non-renewal of funding
leaves an impression that the program was not successful. By a similar inference, if the program was not successful, it could be assumed that the required standards were not met leaving the IEPs in the dark on the legitimacy of the instruction they acquired or the credibility of the certification received. There is a lot of time spent on developing a proposal for the program. Karen who was attached to a university echoed Paul’s sentiments in relation to the challenges her Director faced:

*The Director who has the final responsibility for the program faces a lot of challenges having to write a grant for funding every year to keep the program going (SP. Karen).*

A lot of time is spent on writing the grant as Karen outlines, and it had to be done regularly taking away valuable time and resources from the Program Director. It not only affects their long-term planning, but also their ability to fully develop the programs. In such a situation of uncertainty, creativity gets impacted as well as in making long term plans. The focus remains on resolving short-term issues and having to worry if the program will continue to exist in the following year or not. The stability gained through long-term planning is replaced by short-term gains that provide momentary benefits, overlooking the more stable and productive long range achievements. It also leads to a discourse that distances equality in favor of quality, accountability, efficiency and choice (Dei, et.al., 1997). The success of such programs and its continued funding is determined through the number of professional immigrants who get any job instead of “measuring systemic changes” (Goldberg, 2005, p. 54).

Funding is the key driver of these programs with stability and consistency remaining a key point of apprehension. To bridge the funding gap, the IEPs were required to pay which was a concern for many service providers. This was relayed by a number of them, with Mary relaying how initially the programs were considered to be a
“pilot project” and once they were successful, the funding was either reduced or terminated with the IEPs asked to pay:

A lot of times these programs are seed funded and they’re piloted and then once they’re successful then the government says we cannot fund them anymore (you have to) go get the funding. We ask the participants to pay and that’s really, really difficult (SP. Mary).

What Mary has highlighted as seed funding can be seen by many as an “enticement” or “a lure”, whereby the incentive to initiate and start a program leads to acquisition of funding. When a program is new, it requires more resources to lift it off the ground and funds required to start such a program are covered under such an agreement. Once the program is successful, the funding is either withdrawn, curtailed or the participants asked to pay for the program, a function of control under the neoliberalism. The unstable and insecure funding model that currently exists provides little support for the IEPs or leaves room for the service providers to plan any long-term strategies. It does not afford them to be creative in their effort to integrate the IEPs in their profession, nor does it make it easy for IEPs to go to class as well as work and be able to bring food to the table for their families. In its effort to avoid long-term commitment but still maintain control, the government has designated these programs as “pilots”, a way of not committing to either the funding nor the long-term establishment of it. Mary raised her concerns of losing out in the long run and suggested that funding should continue after the “pilots” have been completed. According to her:

If a program is successful, there should be ongoing funding and not pulled after the pilot is over because then those programs just disappear. So in the long run it’s a loss because you may be saving money by not funding but then again what about those (IEPs?) (SP. Mary).

According to Mary, funding is limited to the lifetime of the “pilot” program. She emphasizes that once the funding for the programs is taken away, the programs cannot
sustain themselves and have to be made obsolete. This leaves the students in a limbo, leaving many clamoring for an explanation on the real intent of such a funding model. If the programs have not been created to support IEPs who are already marginalized then the question that arises as to what is the real intent. It is also a manifestation of how the system has been developed, silently shifting the responsibility on service providers and placing pressure on these institutions to be creative to seek other sources of income in order to survive. These are systemic issues that place heavy emphasis on getting the students to pay, ascribing the institutions and students as players under market driven forces where the institutions that can attract more business (students) will be able to survive, while others will falter. The amount of fees vary from having no charge to up to $10,000 depending on many factors such as length, profession and type of institute among others.

Mary relates how it was difficult to seek funds from IEPs who may not have any earnings and were working hard to integrate into the labour market. She emphasized that it was not just difficult, but “really, really difficult.” Such accentuation underscores the severity of the issue and was not limited to Mary, as Jane another service provider who led a community based organization resonated similar sentiments on the challenges of charging fees to the participants:

A challenge we encountered was that the ministry required us to charge a fee to the individuals as well (SP. Jane).

As Jane and Mary describe, charging a fee to IEPs is a big challenge. Even when the organization found money elsewhere the ministry, as Jane states, required them to charge a fee. Placing such an obligation creates a dilemma for service providers. Jane’s organization is a community based agency that delivers many other programs which have no participant fees attached to them and so the requirement to charge a fee for the
bridging program was a surprise. It was seen as a difficult challenge even if they may not want to. Most community based organizations do not charge any fees for their services such as resume writing and job search workshops which are included in many bridging programs. Seeking fees for the bridging programs could pose a challenge for the organization and at the same time limit the students’ ability to be able to attend. When students cannot afford to make payments they have no choice but to drop out of class. George shared this concern stating that:

A number of students that had joined the program dropped out because they basically could not afford because we were moving from totally (free) students to students paying fees because we had to maintain the program after the government (stopped) funding it (SP. George).

George confirms Jane’s concern that his organization had no choice but to start charging in order to maintain the program, and as a result, a number of students dropped out due to their inability to pay for tuition fees. He also relates the discontinuation of funds from the government. The extant system represents an unreliable and inconsistent mix of the funding formulae where the Ministry’s insistence for the service provider to charge the participants of the program, affects the programs ability to be stable and be successful. Ali felt remorseful at the plight of immigrants. He gave reasons why as a service provider, it was difficult for them to get the IEPs to pay the fees:

One of the challenges we are facing right now for some of our programs is to convince newcomers to pay that fee. Now someone who is new to the country doesn’t have enough funds to carry on for many months because when you come to Canada you can be without a job for few months or sometimes for a few years and whatever savings you bring from back home can last you only a certain amount of time and I mean many newcomers here come with family as well, so convincing people to pay fees to attend the program has been a challenge (SP. Ali).
As a service provider, but also as an immigrant himself, Ali understood the challenges IEPs experience in their effort to integrate into the labour market. He acknowledged that, as a new immigrant who has no income, but has to provide for the family, can be a daunting task that can lead to their savings being exhausted. Convincing the already qualified IEPs to take a bridging program in order to practice in their profession and pay for it is a paradox and a contradiction that needs to be examined closely. On one hand, the program is supposed to help the IEPs, and yet on the other it places an emphasis to burden them with fees even though the institutions may not like it and are able to find other sources of funding. It is such system induced necessities that generate apprehension. Instead of addressing the challenges IEPs face, it creates an added barrier and the stress of finding funds to attend the program leading to the possibility of dropping out or missed opportunity as Jane describes:

*One of the challenges in the bridging program is that individuals may miss an opportunity because they cannot come up with the funds to participate in the program (SP. Jane).*

Jane highlights how programs have created extra challenges. While on one hand the government boasts of creating programs to help and address the needs of the IEPs, but on the other it asks the very people who it is meant to help, to bridge the funding gap. Without funds the IEPs either do not join the program or drop out of it. The sentiments relayed by Jane towards the IEPs regarding fees was quiet clear with her concern that the IEPs could miss an opportunity. However, the system that has been crafted by the government where IEPs have to pay for the bridging programs places them in a situation of vulnerability creating a commodity out of them. The service providers seek students to fill the gap in their funding requirements. Such a model encourages an aggressive marketing strategy that service providers have to adopt, reflective of a
commercial model that is focused on attracting much business. “Some programs have become highly competitive, with seat numbers poorly matched to demand” (Augustine, 2015, p.S19). The IEP's become a commodity to be attracted to the program, with the service provider getting paid through each participant that gets enrolled, validating neoliberalism as a key strategy of integrating immigrants with an economic advantage. The requirements that have been placed on the service providers creates tensions and contradictions manifested through individual experiences mentioned by the service providers above.

The universities and educational institutes play a key role in the production, dissemination and validation of knowledge and should respectfully be engaged in empowering IEPs to challenge the marginalization that exists and support a fair and suitable transition to integration into their profession. Instead, they are focused on attracting students to their programs and satisfy the funding requirements. With funding constrictions and complex administrative requirements, many of these programs are left with a continuous struggle to look for funds for their survival. For the IEPs, not being able to come up with funds to participate in the program is an indication of more austere issues that are discussed in the next section. Along with other systemic issues mentioned above, Sarah a service provider identified that the timing of allocation of funds was problematic. According to her:

*There is a systemic issue here on the timing of the fund allocation, like we apply in August /September for OBAP funding, say this many people will need, but by the time we get the funding (response) it is November/ December and by the time the funding reaches us, it is January/ February* (SP. Sarah).

What Sarah describes is another systemic issue that creates undue hardship even to the service providers. Funding is the lifeline of these programs. Any delays in receiving
the funds could result in unnecessary anxiety for the administrators not knowing what to expect. From the time an application is made for funding in August, it could take up to seven months for the funds to finally arrive in February. Such delays as it appears are not a one-off situation but speaks to a system that is rife with flaws at the various levels of its delivery process. The concerns of the service providers indicated above, poignantly point to issues related to the development of the bridging programs, their requirements, administration and monitoring which cannot be fixed through band-aid solutions but one that requires a substantial overhaul.

11.4 Accumulation by Dispossession

In Chapter 2, I talked about the concept of accumulation by dispossession under neoliberalism and how certain groups of people could be dispossessed of their assets for the benefit of a few. In this section I focus on how IEPs are dispossessed of their wealth, education and skills. Funds are allocated for bridging programs to integrate immigrant professionals into the labour market however these come with requirements of budget monitoring and productivity measurements. As seen above, the process of applying for grants by educational institutes and community based institutes to offer the bridging programs and the contradiction stipulated by the government for IEPs to pay for them, is a validation of neoliberalism where austerity and fewer supports to the public are reinforced. The service providers have been required to pass the burden of cost to the students who incur debt in order to practice their knowledge and skills as a professional. For the IEPs, attending and paying for the program remains a big stumbling block as Behrang explains:

*I was postponing many things to the end. I was not applying to jobs, I was focusing on these bridging programs. I was spending a lot of time and energy and this was very*
costly and I was spending all my savings, for two years, without even having a survival job and it was putting me in a very hard situation (Behrang).

