

**Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Activity on the
Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL)**



**Report
Province of Alberta**

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

ALBERTA ADVANCED EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Responds to New OECD Activity on Recognition of Non-Formal and
Informal Learning

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Component 1.1 Demographic Change	1
Component 1.2 Internationalization	6
Component 1.3 New ICT	7
Component 1.4 Economic Development and Skills Shortage/Mismatch	10
Component 1.5 Social Developments	15
Component 1.6 Others	16
Component 2.1 Description of Institutional Arrangements	17
Component 2.2 Government and the Role of Government	19
Component 2.3 Resources	20
Component 2.4 Others	21
Component 3.1 Qualifications, Qualification Systems, Qualifications Framework	22
Component 3.2 Credit Accumulation and Transfer	24
Component 3.3 Assessment Methods and Procedures	26
Component 3.4 Others	28
Component 4.1 Characteristics of Stakeholders	29
Component 4.2 Access	30
Component 4.3 Participation	32
Component 4.4 Incentives and Disincentives	33
Component 4.5 Others	35
Component 5.1 Economic Benefits	36
Component 5.2 Educational Benefits	38
Component 5.3 Social Benefits	39
Component 5.4 Personal Benefits	40
Component 5.5 Others	41
Component 6 Conclusion	42
References.....	43

Component 1.1 Demographic Change

1.1 a)

How have the profiles (age, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic backgrounds) of learners changed/diversified for overall post-secondary education institutions (higher education, further education and vocational education and training, professional training, etc.)? Is there any evidence of admission and graduation rates?

General Enrolment

- In 2004/05, there were 249,654 students enrolled in post-secondary institutions in Alberta (not including private vocational institutions).
- Of these students 155,860 (62.4%) attended on a full-time basis and 93,794 (37.6%) attended part-time.
- At the university level, Alberta's university enrolment increase from 2003/04 to 2004/05 ranked in the middle of Canadian provinces at 2.3%, slightly above the national average of 2.1%. However, Alberta registered the second largest increase in part-time university enrolment across Canada. This confirms a continuing trend since 2001-02 with growing numbers of Albertans choosing part-time studies.
- Enrolments are fairly evenly split between colleges and universities. In 2004/05, 116,147 students (46.5%) were attending a university. During the same year, 53.5% of learners were enrolled in programs at a college or technical institutions. 46,617 students (18.7%) attended a technical institute and 86,890 (34.8%) attended a college.

Gender

- In 2004/05, there were more women (54.8%) than men (45.2%) in the post-secondary system. This has been fairly consistent over the past 5 years, with women making up approximately 53.6% of enrollments and men 46.4% in 2000/01.
- There are significant gender disparities in credential types.

Credential Type	Male	Female
Certificate	40.2%	59.9%
Certificate – Journeyman (apprenticeship program)	94.8%	5.2%
Degree Bachelor	41.8%	58.3%
Degree – Doctoral	45.2%	54.9%

- In regards to full-time enrollments, female and male students are fairly even, with 51% of females and 49% of males enrolled full-time. However, the majority of part-time learners are women (61%).
- In terms of field of study, in the past 7 years, the gender gap between men and women in the sciences degree and diploma programs has remained fairly stable. In 1997/98, 41.1% of students enrolled in sciences were female compared to 43.9% in 2003/04.
- The gender gap is widening in PhD science programs. In 1997/98, 43.4% of PhD students in the sciences were women compared to 41.3% in 2003/04.

Age

- In 2004/05, 18 to 24 years olds made up 53% of total enrollments (part-time/full-time), 25 to 34 year olds make up 25.5% and 35 and older make up approximately 19.8%.
- The majority of full-time learners are between 18 and 24 (65.6%), 21.7% are between are between the age of 25 and 34, and 10.6% are 35 years and older. The reverse is true when part-time enrolments are examined. 67.1% of all part-time enrolments are over the age of 25.
- Enrollment trends by age in Alberta's post-secondary system have been consistent over time. Proportions of enrolments by age cohort have not significantly changed between 2000/01 and 2004/05.

	2000/01 Total enrollments	2004/05 Total enrollments	2000/01 P/T	2004/05 P/T	2000/01 F/T	2004/05 F/T
1 – 17 years old	2.0%	1.8%	1.3%	1.2%	2.4%	2.2%
18 – 24 years old	52.2%	53.0%	30.4%	31.8%	64.4%	65.6%
25 - 34 years old	25.7%	25.5%	31.6%	31.8%	22.3%	21.7%
35 years & older	20.3%	19.8%	36.8%	35.3%	11.1%	10.6%

Ethnicity

- According to Alberta Advanced Education Learner Enrolment Reporting System, in 2004/05, Aboriginal students made up approximately 2.6% of total enrolments in Alberta (6,386 students). More specifically, 3,307 individuals indicated they were Status Indian, 1,175 stated they were non-status Indian, 1,831 were Metis and 73 were Inuit.
- According to our Graduate Outcome Survey, 14.6% of non-Aboriginal respondents are members of a visible minority. University Colleges have the smallest proportion of visible minorities at 8.3%, while universities have the highest proportion at 17.7%.