The impact of paying for the program on one hand, and the inability to be able to work while attending the courses on the other, is a big stumbling block as described by Behrang. He explains how he was spending a lot of time and energy, seeking employment and not being successful at acquiring a survival job. Having spent all his savings in two years placed him in a difficult and precarious situation. He displayed disappointment and relayed the difficulties he faced in paying for the bridging programs. Such situations place IEPs in a precarious position where taking a bridging program places them in a position of debt and proscribes them to work and bring food to the table. Support through Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) is available only to certain bridging programs as seen in Chapter 6 and that too is in the form of a loan. Funding under Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance Program (OBPAP) is also limited to certain programs and covers only the tuition costs. There were some participants who mentioned having received the loan. It should be recognized that those enrolled in bridging programs are mature students with families. Enrolling in a bridging program for them is like dealing with a double edged sword in terms of monetary requirements. Whatever they choose, the IEPs will continue to have to deal with its consequences which are usually unfavorable to say the least. In contrast and unlike the bridging programs, the Second Career program administered by MTCU is a grant that not only covers participants with educational costs but also contributes towards basic needs and shelter costs to a maximum of $28,000 (MTCU, 2013). The contrast in funding within these two programs could be considered by many as discriminatory against the immigrant population. For IEPs enrolled in bridging programs, along with tuition costs,
expenses for credential assessments and certification can dauntingly add up. “The costs for participants can be considerable, reaching up to $30,000 for a one-year program” (OFC, 2013, p.30). The necessary costs for shelter and basic needs need to be included along with other costs associated with settlement and adjustment to a new life in a new country. Most importantly these individuals need to provide food for the family. Enrolling in a course and earning a living to feed themselves and their family at the same time can create circumstances of poverty. It becomes even more difficult for some participants as there are programs that do not qualify for any funding as we saw in Chapter 6. Expecting such participants to attend class and pay for tuition and expenses for basic necessities of life at the same time can be overwhelming and demoralizing. Interpreting these findings helps deepen understanding of how discrimination and neoliberalism intersect as discussed in Chapter 2. On one hand, austerity under neoliberalism drives students to make payments for their courses and living expenses under the bridging programs, while those who take Second Career programs are supported financially in significant way. The Second Career programs are geared towards Canadians while the bridging programs are intended for new immigrants drawing lines of discrimination between the two groups.

Zahra recounted how the savings she brought to Canada became exhausted in seven months affecting her financial situation and bringing sadness to her. She narrated how she used up her savings;

*I have to pay my bills, to tell you frankly from whatever I got from back home in seven months, it’s almost zero and I feel so sad going to sometimes factory job or working at Tim Horton’s* (Zahra).

Zahra highlights the issue of bringing savings from back home which may have taken her years to accumulate and exhausting it in Canada within a few months. After being in
Canada for almost a year her economic situation was worse than when she first arrived. She had lost her savings and was still struggling to get back into her profession at the time of the interview. Harvey (2007) compellingly describes such articulation as “accumulation by dispossession,” the occurrence of which can explain the creation of underemployment to produce a pool of low-waged surplus labour, dispossessing immigrants from their trained profession, while allowing those controlling the markets to maintain their stronghold and further their accumulation. When the number of those in a profession are limited they can continue to benefit and maintain control of the profession. These experiences signify the depth of suffering some IEPs have to go through when they are enrolled in the bridging programs. Their situation is such that when they come to Canada, they are not only dispossessed of their education and training until a time they can repossess it, but as Zahra has articulated, they get disposed of their savings they had acquired over many years which may be difficult to replace. They however spend time and money on bridging programs expecting that they will be gainfully employed in their profession after completing it which may not materialize as we have seen with many participants. With such anticipation and hope, they are even prepared to risk it and get into debt as Samir recounts:

*The problem is that almost all students take OSAP loans, and finally after completing the program forget (that they have) to pay back OSAP, so that is also another struggle for them. Because, they are already in financial trouble, after completing, they are in more trouble* (Samir).

Samir highlights the issue of taking loans to complete the program, which, he indicates as getting into deeper financial trouble. Much can be said from the experiences of the IEPs when it comes to trying to get their education and experience legalized and acceptable. Their expectation that the bridging programs will be an avenue of last
bastion to get themselves working in their profession places them in a vulnerable position. Under such circumstances, the concern is that IEPs like Samir could be treading a fine line drawn between survival and being dragged into poverty, none of which could be seen as a positive outcome.

Transferring the funding requirement to the IEPs is seen as a way to sustain the programs and a way forward for the government (Duncan & Poisson, 2008). Reducing the safety net is one of the key principles of neoliberalism and as observed above some IEPs are dispossessed of the assets they brought to Canada. The reality of low wage jobs for IEPs, discriminatory attitudes towards racialized people and the erosion of social provisions increase the desire to produce market relationships that enhance consumerism while creating a distance between education and social change (Giroux, 2004). In an environment dictated by market forces, if IEPs lose their assets it is of no consequence to the market. But for IEPs losing their savings and getting into debt could leave them exposed to dire circumstances even if they got employed in their profession. If they fail to achieve the integration into their profession, they could face a long and difficult journey ahead, susceptible to falling into poverty and other social problems.

Amir was very blunt and sums up his frustration about paying for the bridging programs in a few words. He said:

*I’m ready to pay to get the job easily but when I end up nowhere then why the hell I paid?* (Amir).

Amir demonstrates his frustration and relates two important issues. The first was the expectation that completing the bridging program would help him get a job which did not materialize and the second was the payment he had to make which placed him in debt and long-term difficulty. One can safely assume that Amir like others are ready to pay
as long as it could bring them benefits in terms of getting into their profession. It is a sacrifice they are willing to make which is not just the story of one person but a reverberation of many others who continue to experience similar exploitative and oppressive challenges. Their predicament is not a one-off situation. The current model of bridging programs falls under a system created under the watchful eye of the government. When the solutions put forward by the government become a hindrance, what choice do the IEPs have, other than to make themselves available as highly educated labour force, to accept precarious employment? This is also promoted under neoliberalism as a moral perspective where a virtuous person is seen to be one who is able to access and be an active player in the relevant markets (Thorsen, 2009). If the person cannot get employed in their profession, it is as a result of their own deficiencies and they should be available to take any other job. Doing so creates a pool of labour that is highly educated and qualified that is available to the markets for precarious work.

11.5 Neoliberal Governmentality: Legitimizing ‘Deficit’

Neoliberalism impacts IEPs and the community in many ways as described above. One significant way it impacts society is in the behaviors and desires of its citizens (Baltodano, 2012). In many ways the bridging programs intensify and exacerbate many aspects as explained in Chapter 2 in regards to neoliberal governmentality, some of which may not be as obvious. Using the interpretivist approach to understand the discourse of the participants, one cannot fail to see how IEPs were being led to believe that they have shortcomings in their education and experience and the bridging programs was a solution to the gaps they may possess. Assumptions are made to emphasize that they have deficits in their knowledge and skills without really finding out the talents they possess. Furthermore, the bridging programs could be seen to reinforce
that after going through the programs, if the IEPs do not get a job, it is as a result of their own shortcoming. Samir who has international experience in social work related his frustration as follows:

*When we say these are our experiences and we have our certain qualification which are very competent in. Still we found that when we presented our statements based on these views of ideas that we had back home, they told me that I have no experience and social work skills work and the capacity we had (from) back home was not progressive social work practice (Samir).*

For Samir, it was a setback having practiced in an international arena to be informed that his experience and knowledge was not important. He felt his education had been negated and considered inferior and out of place in Canada. What the bridging program did for him was to identify his deficit and legitimize it by letting him know that things are done differently in Canada. There is subtle messaging in such a practice that reinforces the other as having deficits in their knowledge and education. In a way, Samir was made to believe that he should readily accept, that his knowledge was of no value, and if he did not get a job, it was as a result of his inadequacy and inferior education different from that in Canada. For Samir, the process believing that he had deficiencies as a result of his own fault had already begun. By so doing the focus of the program was directed on Samir’s education and knowledge, completely side-stepping other key and relevant issues that are systemic such as related to discrimination, racism etc.

Behrang who had experience taking numerous bridging programs elaborates on this mentality of governance by expounding as follows:

*Professors or facilitators of different workshops who were working for these organizations who worked with newcomers, and they had these kind of mindset that people from these countries are not civilized enough to integrate into the country, you know, because of all the communication barriers and cultural barriers, it was difficult for them to work with these people (Behrang).*

Although Behrang was employed at the time of the interview, he emphasized the
predetermined mindset of some professors who taught these classes. With his experience of the bridging programs, he describes how blame is inferred on the IEPs with a mindset that negates the skills and education of the IEPs. With such predetermined ideas, one can interpret and assume that the teachers and professors would try to prove themselves to be right and reinforce that the IEPs had deficiencies for them to be integrated into their profession. It alters their sense of self and can lead them to believe they are not worthy of practising in their profession. With such internalization, the real issues become blurred and invisible. The blame and responsibility is left on IEPs to resolve their integration by meeting the laid out professional and government requirements. The experience of Behrang was also reiterated by Rashid who had this to say:

so that’s the kind of a view that is created, like oh maybe he wasn’t good enough that he had to go through all this again (Rashid).

What Rashid is stating is directly related to the bridging programs and how they could be exacerbating the perception that the IEPs are taking these programs because they are not good enough and their education and knowledge is not up to the required standard. According to Rashid, the seeds of the thought process that he has deficits and it is his own fault for not getting employed had been planted. Conversely, it also reiterates that those who are practicing in their own field of training is because of their knowledge and education. Once again in such situations the focus is shifted on the IEPs and away from other relevant systemic issues that exist. “The idea that those who are at the top are there because of merit necessarily implies that those who are under-represented lack merit in some way. And the corollary is that lack of success must be linked to a failure to work hard, or to personal flaws such as laziness, criminality or parasitism” (Davison and Shire, 2015, p.85). These ideas do not augur well for any
community, and they are even more concerning with the influx of immigrants to Canada expected to continue. More attention should therefore be given to how neoliberalism subjectifies individuals and creates high poverty and increased wealth disparity while shielding systemic and discriminatory issues related to equity and justice.

11.6 Who are the Beneficiaries of the Bridging Programs?

It is a business. Its money making, it’s a money making racket. If you want my free, frank opinion, it’s a money making racket. Because behind this there is some other people who get paid, who make money over this (David).

The bridging programs have been created to support and help the IEPs integrate into the labour market. These programs have been proclaimed by the government as “helping skilled newcomers find good jobs that match their qualifications” (Ontario Government, 2011). A lot of resources and funds have been allocated to such programs with an emphasis that they will benefit the IEPs in their effort to once again practice in their profession. While the ‘official version’ portrays IEPs as the main beneficiaries for whom the programs have been created, response from both the service providers and the IEPs depict a different picture. Most service providers who participated in this thesis identified employers as among those who profited the most, a stark contrast to what has been portrayed as the original intent of the program. The IEPs on the other hand indicated that it was the service providers who benefited through having employment and that they (IEPs) gained some benefit from the bridging programs as well.

11.6.1 The Employers

I start with the views of the service providers and how George identifies employers as benefitting from the bridging programs:

I think employers (benefit). Those people who have gone through the bridging programs
and the employers can be employing these people more confidently then those who have freshly arrived (SP. George).

George reflects on those who complete the program as being more prepared and benefitting the employers due to their exposure in Canada. George raises the issue of employer confidence in hiring of IEPs. The emphasis as it appears is not on education, skills or experience of the IEPs but on how an employer feels and their confidence level in who they wish to employ. It implies therefore that the hiring or not by the employers has nothing to do with the education or skills of the IEPs but how they felt about them. Although the employers are the beneficiaries of the program as George indicated, the irony is that there others who believe as mentioned elsewhere that employers were not hiring them. Those who hold this belief are the ones who were not successful in being hired. Mary, another bridging program service provider with a community agency articulates clearly how the employers benefit from the bridging programs:

_I would like to think it’s the employer though they are not aware in many cases, the internationally educated (IEPs) of course, but then they are so open to learning and so eager they are willing to do anything. So even if you give them a crappy program, they’ll do it because they’ll think it’s at least one step further. But the people who are ultimately at the receiving end are the employers and I think they benefit when they get people who are well informed, who are confident, who are ready to go, who are familiar and who can integrate quickly and you know retain those positions, so I think it’s the employers but it’s unfortunate that the employers may not be aware of this. And they’re getting these people without paying a penny right? (SP. Mary)._ 

According to Mary, it is the employers who are the beneficiaries of the bridging programs. She states that as a result of these programs, the employers get their personnel who are well rounded, have good knowledge, are confident and can integrate efficiently into their workforce. This is a win/win situation for the professional areas. On one hand as Shibao Guo (2009) has explained the professional bodies act as gatekeepers to their profession and have the control of who gets in their profession and
who does not. On the other hand as Mary describes, when they allow someone in their profession, they get “people who are well informed, who are confident, who are ready to go, who are familiar and who can integrate quickly and you know retain those positions.” To hire, train and retain an employee involves time and expense which the bridging programs provide to the advantage of the employers. Mary however, also mentions that the employers may not be aware of the benefits they are reaping as a result of the bridging programs. I would like to emphasize that such outcomes are reflective of the system that has been created to benefit businesses whether they recognize or not.

Revelation by service providers that the beneficiaries are employers, affirms the neoliberal nature of the programs and exposes important flaws that have contrasting outcomes. While the service providers who deliver these programs felt the employers were the biggest beneficiaries, IEPs on the other hand have not been able to reap meaningful benefits or be employed in their profession as they had expected. McBride and Shields (1997) have expounded that “fundamentally neo-liberalism is about shifting decision-making power to the marketplace and establishing a government policy environment that is driven by corporate priorities” (p.14). The programs that are promoted as a panacea for the IEPs also benefit businesses with employers reaping rewards of getting trained employees without spending money on them. Mary also commends the positive attitude and flexibility IEPs bring with their readiness to learn and do anything, even enroll into a “crappy” program in order to get closer to attaining employment. It is not one sector or profession that benefits out of this. While professional sectors may benefit by getting more qualified and experienced people for lower skill jobs for eg a foreign trained engineer may accept a technician’s position out of necessity. The sectors that benefit the most are those that are precarious, employing
part time or temporary workers such as security guards, taxi drivers or retail traders. The public sector such as the municipal governments’ have their own programs while the non-profit sector especially in the social services sector benefits through programs that are subsidized where IEPs who are highly qualified are sought after. The IEPs become so desperate to get into their profession that they will do anything for it. While many IEPs, in the hope of being able to work or get licensed, or to be allowed to put into practice their knowledge and education have to struggle to pay fees for the bridging programs, the biggest beneficiaries are the businesses who incur no costs. Jane also emphasized a similar point:

*I think the IEPs benefit from the programs, but I also think the business sector benefit a lot from the bridging programs. They’re getting candidates that are well rounded and experienced from other countries* (SP. Jane).

Jane joins other service providers in emphasizing how employers were benefiting through the availability of well-rounded experienced employees without having to train or spend money on them. These revelations come from service providers who had no misgivings about the benefits to the business sector and shed light on the veiled and subtle nature of how the neoliberal agenda is put to practice with the government playing a key role in promoting it. It can also be seen here how neoliberalism strives to ensure IEPs are compelled to assume the norms set out for them by programs initiated by the government, where businesses are among the main beneficiaries.
11.6.2 The Internationally Educated Professionals

Although most participants were not employed in their profession at the time of interview, they did find that they benefited to some degree from participating in the bridging programs. Both the service providers and the IEPs indicated that there was some benefit for the participants in the program. Lucine described her experience as follows:

*you will become a citizen of that country, so to understand how it works… it’s very important… yeah… I think it was very helpful* (Lucine).

Lucine who emigrated from Europe found that she benefited from the program by understanding how the country functioned. This was significant for her as she prepared to be a Canadian citizen. Acquiring citizenship is of extreme importance for new immigrants and as demonstrated by Lucine, despite the challenges IEPs experienced, acquiring Canadian citizenship was paramount for her. As a result of learning how Canada works, Lucine felt she was a beneficiary of the bridging programs without realizing that such knowledge and learnings about Canada and how it works could be acquired through other community-based programs that are available at no cost. Furthermore, it raises concerns of a contradictory nature where Lucine is looking forward and preparing herself to be legally recognized and included as a Canadian citizen, she however continues to remain excluded from the labour market and unable to benefit or be accepted like other Canadian professionals. What we can interpret from Lucien’s experience is the intersectionality of neoliberalism and discrimination. Whereas on one hand the government prepares highly educated immigrants as citizens who find it difficult and discriminated to practice in their profession but readily available for the labour force.
How the system functions and the structure of the government was seen to be important for Asha who recounted her experience as follows:

Knowing the system, knowing the policies, knowing the different tasks, knowing the different levels of the government, knowing the municipality, knowing the structure, knowing the funding structure, knowing the theory was really useful for me (Asha).

As a result of learning about the system, different levels of government, and its functioning, Asha considered herself to be a beneficiary of the program. She also notes that as a social worker being aware of the funding structure was important to her.

Knowing the system and making friends was a common theme that resonated with the IEPs, with Rashid echoing the benefit of knowing the system, but also of making new friends:

Familiarizing with the system and sometimes they help to find connections. Also to see people that they are going through the same thing, to make friends… they let you know about stuff… yeah getting connections and getting to know about stuff (Rashid).

The benefit of making friends and networking which was discussed in the previous chapter was seen by Rashid to be helpful. He also raises the issue of his predicament of going through the challenges in looking for employment and it was through the bridging program that he felt reassured that he was not alone in his trepidations. This finding also portrays that the IEPs who are unemployed and going through the challenges of integration are not alone. The bridging programs bring the unemployed professionals together validating that the numbers are significant and the challenges substantial. According to what Rashid has stated, the bridging programs brought together IEPs who were in a similar situation who formed networks. The experiences of IEPs reiterate that it is a long and lonely journey to integrate into the labour market and having friends is helpful. Bourdieu (1986) explains that such networks are formed as a result of endless efforts of the institutions to bring them together where institutional rites
such as the bridging programs are seen as a rite of passage to this network. Through such groups, there is mutual recognition but is also surrounded by its limitations (Bourdieu, 1986). Such boundaries are evident even when they get together through their program as their voices may not be in synch since they are at different levels of trying to get accepted to practice in their profession. They come from different countries, have different educational backgrounds and experiences. Despite the higher education, IEPs feel helpless and marginalized and unless such boundaries are brought down change will be difficult to achieve.

The issue with IEPs is not illiteracy, rather they are highly educated but the system leaves them alienated from the mainstream making them feel powerless and dependent. They all have to fend for themselves individually. There does not exist a coalition powerful enough to challenge the discriminatory practices of the established structures, systems and norms. With various cohorts coming at different times they form small numbers and become “conspicuous members of the labour force, unable to form a powerful coalition, have to trade favors’ individually from the dominant group” (Sen, 1978, p.23). The bridging programs should therefore not only be teaching how to get a job or get experience or accredited, it should be an effort to challenge oppressive behaviors and empower the individual to bring about a change.

The benefit for IEPs who already have a post-graduate degree ranged from getting to “know the system”, “preparing to be a good citizen”, “making friends” or simply affirming what they already know. These are benefits they acquired from the bridging programs and are good for anybody, but my consternation is that if these were how the IEPs benefited, then was it necessary for them to go through these programs and pay for these courses. Some of these services were not directly related to their professional
career path and are already available through other community and City agencies. Such programs are available to the participants without having to pay for them. It therefore begs to ask the question why participants of the bridging programs have to pay for services that are available through other programs and are free of charge. Furthermore the bridging programs are supposed to act as a conduit for the IEPs to ensure they have an active place to exercise agency to address their challenges and pursue their goals. Such bridging programs should address individual demands, provide a collective response for the conditions IEPs experience and empower them to bringing change.

11.6.3 The Service Providers

Among the service providers and IEPs, there were some who identified the beneficiaries of the bridging programs to be service providers. Samir identified that the bridging programs were creating employment for some. This is what he had to say:

*the program itself is employment for some people, so they do benefit. Mostly they do benefit, that is employment for them* (Samir).