Graduation Rates:

- Alberta Advanced Education has implemented a program completion rate indicator. The indicator measures the proportion of an entering cohort that completes within 3 years of normal program length.
- At the university level, 66% of the 1998-99 cohort had completed by 2004/05. This is an increase over 2000-01, when 60% of the entering cohort (1995/96) cohort had completed within 3 years of starting their program of study. At the college level, the completion rate in 2004/05 was lower at 55%.

Admissions:

Alberta's post-secondary institutions are independently board-governed. The institutions have authority to set their own admissions requirements. Admissions requirements are published in the institutions' annual calendars and other data reporting. Admissions requirements vary according to institution, program, and credential type. While some programs do not require high school completion (such as some entry-level occupational

programs at private, for-profit vocational institutions), others require high academic achievement with admissions granted on a competitive level.

1.1b)

What are the demographic change (aging population and migration) on participation in different sectors of education and training?

Age

- Between 2006 and 2031, Alberta's population is expected to grow from 3,311,200 to 4,543,400, an increase of 1,232,200 individuals. This growth 37.2% would be the highest in Canada.
- In 2005, Alberta had the youngest population in Canada, with a median age of 35.5 years. The national median age was 38.8. Although its median age is predicted to rise to 39.6 by 2021, Alberta will remain the province with the youngest population.
- Currently, 71.2% of Alberta's population is of working age (15 to 64). This portion of the population will decrease in all provinces, reaching 64.3% in Alberta by 2031.
- From 2005 to 2031, Alberta will maintain a positive rate of natural population increase (birth rate less mortality rate), while other parts of Canada will experience negative natural population rates.
- The traditional age cohort for post-secondary students (18-24 year olds) is only expected to increase until 2011. In 2006, this cohort was 329,000 individuals, and is expected to climb to 357,000 individuals by 2013. However, by 2021, the number of 18-24 year olds will fall to below current levels.
- Alberta has experienced enrolment growth over the past several years, largely the result of growth in the 18-24 population. However, enrolment growths in the future cannot rely on natural increases in this age group.
- In 2006, the number of retirement aged Albertans (55-65) was 348,140. By 2026, the number will climb to 560,260, representing a 60% increase in those between the ages of 55-65.
- In 2000, Albertans aged 45 years and over accounted for only 31.3% of the total population. By 2016, this group is projected to account for 42.5% of the total population.

In-migration

- In recent years, Alberta has been the beneficiary of substantial inter-provincial migration and to a lesser extent immigration. Alberta continues to have the strongest inter-provincial migration rates in Canada. Between 1997 and 2004, over 186,000 people entered Alberta from other provinces. Over the next couple of years, Alberta expects to continue to attract an average of approximately 14,000 Canadians per year.
- In 2005, 19,393 individuals immigrated to Alberta, an increase of 2,919 newcomers (growth of 15%) since 2004. While immigrants in Canada comprise 17.5% of the total population, immigrants in Alberta only comprise 14% of the provincial population. Even though Alberta is home to 10% of Canada's population, it only receives around 7% of the immigrants arriving in Canada.
- In 2003/2004, there were 6,753 fulltime, and 1,607 part-time, international students in Alberta's post-secondary institutions. This represents 4.3% of the total of full time, and 1.7% of the total of part time students on a head count basis.

- Many of new arrivals come to the province with higher levels of educational attainment (college and university level education) than the general population. As a result, Alberta's overall level of educational attainment is the 5th highest in Canada despite high school and advanced education completion rates that are somewhat lower than the national average.
- Slightly over half of the working-age international immigrants arriving in Alberta (51%) have a post-secondary credential – 5.2% had a trade certificate, 35% a Bachelor degree and 10.9% had a Master's degree. In comparison, only 19% of Albertans hold a Bachelor degree and only 6% have a graduate level degree.
- In addition, close to half of those arriving in Alberta from other provinces have a post-secondary education. Over 19% of inter-provincial migrants have a university degree, 17% have a college certificate or diploma, and 12.5% have a trades certificate or diploma.

1.1 c)

Is there any evidence of national policy on migration (e.g. the low-skilled or high skilled) with respect to demographic change?