Samir is clear on who benefits from these programs. According to him those involved in administering the programs are the main beneficiaries as a result of employment created for them. Although the focus of the bridging programs is to address the challenges IEPs face, a consequence of it is creation of employment for those who are involved in the running of it. Bila, a service provider was candid in identifying the staff of the bridging programs as being the beneficiaries of the programs. He had this to share;

*Through this program some employment is created (for staff) and we are working and have got employment. It's (like) a shield and (through) employment we don't have much anxiety. If I look at the participants' perspective, they have a lot of anxiety about their education in a new country, about their job search, about running their life, about their families…multi levels of anxiety. But I believe working in a bridging program, I think our team members are very privileged to have that opportunity* (SP. Bila).
As a service provider himself, Bila recognizes that employment was created for staff like him and others. He explains that their employment acts like a “shield” from the anxiety experienced by the students and identifies reasons for such anguish. He reports that IEPs experience multi-levels of anxiety such as to do with accreditation, employment and welfare of their families. Bila believes that as one of those who is employed, he was like other service providers in a position of privilege compared to the students who were highly qualified but unemployed and experiencing hardships. According to him, the bridging programs serve the interests of those administering or teaching the programs. They are however placed in a difficult situation of having to tread carefully between their own interests and those of their students. Those who teach have to abide by strict guidelines on how the outcomes are measured limiting their creativity and abilities to make a difference in their students’ lives. Also, their empathy level towards those taking the bridging programs may be low as their own livelihoods have come to depend on them.

While Bila acknowledged that these programs have generated jobs for the service providers a closer look reveals that the type of employment that has been created has been casual, temporary and precarious. Sarah a service provider indicates that these types of jobs are mostly casual, precarious and contract based:

*I was brought on a casual basis because I had the skills and qualifications to run with this project because I have a lot of experience in project planning and I happen to be available, otherwise I don’t see anybody with my qualifications willing to take on a 6 week rolling contract… we had to hire our program assistant in the same way as well on a casual basis* (SP. Sarah).

Sarah describes her project planning education and experience that led her to the administrator of bridging programs job but it was casual and temporary. As an administrator who applied for grants and made sure the program ran well, her job was
temporary and precarious. The employment contracts Sarah describes, are short and the jobs casual, leaving the employee little room to plan for their own career, let alone for the IEPs they are trying to help. The precariousness of her job is evident from the six weeks of rolling contract being offered to her. For her there was no certainty that she will have her job beyond two months. The length of her contract was shorter than the programs she was managing. As an IEP with post graduate qualifications, she had little choice in accepting the short contracts to run the programs. The way these programs have been structured with their time limited funding is such that long term permanent and stable jobs are uncommon. The bridging programs are supposed to integrate IEPs into the labour market through long-term stable jobs in their profession of training. They are not practicing what they are preaching in getting IEPs integrated in the long term. Addressing the issue of integration is one aspect, but with Sarah’s experience, the programs seem to be breeding precarious short-term contractual employment. One might argue that this is the nature of business and how the institutes hire their staff. However, within these organizations there are many who deliver other programs who have more permanent or stable jobs while those delivering the bridging programs have part-time casual and contractual assignments.

In an effort to market these programs there is an effort to increase the student numbers while the teaching staff remain under sourced. This exposes the limited importance, seriousness and resources that are assigned by the government and other key players to the bridging programs and supports for the IEPs. The problem of precarious and short term, temporary jobs is confined not only to the service providers of bridging programs, but indicative of a larger problem IEPs face in their integration into the labour market in Canada. Identifying similar issues on immigrant employment and
education planning, Jaysree Sen (1978) called out decades ago that, “unless some exogenous, fortuitous force comes to their assistance, these workers (IEPs) have no choice but either to accept underemployment and/or to acquire additional credentials in the hope of successfully competing for the available jobs in the market” (Sen, 1978, p. 23). Needless to say that acquiring of more credentials or certifications for IEPs is no guarantee of getting integrated into their profession of training.

11.6.4 Other Beneficiaries

There are other beneficiaries of the bridging programs as indicated by the participants in this study. Those that have been mentioned so far are the employers, IEPs and the staff of the bridging programs. Other beneficiaries include the government and the society as whole. Ali, a service provider who works closely with employers succinctly sums up the beneficiaries of the bridging programs:

The direct beneficiary is the economy and the others would be employers because they should consider themselves very fortunate. I am talking about Canadian employers...thanks to Canada which actually has such a strong system of bringing newcomers here because if you look around the world right now and if you interview employers, many of them are saying that the biggest impediment to their growth around the world is not because they don’t have enough money or they cannot spend enough money but it’s because they don’t have enough skill talent so if all the skill talent is coming to Canada it is almost like a gift to them which some of them do realize and some of them do not, so I would say the employers are the biggest beneficiaries and I would say the society at large benefits because you know what, when this educated talent is coming to this country and if they are getting jobs compensated with their skills and experience. A happy citizen or happy resident is a healthy positive sign for the economy as well as for the society because for these individuals you don’t just see them as newcomers but once they find jobs they will also become consumers in this economy (SP. Ali).

Ali starts by indicating the economy as a beneficiary of the programs and refers to the contribution IEPs will make once they get employed. As mentioned repeatedly in this thesis, finding jobs for IEPs in their own profession remains an elusive goal. It is
recognized that the proponents of neoliberalism extol the virtues of open market, freedom of choice and less regulation etc. however the effects of its policies on IEPs are quite the opposite. Unlike other beneficiaries, individually they may be the only ones that have to incur a loss without any gain. Under the neoliberal philosophy this should not be of any surprise as everything is looked at from a standpoint of profit and loss (Giroux, 2014). Businesses benefit in a subtle and indirect way without any expense. While these bridging programs have been created to promote and benefit the IEPs, businesses remain the silent beneficiaries. Ali also raises the issue of the perception of the employers in regards to skills shortage they are facing. He responds by explaining that Canada attracts the top skilled immigrants from all over the world and that such talent is like a gift for the employers. Debunking the labour shortage theory, McQuillan (2013) contends that the widening gap between the skills that are possessed by the workers and the skills required in the labour market can be filled with better training and deployment of those unemployed to areas of need. With so many qualified IEPs seeking employment, it would require little training to fill the skills gap, if there was one. Ali further points to the international talent that is readily available to the business community and contends that the businesses along with society as a whole benefit. Accordingly, if the IEPs are employed in their profession they would spread their happiness to the society which in turn would impact the economy in a positive way. Ali’s assessment that the businesses and the society benefits is not complicated science. With jobs that are commensurate their qualifications, IEPs will spend and support the economy spreading benefits to all while meeting the objective of capitalistic policies. This however is in contradiction to the reality faced by IEPs due to high unemployment and underutilization of skills which leaves us with an understanding that there is no one
simple method that can help us understand and provide solutions to the predicament of so many trained and skilled immigrants.

11.7 Conclusion

*Canadian government brings in rich immigrants and turns them into poor persons* (David).

This statement by David sums up the frustrations and helplessness experienced by many new immigrants. This thesis is not just about an IEP gaining a job or access to the labour market, it is about being able to utilize their education, skills and knowledge through equal opportunities just like any other Canadian. The issue is not about an experience of one IEP or a service provider. Neither is it to do with one program or another; or one profession in relation to another. Rather, as espoused by both the IEPs as well as the service providers, it is one to do with how the programs have been developed and how they impact IEPs on a daily basis. The funding model of the bridging programs is such that the service providers have to create a program that has to meet the government funding requirements and are required to charge fees to the participants which they have reluctantly done so. Furthermore, funding to the service providers is attached to the quantitative outcomes that may not have much bearing on the real success of the participants. Those who are amongst the main beneficiaries are the businesses. Both the service providers as well as the IEPs acknowledged that jobs are created as a result of the bridging programs, but these are devoid of any job security or benefits. Temporary, part-time and casual jobs with no benefits are not an ideal job opportunity, revealing once again the precariousness and sad emptiness of neoliberalism. Instead of helping to fight the challenges and inequalities that exist for IEPs, bridging programs can be seen as a tool to help businesses acquire trained
personnel. The increase in inequality according to David Harvey (2007) is a result of the ongoing process of accumulation by dispossession that facilitates the transfer of wealth from the poor (and marginalized) to the wealthy (p.159-165). As seen in this chapter, issues related to funding and who really benefits from such programs give us insights into the gaps and deficiencies that exist, as we explore suggestions in the next chapter for possible solutions as identified by the IEPs. Such findings lead us to believe that unless there is a stable, resolute or systemized effort to address the challenges IEPs face, the band aid solutions will not make any significant dent in resolving the issues. If the bridging programs are used by the government as a tool to integrate the IEPs, it is not only failing in its endeavor but also exacerbating their plight by turning them into demoralized and exhausted professionals of the past on their way to being deskilled from their profession of training.
Chapter 12
Recommendations and Future Research

12.1 Introduction

The reduction of social programs under neoliberalism may be seen to be the way to economic prosperity; it however undermines the collective interest of Canada as a welfare state. The shrinking “social safety net” has affected those who are most vulnerable, leaving little room to focus on issues that are prejudiced and inequitable. Under neoliberalism, the inequality in employment and poverty is not considered to be due to discriminatory issues but rather the fault of the person and their failure to take responsibility for their own growth. By relegating the focus to the individual, the practices and role of corporations, associations or the government is ignored or reduced (Brown et al., 2003). The inability of IEPs to practice their profession can be considered as oppression that needs to be challenged every step of the way. “Neoliberalism does not merely produce economic inequality, iniquitous power relations, and corrupt political system; it also promotes rigid exclusions from national citizenship and civic participation” (Giroux, 2005, p.14). It should be understood that such acceptance of the suffering and use of IEPs as cheap labour are not the result of deficiencies on the part of the IEPs, but rather from having no choice other than for survival. One would expect the immigrants themselves to raise their voice, however they come to Canada as individuals and being new to the country, their immediate focus is to make ends meet and bring food to the table; they continue to suffer in silence. The question that remains is who and how to bring about any change. There have been many strategies that have been proposed and put forward to address the situation of the underutilization and undervaluing of IEP skills. The bridging program as seen in this thesis, is one such
strategy that was crafted by the government in anticipation of addressing issues related
to economic integration and the challenges faced by IEPs. The programs however, as
established in this thesis are not as successful as they claim to be, with glaring flaws
that have been identified and discussed in the previous chapters.

The bridging programs created by the government do little to address other
challenges such as the racial inequalities and discrimination that IEPs experience on a
regular basis. Some may relegate the discriminatory experiences of IEPs as being
individual acts of racism and out of the control of bridging programs. However, systemic
issues such as the accreditation and hiring practices of corporations that could be
addressed are overlooked and never brought to question or help overcome the overt
and covert discriminatory practices and the power dynamics that exist. It is only when
we look below the surface and perceive the issue as that of being systemic can we
bring a change of focus and demand for a bigger role for the government and its
institutions,

This thesis would remain incomplete without bringing forward suggestions on
ways to challenge neoliberalism along with discrimination and racism in order to help
integrate IEPs better into their professions. It calls for a complete overhaul of the system
to bring a lasting difference, and makes recommendations that could bring meaningful
change to have better results. Most of the discourse so far has been on immigrants and
their shortcomings and little to do with the systems that are currently in place which this
thesis focuses on. The bridging programs are part of the system and so this thesis by
raising the issue shifts the narrative to where it should be. It challenges the government
to re-examine its policies and programs so that they benefit those who they are
intended for. The recommendations here are mostly systemic with some that call for a
significant shift while others involve little adjustment to any new programs. I am not arguing that bridging type of programs be removed but rather their funding be increased and any programs that are developed be more meaningful and benefit those they have been created for. Increase in the number of immigrants from 2017 onwards will warrant increase in funding and if the system is to be fair then IEPs should be treated the same as those who have been educated in Canada similar to those who benefit from the Second Career program. If Ontario is going to be serious to integrate IEPs it has to make some invest on them to reap the benefits of their education and skills. A halfhearted effort will only bring about mediocre results.

These suggestions made below include those made by the IEPs based on their own experience of having completed the bridging programs, the service providers after having delivered them, and my personal insight having delved into the issues during this thesis. The recommendations call for changes to the legislation, funding for the IEPs, and the way these programs are developed. Marketing of any program that is created should reflect a true picture and include networks that are professionally meaningful with possibilities of gaining work experience part of all programs. These suggestions are focused on how best to improve the underutilization and underemployment of IEPs in general and bridging programs in particular.

12.2 Recommendations for Integrating IEPs

Recommendations for improving the integration of IEPs include those that are general in nature and also specific to any new program that is created. It is recognized that if we are to improve the plight of IEPs in relation to economic integration there have to be some drastic changes that need to be made. Below are brief suggestions that call
for changes to the system and any new program that is developed should have the interest of IEPs at its heart.

12.2.1 Assessment Before They Come to Canada

*Once a person is eligible to come to Canada they should be advised and provided with lots of information so they will be better prepared* (Tekle).

The educational accreditation and assessment of the IEPs should be done while their immigration is being processed prior to coming to Canada. If their education and skills are assessed prior to immigrating it could diminish a number of challenges IEPs face. This would reduce the time they have to spend on getting accredited and as a result have no issues in practicing their profession once they arrived in Canada. IEPs should also be encouraged to register with the professional associations in Canada from their countries of origin to allow the regulator to be familiar with their educational standards and assess the qualifications and experience before they come to Canada.

12.2.2 Legislative Changes

The failure to integrate IEPs into the labour market has mostly been seen to be the responsibility of the government. The government could however bring about big changes through the introduction of various legislation. Many professions in Ontario are self-regulated or in other words “self-protecting” and justify the exclusion of foreign trained professionals under the guise of public interest. Both the Ontario government and the Canadian government have no effective way of dealing with equity issues in employment which could be seen as being complicit in protecting Canadians over immigrants (Han, 2007). Having a clear policy on protecting and supporting all against discriminatory practices could go a long way in the integration of IEPs. Legislating professional bodies to do more such as to enhance networking and mentorship
opportunities could address many challenges IEPs face. Unless the governments are motivated to bring about a change through legislation the status quo will continue.

Another problem has been that some professional regulators have attempted to make bridging programs mandatory (Augustine, 2014). Knowing the inconsistencies of the programs and its unstable funding, the government should step in and refrain professional regulators from allowing to make bridging programs mandatory for IEPs. Otherwise, this would create an extra layer of educational requirement and a two tier education system that is limited to only certain categories of people. A change in attitude to embrace social responsibility and commitment for social justice is required and instituted through legislative regulations.

Make the business sector, those who also benefit from the bridging programs take responsibility. Employers tend to be selective in their hiring process often requiring Canadian qualifications, Canadian experience and good communication skills. Introduction of legislation and tax incentives for businesses would encourage the hiring of IEPs.

*From a public policy perspective, the under-representation of racialized workers in public administration is of grave concern. Both racialized men and women appear to be experiencing significant barriers to access employment in this sector. This has implications for good policy development and suggests a need to review the effectiveness of equitable hiring programs practice in the public service* (Block and Galabuzzi 2011, p. 11).

The government should lead by example and start hiring more and provide incentives to the employers to encourage them to hire the IEPs to enhance businesses and the economy of the nation as a whole.

Utilize the initiative taken by the Ontario Human Rights Commission on the requirement of “Canadian experience” as discriminatory and use it as a starting point by
legislating it into law. Issues of discrimination, class and other oppressive undercurrents need to be addressed head on. IEP education and training should not be seen from a ‘deficiency’ model, rather from an angle that recognizes their skills and the international experience they possess. Any discriminatory practices by employers should be legislated to give the IEPs a fair opportunity to utilize their talent.

12.2.3. Include IEPs, Professional Bodies and Businesses in the Decision Making Process.

Create transparency by including the IEPs in the decision making process. Canada’s labour market growth is dependent on immigrants with no sign of abating in the near future and so a more effective and stable solution needs to be found.

*It may not be the best way, but we haven’t done much work investigating other ways.* (SP. Jane).

Service provider Jane suggests exploring other options including recreating the programs altogether and being creative in identifying what works best for the IEPs. Such a development should include the IEPs for whom these programs are made. It would be important for them to be part of any development of programs. Along with them should be service providers who have gained good experience in the delivery of these programs as well as the professional associations and employers. Such a process that is inclusive of the key players will have a fair voice for all and ensure transparency.

12.2.4. Change the Funding Model

There has been strong criticism from both the service providers as well as the participants in the way funding of the bridging programs has been organized and implemented. When both those who are delivering and those who are receiving the
programs have issues with it, one can determine that the funding model has to change and a major overhaul is required. Funding for any new program needs to be looked at in a way that is long term, sustainable, secure, and fair, without creating any burden on the participant or the service provider. There are different funding models as suggested below that can be explored. From the side of the service providers this is what they wanted to see changed:

*There’s no sustainability. There’s no sustained ongoing funding* (SP. Mary).

Paul also reiterated similar sentiments;

*There is no secure funding in place, so if there’s no secure funding, there is no long term planning that you can do* (SP. Paul).

Funding for the programs need to increase, be secure and stable so that the service providers can make long term plans, learn from their experiences and develop programs that are meaningful and economically viable for the participants.

Create better funding supports for IEPs, similar to that of the Second Career program, where the students are given grants of up to $28,000 that includes living expenses. Creating one set of rules for citizens and long-time residents and different for IEPs. Another suggestion around the funding support was shared by Dilip with the following:

*I think the more efficient utilization of resources would be promoting the programs of Toronto Social Services that provides income support, some training, some funds in training and some funds in neighbourhood programs…and helping us find a job. While we are on job, they need to match the earning requirements. If there is fall in income, the city comes back and fills that gap. They also pay for our training. I think this is the best way…that worked for me and I would recommend it to anyone I know rather than going for such a bridging program* (Dilip).

The solution Dilip is recommending involves a complete change of support for the IEPs. He recommends IEPs be supported under the Ontario and Toronto social service
system that takes care of the training needs, job search as well as income supports.

Expecting IEPs to attend and pay for the bridging program while providing for their families at the same time creates a lot of financial hardship. Zahra highlighted her financial challenge:

*the bridging program was not covered so I had to pay by myself, had there been some help from the government it would be really, really be helpful for me (Zahra).*

Supports to help pay for the programs as well as for living expense would alleviate the undue hardship IEPs have to endure, while going through the program and integrating into the economic system. These are professionals whose education was paid by their country of origin. Some investment on them after their immigration to Canada can support the economy and reap benefits for the host country in the long run.

Another important change that needs to be looked at closely is to ensure that the funding model does not stifle advocacy and the important role of civil society. The community based agencies similar to those that are now delivering bridging programs along with the educational institutes such as universities and colleges have traditionally acted as advocates and the “voice of reason”, identifying inequalities and inequities. Under the current funding model of the bridging programs, the flexibility of those who acquire funding is curtailed and limited leaving little room for activism. Any new program should not have advocacy and activism stalled but instead fully supported.

### 12.2.5. Employer and Professional Association Engagement

The main issue with underutilization of immigrant’s skills in general and the bridging programs in particular is related to employment. Engaging employers and professional associations at various levels in regards to employment of IEPs is critical for any program to be successful. Any new program should include employers who hire
and professional associations who license. This sentiment was echoed by both the service providers as well as the IEPs.

_I think we need to spend a lot more energy in engaging the business community, I think we are not doing enough to engage in business community_ (SP. Jane).

Employers are a very important side of the issue and so more effort should be made to engage them. All programs created for IEPs should have professional associations and employers as partners with the delivery agents. Through these partnerships, all participants in a program should have the opportunity to get some experience in their profession with a good possibility of being employed.

_The employers need to come on board, like I said it’s best if all the stake holders are on board...More employers have to be party to this, maybe more on the advisory steering committees, for them to be engaged so that they see the value of the participants as well as the value of the bridging programs_ (SP Mary).

Service providers Jane and Mary identify the importance of involving employers from the beginning. It is the small and medium businesses that form the majority employers in Canada (Reitz, 2011). It is the employers after all who can hire and open the doors for the immigrants. Without the employers being on board, it does not matter how much the IEPs are trained, the outcomes will not see any significant change.