- In October 2005, the Alberta government announced a new immigration strategy, *Supporting Immigrants and Immigration to Alberta*. The strategy proposes to balance social and economic needs by building 'welcoming communities,' attracting and retaining immigrants (including foreign students), improving the credential recognition process, and enhancing integration through language and literacy programs.
- This strategy aims to attract 24,000 immigrants each year, a 46% increase from 2004. Approximately 16,468 newcomers were admitted to Alberta in 2004.
- To accomplish this goal, the Government of Alberta intends to:
 - partner with the federal government, develop a permanent Provincial Nominee Program that is more flexible and increases the number of nominees in Alberta. The current program only allows eight hundred foreign nationals to be actively recruited by employers to fill labour needs;
 - raise awareness about studying in Alberta through a website that provides information on learning opportunities, the advanced education system, and requirements and processes to enter the province to study;
 - continue to work with the federal government on agreements that will allow international students to work off-campus and pursue permanent residency upon completion of a program;
 - increase access to ESL and language training in smaller centres and rural areas while still meeting demands in Edmonton and Calgary;
 - work with post-secondary institutions to address gaps in immigrant skills and knowledge; and
 - work with partners to explore opportunities for credential assessment frameworks.

1.1 d)

Describe any change of higher education institutional admission policies starting to practise recognition of non-formal and informal learning due to the demographic change?

N/A

Component 1.2. Internationalization

1.2 a)

Describe any national policy or current practices of recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of integration strategies of migrant population (highly skilled, low skilled and refugees)?

N/A

1.2 b)

Describe any national policies or higher education institutional approaches that are currently being taken to promote comparability/compatibility, visibility and portability of learning outcomes through non-formal and informal learning to promote cross-border mobility?

N/A

Component 1.3 New ICT

1.3 a)

Provide any evidence of modularization of learning and the new recording system opened up by new information and communication technologies be fully used to promote credit transfer?

A strong emphasis has been made to leverage electronic tools and resources to increase access to Alberta educational opportunities, with eCampus Alberta and the Online Alberta Transfer Guide as two examples.

Incorporated in 2002, eCampus Alberta (eCA) is a consortium of fifteen colleges and technical institutes established to facilitate increased access to high quality online learning opportunities. The consortium is developing a collaborative online learning initiative that currently spans across Alberta.

The mandate of eCA is to provide learner access to online courses in programs of study offered by Alberta member institutions. Each member institution develops, contributes, and offers its respective online courseware, but also offers other member institutions' courseware. Participating students could be studying exclusively on-line, or may be taking a distance delivered course to complete requirements for a classroom-based program.

This collaborative effort is designed to increase and strengthen online offerings amongst the institutions as well as promote seamless access for prospective learners. Enrolment has grown from 460 course registrations in 2003/2004 to over 5,100 in 2006/2007. Over 400 courses are now offered online and more than 30 certificate, diploma, and applied degree credentials are now fully available online.

In addition to offering post-secondary learning opportunities online, Alberta students are able to map out their educational path by searching the Online Alberta Transfer Guide (OATG). This web tool allows students to determine transferability of current and past courses and programs between 36 educational institutions. The OATG is maintained by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, an independent body established in 1974 that works to ensure smooth transitions and effective transferability of courses and programs.

The current OATG contains over 55,000 active transfer agreements on a course-by-course basis, and over 1,600 program transfer agreements. The public ACAT website houses the OATG, as well as a variety of additional tools and resources related to admissions and transfer. The website received over 5 million hits in 2006-07.

The following post-secondary institutions in Alberta provide examples of learning processes that would aide in the promotion of credit transfer.

Athabasca University

The Centre for Learning and Accreditation administers Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) requests for:

1. Challenge for Credit towards a specific course
2. Portfolio Assessment to receive credit towards a degree program
3. Assessment of training packages from employers, private trainers, unions and other institutions.

By utilizing the credit transfer system towards a university degree, students may qualify for promotion, increased pay, openings for career shifts, broader options within the career already chosen, and choices in further education and training. Also, credit transfers via PLAR may increase eligibility for training and attendance at conferences and workshops.¹

Lethbridge Community College

The Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) program at Lethbridge Community College awards credits not for experience, but for learning. PLA places emphasis on the documentation and/or demonstration of what has been learned. Lethbridge Community College also has an Advanced Credit policy where courses completed at other institutions may be recognized.²

Red Deer College (RDC)

For a student to qualify for a RDC program credential, they must complete at least 25% of the credit requirement for that credential at Red Deer College. This institute also uses a “Course Credit” model where PLAR credit is granted. Any applicant using this credit award process must meet the requisite course outcomes and/or competencies specific to current College course curricula.