12.2.6. Networking

Based on the findings from this thesis, IEPs often tend to rely heavily on their relatives and friends to find employment. For IEPs to be integrated into their profession of training, it was important that their connections and links include those that are established “Canadian” professionals. Any new program should therefore expand networking opportunities to focus on professionals from mainstream organizations.

Tekle an engineer by profession brought up this suggestion stating that:
If I was the policy maker I would design the bridging program so it would be more practical based providing them with a placement… you know and provide them with connections which are really important. You see in Canada most of the hiring process is not publicized for the most part, you have to have a connection and somebody has to trust your skills, and that person needs to know you (Tekle).

Tekle emphasizes the need to have professional connections and networks in your own profession. He suggests that the placement should be such that they expose IEP skills to other professionals in their field, so that they could be recognized and trusted. He also mentions that most jobs are not advertised and so good networks could make the difference in getting that important lead to employment. Some positive outcomes as identified by Behrang were because of appropriate networks and good mentors that resulted in employment in his profession. Mentors can play an important advocacy role to enhance the chances of employment for the IEPs. Professional networks and meaningful mentorships should be legislated and supported to expand the scope of advocacy that eventually produces positive outcomes.

12.2.7. Provide Work Experience

One of the most common challenges cited by the participants in this thesis was the lack of work experience required to get licensure or get employment. The need to get more practical experience was suggested by a number of participants in this thesis. Below is what Tekle stated:

They have to redesign the bridging program to providing more practical placements. Everyone should get to practice which is really helpful… you are asking for a position with no money in return. So the bridging programs have to provide that practical experience (Tekle).

Tekle places emphasis on providing employment experience even if it is through an unpaid placement. The Canadian experience requirement continues to trouble the IEPs. While the Ontario Human Rights (OHR) may have provided the much needed reprieve
there is a lot more that needs to be done. OHR only focuses on complaints and not on policing. It is the systemic issues that perpetuate the discriminatory requirement that need to be addressed. Without the government enforcing the Ontario Human Rights position it will be difficult to see how professional associations work around the Canadian experience requirement they currently have.

12.2.8. Meaningful Evaluation of the Programs

For any program to be successful there has to be sound and continuing evaluation embedded in them. Bridging programs or any other program created to integrate IEPs in their profession are no exception. Behrang who had completed four bridging programs identified the weakness of the program and stated the following:

*The lady just came and just talked to the program manager in front of the class and they asked in front of the teacher and if someone had criticized, in front of the teacher, there was this fear that it might affect our scores in the class or the program. So we just gave a few compliments and that was it and they took a picture and just made everyone happy (laughter). They call it productive comments. I think rather than getting feedback from the students, the thing is to see the results. The result should be the internship or employment. …..This was not a good evaluation system. The responsibility bears partly on the government who come and see and monitor these programs and see how efficient they are (Behrang).*

The evaluation Behrang mentions should not be limited to a photo opportunity but to get an honest and anonymous feedback from those who have completed the programs. It should be accompanied with some sound statistical data on who got employment in their field of training. Involving academics to identify appropriate measuring tools can be helpful as not every outcome is quantifiable nor do all quantifiable numbers reflect a true picture. Evaluations should therefore reflect outcomes that are realistic and meaningful.
12.2.9 Pedagogy of the Programs to Address Racism and Discrimination

The practice and how best to teach the programs has to be looked at closely if any anti-racism programs are to be established. Currently there is no consistency in how the programs are delivered or what the focus of the programs is with each program having their own emphasis. It is recognized that there is a difference in how the programs are delivered between community colleges and universities, but even within the same institution they are different. This thesis suggests that any new program should not be seen simply as a tool to help IEPs get employment, or accreditation or to gain some experience but should be linked to address the various axis of power that exist such as discrimination, racism, class and neoliberalism. The focus therefore should be to make these programs address individual and systemic hegemonies and power structures that exist with the goal of establishing equal opportunities for all. The changes suggested need to be promoted as the right thing to do. It would require a spark that states it is the right thing to do to hire IEPs and let it spread to bring about a change.

12.3 Future Research

The topic of immigrants is like an ocean with a vast array of perspectives that have relentlessly been researched, debated, and analyzed from all angles over a long period of time. This thesis on bridging programs is like a bucket from that vast ocean with a lot more that needs be looked at and deliberated. While this study on the effectiveness of the bridging programs is like a bird’s eye or a partial view of the issue, there is more that needs to be explored.

The challenges immigrant women face are different from those of men. Women are frequently called to support their husbands, act as primary caregivers for their children and maintain their household leaving little time and energy to enhance their
careers (Solar, 2011). Other studies have also identified gender inequalities in the labour market issues and varied negative labour market outcomes for racialized immigrant women (Sethi, 2014; Premji et al., 2014; Solar, 2011). The impact however of bridging programs and related issues on women and the challenges they face needs to be studied extensively and with a special focus. Given that the interviews in this study had open ended questions gender intricacies in relation to or causal to the bridging programs may not have surfaced such as child care that could be impacting access to the bridging programs or employment, issues out of the scope of this study which need to be explored further.

Another topic related to this thesis that I have not been able to address, is to do with the political economy of the bridging programs. IEPs bring a lot of savings to Canada, spend money for these programs and get employed with an expectation of contributing to the economy. With vast amounts of money that exchanges many hands, it is inevitable that a political component is lurking close by. There is an industry that has developed around the bridging programs impacting many players. It would therefore be important to trace and highlight the political and economic struggles that are involved in the development, delivery and the outcomes as a consequence of these bridging programs and identify the underlying currents that may be present.

The approach of this thesis has been from a bird’s eye view that has taken a broader perspective to the bridging programs. There are however intricacies involved with every program, as they are different from each other. Even within the same profession, a program that is being delivered by a university is different from that which is provided by a community college. A close look at the individual programs would be able to give us better insight into the intricacies involved into determining what works for
a particular profession (or with each program) and what does not and their overall success. A look at one profession for instance could give us an in-depth analysis in that occupation and a better understanding of the strategies that can be effective and identify the best of practices. Another important issue to research in relation to the bridging programs is the employers. A good understanding of the employers’ perspective and needs is critical if any programs are going to be successful especially because they are the ones who eventually hire IEPs.

12.4 Conclusion

The recommendations one can make can be endless, however it is important to recognize those that can make a significant difference. Most of the issues identified in this thesis have to do with the system and so the suggestions mentioned above are related to it as well. It is only through systemic changes that we can make any significant difference to the situation of underemployment or underutilization of immigrant skills. It impacts not just the IEPs but the nation as a whole. It is critical that the goal of these programs should be to address the inequalities and promote a fair playing field for all based on their education and experience. None of the suggestions mentioned above are impossible to carry out. Whether it is simple changes or complicated ones, the real difference can only be made if there is the will to carry them out. Anything short, reinforces the status quo and should not be left unchallenged as an acceptable paradigm by all those involved.
Chapter 13
Conclusion

This thesis is a small drop in the ocean in the struggle against inequalities and fight for social justice. It is also a personal struggle to make sense of the underlying causes of what I experienced years ago as a new immigrant, which continue to be experienced by waves of immigrants who reach the shores of Canada. The bridging programs that are supposed to help address the challenges of economic integration seem incapable of bridging the gulf that divides the IEPs from practising in their profession. Economic integration is an important benchmark in determining the success of immigrants. Canadian immigration policy attracts highly educated and skilled immigrants, but they end up struggling to work in fields other than their training or education, a big loss to the individual and the country as a whole. In 2015, there were 884,238 people up from 540,000 in 2001 who could earn an additional $13 to 17 billion if their skills, resourcefulness, and experience were recognized (Grant, 2016). The research sponsored by the Conference Board of Canada shows that the problem has obviously exacerbated since 2001, when similar research had been conducted. The bridging programs were initiated in 2003, to address this issue of underutilization of immigrant skills and integrate IEPs faster into the labour market. Over a decade later, the number of people who are struggling to utilize their skills has drastically increased indicating that these programs are not making any significant difference.

This thesis has identified and brought forward issues that would not otherwise have been known. From the discourse of IEPs and its analysis, it has become evident to have impacted them in ways that have negatively imposed experiences of alienation,
inequalities, discrimination, and dispossession of their wealth, passion, and skills. It covers gaps in research that exists in the vast field of IEP integration discourse and gives us insight on what works or not which will help legislators develop policies and programs that will make a difference to new immigrants. From a program perspective modeled under the neoliberal funding method as its backbone, it is found to be inconsistent, unstable and unreliable, exposing many maladies. For IEPs, the impact of taking the bridging programs is many fold. Most participants in this thesis revealed that their expectation of getting employed in their profession after completing the bridging programs was yet to be fulfilled. Using the interpretivist approach it can be seen that it not only defines their economic and social facets but dictates and shapes individual thought processes and how they structure their day to day lives. It is in a way teaching them to accept that they are taking the programs because they do not have the Canadian experience or Canadian education or Canadian ethical requirements. The inequality in employment and poverty is not deemed to be due to discriminatory or systemic issues, but rather the fault of the person and their failure to take responsibility for success. It relegates the focus from systemic, corporate and institutional issues to neoliberal governance and the self. Under such circumstances the individuals accept it to be their own fault. When such internalization happens, it leads the IEPs to accept employment of any type, creating a highly educated surplus labour force. Such systemic issues create disparities and if allowed to continue can be perilous for the IEPs as well as the community as a whole. Ironically, immigrants whose education and training has been accepted to enable them to immigrate to Canada, are made to believe that their education is ‘deficient’ when seeking employment in their profession. The notion that the bridging programs are a prescription to treat the ‘deficiency’ of the IEPs and get them
into their profession is itself problematic. They are neither equipped nor have the
capacity to address these so-called shortcomings even if they were true. The bridging
programs do not take into consideration the knowledge, experiences and the diversities
they possess, nor do they address the systemic and individual discriminatory practices
that exist. The bridging programs could, therefore, be seen as a technique of
subjectification and control by the government and a system to produce a cheaper pool
of labour.

Making deficiencies and IEP shortcomings as the foundation of the programs
weakens their structure, as it starts with a premise of negativity. It should not be lost that
those who take the bridging programs are already qualified professionals from
Universities around the world and years of experience behind them. They now have to
go through more training and a process of validation which may not lead them to their
goal. The question which arises then is that, are these programs a means of changing
IEPs from what they are, to making them “Canadianized” or a tool to make available an
army of highly educated immigrants for the labour market. If so, they should be
designated as such. If these programs are truly meant to make any difference and put a
dent to the challenges IEPs face, then, they have to address the real and systemic
issues that exist. In this discourse of labour market integration, the IEPs are just one
aspect with the employers and the professional bodies as other key players. The narrow
spectrum of focus of the programs on IEPs distorts the bigger and more profound
systemic issues that exist, leaving the government hard placed to explain the continued
disparities IEPs experience. If left unchecked and unchallenged it will only lead to a
continued downward spiral for IEPs.
The problem of IEPs is not limited to government policies alone, as there are over 50 regulated occupations, 400 regulatory bodies, 427 provincially licensed post-secondary institutions and seven independent credential assessment agencies (Grant, 2016). Added to these are the employers who have their own criteria for accepting a potential employee or not. One can imagine the power dynamics that is involved when all these entities are trying to safeguard their turf and interests. One of the biggest hurdles is that employers are not willing to give the IEPs a chance. They base their practices on certification and not on the capability of the person. There is also no incentive for them to entice them to give IEPs a chance. What is not actioned through the cursory classes of the bridging programs is the constant lack of buy-in by the employers to employ IEP’s or address the systemic barriers that exist in integrating newcomers to Canada. The provision of education to the IEPs which should be seen as a public good, is converted to employer good under the neoliberal framework with little talk on the responsibility of the business sector, a segment, as highlighted by the participants that were found to be a beneficiary of the bridging programs. In his study of employers, Eric Liu (2007) identified disconnect between the employers’ perceptions about the skills possessed by foreign trained immigrants and the actual skills they possess. Employers tend to be selective in their hiring process often requiring Canadian qualifications, Canadian experience, and good communication skills. Many professions in Ontario are self-regulated or in other words “self-protecting” and justify the exclusion of foreign trained professionals under the guise of public interest. The Ontario government or the Canadian government do not seem to have an effective way of dealing with equity issues in employment which could be seen as being complicit in protecting ‘Canadians’ over immigrants (Han, 2007).
The IEPs as mentioned in earlier chapters have a perception that they could only succeed through the bridging programs or had the hope of finding employment in their profession hence the continuance of the programs. It explains why even when the results are not very positive, they keep on going back and taking them as illustrated by Behrang, a participant who had completed not less than four different bridging programs. He was employed at the time of the interview but this was not as a result of the bridging program. Although these programs are not as effective, IEPs keep on taking them, partly because they have been told by friends to take them or it is required by the professional bodies. Some professional regulators have even attempted to make bridging programs mandatory (Augustine, 2014). Allowing the professional regulators to make bridging programs mandatory for IEPs would not only create extra layers of educational requirement limited to only certain categories of people but add an additional barrier and obstacle to the already existing copious challenges IEPs face. A change in attitude to embrace social responsibility and commitment to social justice is required and perhaps instituted through legislative regulations.

The government’s neoliberal vision of utilizing bridging programs in its current format to address IEP trepidations has important flaws for a long term strategy. My dismay is that there is no unified long-term policy. The band-aid approach adopted by the government to integrate the continuous inflow of highly qualified immigrants into the labour market has failed to produce the desired and consistent results. There is no sustained funding with many programs taken off the list after being designated as “pilots”. Accordingly, the ability of the bridging programs to address the challenges they face has been experimental, inconsistent and contingent on meeting the quantitative program requirements. It has been rather a hit and miss effort where some have
benefitted in certain ways while most were still struggling to get employed in their profession.

The intrinsic significance of bridging programs is that they have been made to become part of the fabric of IEP integration in Ontario. They carry ideals of the government on how these highly trained professionals could be integrated into the labour market to benefit themselves and the community as a whole. Consequently, the most important input in the creation of such programs or identifying their success should be those of the IEPs who should have a strong voice in the development and assessment of the programs. Unfortunately, their voice has been missing. This thesis is an effort to give voice to IEPs on their experiences about how bridging programs helped them overcome the obstacles in their effort to be integrated into the Canadian labour market. For those who are qualified and not able to practice in their profession feel oppressed with a desire to challenge it every step of the way. One would expect the IEPs themselves to raise their voice. However, they come to Canada with their families and being new to the country their immediate focus is to make ends meet and bring food to the table and continue to suffer in silence. Although the bridging programs have been created for them, IEPs remain outsiders with little or no meaningful participation in any decision-making process. There is no requirement for internationally trained professionals to be included in the decision making process. “The process of social exclusion operates in such a way that those most affected are often isolated from the democratic system so that decisions about their lives are made elsewhere and by others” (Stevens et.al, 2003. p. 88). Under neo-liberalism only a few have the control and power. "Neoliberalism also works as a political system, one in which there is formal democracy, but the citizens remain spectators diverted from any meaningful
participation in decision making” (Ross and Gibson, 2007, p.3). Some of the most
effective use of power involves “the prevention of decisions, the muting of issues, the
avoidance of conflict by pre-emptive advantage, by limiting the agenda to suit prevailing
interests” (Parenti, 1978, p. 30). Through the bridging programs, the government is
seen to be taking some action but in the process curbing any debate of systemic nature
on political action or inaction. The question that arises is who will raise the immigrant
voice. There does not exist a coalition powerful enough to challenge the discriminatory
practices of the established structures, systems and norms. It needs to be recognized
that the ‘new’ immigrant is new to the country with few if any networks in place. “The
refusal to acknowledge the existence of the networks of advantage, patronage and
power that maintain the rich in their position is damaging to everyone whose life is
structured by inequality - whether this is connected to race, class, gender or other forms
of structural inequality” (Davison and Shire, 2015, p. 85). With various cohorts coming at
different times, they form small numbers and become “conspicuous members of the
labour force, unable to form a powerful coalition (and) have to trade favors individually
from the dominant group” (Sen, 1978, p. 23). Without a concerted effort of IEPs’ raising
their voice in a chorus to challenge the inequalities or organizations committed to social
justice joining them, their predicament will see little change.

The link between racism and neoliberalism as mentioned earlier is unique and
contradictory. The neoliberal discourse is seen to be colour blind promoting freedom
and choice as its cornerstone. Beneath the surface lies the duality of turning a blind eye
to the discrimination and racism that exists within the institutions and social structures it
has produced and supports (Goldberg, 2009). Under this pretext of not being seen to be
overt, racism has been relegated from the official agendas contending that race is not
an issue anymore. In Chapter 5, racism and discrimination were identified as some of the key challenges IEPs experienced in their effort to be integrated into the economic system in Canada. Social characteristics such as race, culture, gender and other qualities affect immigrants in their assessment and discounting of skill (Reitz, 2011). While these were issues that impacted IEPs when looking for work, they did not get resolved when they came to the bridging classes which were supposed to help overcome those challenges. Racism was allowed to slide under the radar with fewer checks and balances and fewer governmental controls as heard from IEP experiences. Even the racism extended through some of these programs went unnoticed letting it to continue to remain alive and troubling. These classes were not only, not equipped to address the challenges of discrimination and racism, but in many instances were seen to be perpetuating them. Although multiculturalism has been enshrined into Canada’s policies, there is no denying that racism continues to exist in various forms. City of Toronto’s (2015) recent report asserts that “racism is a reality that many people have to live with each day, in every aspect of their lives” (p.2). Such oppressive practices will have to be confronted head-on if we are to create a just and fair society for all. Creation of bridging programs to address the challenges IEPs face may help overcome some issues. They are however, not equipped nor do they have the appetite to address the individual or systemic racism IEPs continue to experience in the many forms of their day to day living. With a projection of an increase in population of racialized immigrants the challenge is to overcome both overt and covert discrimination whether it is systemic or individual and bring about a change that will be inclusive and benefit all regardless of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, colour, orientation or creed.

As demonstrated in this thesis, there are serious flaws in the bridging programs
that treat IEPs as 'clients' who would pay fees and bring in funds, but also those who have 'deficits' instead of considering them as professionals who come with vast skills and knowledge. These strategies do not allow social cohesion and its preservation or maximize the competitive advantage IEPs bring with them. It is more important now than ever before, especially with our aging population that we continue to receive a steady flow of immigrants and integrate them into the economy in the shortest time possible and equal opportunities. This thesis is a call to increase funding for IEP programs, re-evaluate what currently exists and develop again a strategy that is going to be meaningful and produce the desired results with equal opportunity for all. By presenting that the lack of labour market integration of immigrants’ is related to neoliberal economic disparity, race, and class divisions and political indisposition, this thesis seeks to inspire effective policymaking to tackle the underlying causes of underemployment and underutilization of immigrant skills. It is hoped that any new program that is developed to empower the IEPs will address and overcome the challenges they face and address the systemic inequalities that exist from being repeated. This can only be done if there is the will, commitment and a concerted effort from the government, professional bodies, accreditation agencies, post-secondary educators, employers and importantly the Internationally Educated Professionals.
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Appendices

Appendix 1

A Bridge to Where? An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Bridging Programs for Internationally Trained Professionals in Toronto.

Research Questionnaire

• I will explain to the prospective participants the research and provide them with a letter of consent. I will explain that this survey is voluntary and they can decline to answer any questions they want or withdraw from the project at any time with no consequences.

• Interviews will be semi-structured, open-ended to ensure that the respondents’ experiences about the bridging programs are fully captured.

• Each participant will be subject to the same protocol in order to facilitate the comparison of responses.

• Interviews will be tape-recorded and I will also take notes during interviews. I will transcribe the responses later.

There will be two qualifying questions:

Are you an immigrant?

Have you completed a bridging program?

If the response to both questions is yes then I will continue with the interview.

Demographics
1. Age: 
2. Religion: 

3. Gender: 
4. Marital Status: 

5. Country of origin: 
6. Languages spoken: 

7. Family size: 
8. English Language Proficiency: 

**Immigration:**

09. Immigration status upon entry into Canada:

10. Reason for immigrating to Canada:

11. Length of residency in Canada:

**Education:**

12. Highest level of education completed at the country of origin:

13. Where and when was it completed?

14. What courses or upgrading have you completed in Canada?

15. When was it?

16. What institution(s) was it from?

**Past Profession:**

17. What was your profession at your country of origin?

18. What year did you last work there?
19. Where was it? (Country or town)

20. Please describe your work experience before you came to Canada and the length of time you worked in that profession.

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

21. Were you able to start working in the profession you were trained in when you got to Canada? ______________________________________________________________

22. What obstacles if any did you encounter in getting employment in your profession? How did these impact you and your family?

____________________________________________________________________________

Bridging Programs:

23. When and how did you first hear about the bridging program?

____________________________________________________________________________

24. When did you start and complete the bridging program?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

25. What were your expectations about the bridging program before you started it?

____________________________________________________________________________
26. How did the bridging program meet your expectations after completing it?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

27. How has taking the bridging program impacted your life and that of your family’s?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

28. How did participation in the ‘bridging’ program help or hinder your occupational trajectory (career aspirations)?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

29. After completing the bridging program how long did it take you to get employment in your profession? ________________________________

30. In what way has the bridging program helped you in getting employment in your profession? __________________________________________

31. After completing the bridging program what obstacles if any did you encounter in getting employment in your profession?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

32. What suggestions do you have to overcome them?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________
33. From what you learnt in the bridging program what was most helpful?

______________________________________________________________________________

34. In your opinion what challenges did the bridging program help overcome?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

35. In your opinion what are the challenges the bridging program was not able to overcome?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

36. Based on your experience, are bridging programs the right way to integrate internationally trained professionals? Why do you say so?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Current Profession:

37. Are you currently working in the profession you were trained on?

38. How long have you been looking for work or take you to get a job in your profession)?

______________________________________________________________________________

39. What do you think were the reasons for these challenges?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

40. What do you think needs to be done to overcome the obstacles professional immigrants face in obtaining employment in their profession?
41. Do you think your racial identity constitutes an impediment in your getting a job in your profession? If yes, could you provide me with a few specific examples?

43. What has been your biggest challenge in terms of your settlement in Canada? (Why do you say that?)

44. What recommendations do you have to resolve it?

45. Any other comments you want to make.

Thank you for your time.
Appendix 2

Questionnaire for Administrator / Service Provider

A Bridge to Where? An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Bridging Programs for Internationally Trained Professionals in Toronto.

Research Questionnaire

• I will explain to the prospective participants the research and provide them with a letter of consent. I will explain that this survey is voluntary and they can decline to answer any questions they want or withdraw from the project at any time with no consequences.

• Interviews will be semi-structured, open-ended to ensure that the respondents’ experiences about the bridging programs are fully captured.

• Each participant will be subject to the same protocol in order to facilitate the comparison of responses.

• Interviews will be tape-recorded and I will also take notes during interviews. I will transcribe the responses later.

Questions:

1. What type of institution do you belong to (university, college, community agency etc)?

2. What position do you currently hold?

3. As a service provider what do you think are the challenges faced by internationally trained professionals?
4. How many bridging programs does your institution offer and what are they?

5. What is the length of the program(s) offered at your institution?

6. What are the main components of the bridging programs offered at your institution?

7. What is the main focus of the bridging programs offered at your institution?

8. What type of challenges do you think the bridging programs anticipate to address?

9. What challenges do you face in providing these bridging programs?

9. Do you have any other comments or observations that you would like to make?

Thank you for your time.
Appendix 3

Flyer

Are You Internationally Trained Professional?

Have You Completed A Bridging Program?

If Yes…… I Need to Talk to You.

My name is Abdulhamid Hathiyani and I am a student at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/U of T). I am doing research to explore the Effectiveness of the Bridging Programs for Internationally Trained Professionals in Toronto. You are invited to participate in this study whose results will be used to better understand the effectiveness of bridging programs in overcoming the barriers internationally trained professionals face and make recommendations on ways to improve their situation.

Your participation in this research will be entirely voluntary. Should you decide to take part in this study you may choose to discontinue participation at any time without any consequences.

Each interview will take approximately an hour. Information provided during this study will remain entirely confidential with no names of participants being mentioned in the report.

To participate in this study please contact me so that I can schedule an appointment for you at a mutually convenient time and location. Please call Abdulhamid at Tel: (416) 902-6183 or a.hathiyani@mail.utoronto.ca

I Look Forward to Talking to You - Thank You
Appendix 4

Informed Consent Agreement

August 30, 2013.

Dear sir/madam,

I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Adult Education and Community Development of Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UofT) working under the supervision of Professor Kiran Mirchandani. I am conducting a survey of Internationally Trained Professionals who have completed a bridging program to analyze the Effectiveness of the Bridging Programs for Internationally Trained Professionals in Toronto. It will be a study to analyze the impact of bridging programs in their effort to integrate professional immigrants into the labour market. The data is being collected for the purposes of my PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles and presentations. As someone who is an internationally trained professional and has completed a bridge training program in Toronto, I am inviting you to participate in this research study. By participating in this research you could be helping improve policy and contributing to make a difference for other immigrants in future.

I am expecting to interview 20 to 30 participants each lasting approximately one to one and a half-hours. During the interview you will be asked questions regarding your views and experiences about the bridge training programs or “bridging programs”. As the interview proceeds, I may ask questions for clarification or further understanding, but my part will be mainly to listen to you speak about your views, experiences, and suggestions on the issue. After the interview, I will write brief notes that will be used to assist me in remembering the surroundings of the interview (i.e., characteristics of the site).

This interview will be audio taped with your permission and later transcribed to paper; you have the choice of declining to have the interview taped. You will be assigned a number that will correspond to your interviews and transcriptions. The information obtained in the interview will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secured room at my residence. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes). I intend to publish and make public presentations of my findings but all information will be reported in such a way that no individual person, educational institute or community will be identified (I may utilize pseudonyms if necessary). All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

Your participation in this research will be entirely voluntary. You may at any time refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the interview process. You may request that any information, whether in written form or audiotape, be eliminated from the project. At no time will value judgments will be placed on your responses nor will any evaluation be made of your effectiveness as a principal. Finally, you are free to ask any questions about the research and your involvement with it and may request a summary of the findings of the study. If you have any questions about the research now or later, please feel free to ask or contact me at (416) 902-6183 or at
You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Kiran Mirchandani at (416) 923-6641. Finally, you may also contact the U of T Office of Research Ethics for questions about your rights as a research participant at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

You will be offered snacks during the interview.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Abdulhamid Hathiyani
PhD Candidate, Adult Education and Community Development.
OISE/ University of Toronto
7th Fl, 252 Bloor St West

Dr Kiran Mirchandani
Professor, Adult Education and Community Development.
OISE/ University of Toronto
7th Fl, 252 Bloor St West

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: ________________________________

Signed: ______________________________

Date: ________________________________

Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion: ____

Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio taped: ____

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Appendix 5

Letter of Invitation to Program Administrator or Representative

June 06, 2013
Coordinator of Bridging Programs
(Name of College/ University or Institute)
Dear sir/madam, I am a PhD student in the Department of Adult Education and Community Development of Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UofT) working under the supervision of Professor Kiran Mirchandani. I am currently doing research to explore the Effectiveness of the Bridging Programs for Internationally Trained Professionals in Toronto. To understand the bridging programs better, I would like to invite you or any another person from your organization as service providers to participate in this study. The results will be used to better understand the effectiveness of bridging programs in overcoming the barriers internationally trained professionals face and make recommendations on ways to improve their situation.

Your participation in this research will be entirely voluntary. Should you decide to take part in this study you may choose to discontinue participation at any time without any consequences. Each interview will take approximately half an hour. Information provided during this study will remain entirely confidential with no names of participants or the organization being mentioned in the study or thereafter.

To participate in this study please contact me by August 15, 2013 so that I can schedule an appointment for you at a mutually convenient time and location. Please call Abdulhamid at Tel: (416) 902-6183 or a.hathiyani@mail.utoronto.ca
I Look Forward to Talking to You.
Thank You
Abdulhamid Hathiyani
PhD student OISE/ U of T
Adult Education and Community Development
Appendix 6

Consent Agreement for Program Administrator/ Service Provider

Title: A Bridge to Where? An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Bridging Programs for Internationally Trained Professionals in Toronto

Dear sir/madam,

I am a PhD student in the Department of Adult Education and Community Development of Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UofT) working under the supervision of Professor Kiran Mirchandani. I am conducting a survey of Internationally Trained Professionals who have completed a bridging program to analyze the Effectiveness of the Bridging Programs for Internationally Trained Professionals in Toronto. This research is a component of my degree requirement.

To get an understanding of the bridging programs and their focus, I am inviting you to participate in this research study.

**Collection of personal data.** I plan to audio tape the interview and take notes at the same time so that I can transcribe and analyze them later on. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to answer any questions you are not comfortable with or discontinue at any time during the interview with absolutely no consequences.

**Access to data**

At the end of this study when the report has been compiled, I will be able to share with you some key findings if you so require.

**Confidentiality**

All information that is shared with the researcher will be kept strictly confidential. No name of the participant or the institution will be mentioned in the final report. Excerpts from the interview may be made part of the thesis. When this study will be completed and accepted by the graduate school at OISE, University of Toronto, all collected data such as tape recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

**Voluntary Nature of Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence at all your current or future relations with OISE, University of Toronto. At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or
stop participation altogether.

Questions about the Study:
If you have any questions about the research now, please feel free to ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact me at:

Abdulhamid Hathiyani
Telephone Number. (416) 902 6183
a.hathiyani@mail.utoronto.ca

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Office of Research Ethics at University of Toronto for information at: ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273

Agreement:
Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

When this study will be completed and accepted by the Department of Adult Education and Community Development of Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UofT), all collected data such as tape recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

_________________________________  __________________
Name of Participant (please print)    Date

_________________________________  __________________
Signature of Participant             Signature of Researcher

Please indicate your contact address if you are interested in a copy of the research report:

_________________________________________________________________
Copyright Acknowledgements (if any)