Red Deer College also offers Partial Prior Learning for Modularized Computer courses. In order for students to receive Partial Credit for this, they must demonstrate competence in at least half of the modules required for that course.³

1.3 b)

Provide a list of new qualifications that have been opened up by new information and communication technologies. Provide evidence, if any, that the certificates by the major industries carry more or equivalent currency in the labour market than academic qualifications.

N/A

1.3 c)

Describe current national policies or practices of e-portfolio as a tool to record learning outcomes or ‘learning assets’? What have been achieved and what have been challenges?

¹ Barrington Research Group; 22

² Barrington Research Group; 24

³ Barrington Research Group; 30,32,52

Evidence suggests the most dramatic growth and consistent results in Canada have come from the production and assessment of portfolios. As the primary method used in PLAR in Alberta, portfolios are used for healing purposes, transitions to employment, professional certification, and educational assessment or showcasing any number of individualized attributes.

Component 1.4 Economic Development and Skills Shortage/Mismatch

**Please note, all statistics for this component (if not specifically referenced) are based on Statistics Canada data or an analysis of Statistics Canada data.*

1.4 a)

Describe any legal framework, policy, programs, research that address the issue of recognition of skills, experience and knowledge within the framework of human capital with respect to the economic developments or labour force issues. Are there any specific policies at the regional level concerning such as ‘Regional Development’ and ‘Learning Regions’?

Alberta’s future well-being depends on the skills, ideas and creativity of its citizens. It is a key priority of government to ensure Albertans are reaching their full potential and are contributing members of the economy and their communities. There are a number of Government of Alberta initiatives/priorities that address pending skill and knowledge shortages within the province. Some of these initiatives directly or indirectly provide support to prior learning recognition processes.

1. ***Building and Educating Tomorrow’s Workforce: Building and Educating Tomorrow’s Workforce*** (BETW) is a cross-ministry initiative of which Advanced Education and Technology is a co-lead with Employment, Immigration and Industry. The initiative includes a number of short, medium and long term strategies that aim to increase Alberta’s education and skill levels. Strategic directions of the project are *to inform, attract, develop and retain* skilled, knowledgeable workers.

The *inform* theme focuses on the need for Albertans and stakeholders to have increased access to current, accurate and relevant education and labour market information needed to make informed career, workplace, and labour market decisions.

Attract focuses on ensuring Alberta attracts the inter-provincial migrants, immigrants and temporary foreign workers to address skills and knowledge demands.

The *develop* theme has two parts- (a) that Albertans gain improved access to education and training; (b) that Alberta adopts all the characteristics of a high performance economy, such as improved workplaces and working arrangements and use of innovative technology.

The *Retain* focus is on making communities and work attractive so that people will stay in Alberta and remain engaged in Alberta’s labour force.

Ultimately, the goal of BETW is to ensure three outcomes:

1. More workers

2. Better trained people
3. Innovative environments

Priority actions under the key strategic directions of BETW (especially attract and develop) support prior learning recognition processes.

2. ***A Learning Alberta:*** Throughout 2005 Alberta undertook a comprehensive review of its advanced education system - the *A Learning Alberta* review. Certain aspects of *A Learning Alberta* align quite closely with the BETW initiative, given that the key goal of *A Learning Alberta* is to ensure all Albertans are able to maximize their potential through higher learning (including those who have been traditionally under-represented in the system).
3. ***Immigration Policy:*** In July 2005, a new immigration policy, *Supporting Immigrants and Immigration to Alberta*, was created to help attract and retain immigrants within the province. This government-wide policy sets out specific strategies in four broad areas for attracting and retaining immigrants:
 - Welcoming communities - supporting communities to help immigrants successfully transition into Alberta society.
 - Attracting immigrants - increasing the number of immigrants who move to Alberta.
 - Living in Alberta - enhancing existing programs and services that help immigrants adapt to Alberta life.
 - Working in Alberta - improving recognition of foreign-earned credentials and enhanced language training.

1.4 b)

Describe overall skills mismatch/shortage situation in your country. Do you have any economic policies that address the issue of skills shortage or skills mismatch? In what sectors/industries has the issue been most conspicuous?

Although economically speaking Alberta is performing well on certain levels (i.e. overall unemployment rate is 3.5% in Alberta, the lowest in Canada), we will face a number of challenges in the years ahead. Alberta's tight labour market creates competition for skilled workers. Alberta employers need to develop strong attraction, recruitment and retention strategies. Some factors contributing to skills shortages:

- **Aging population:** Baby boomers start reaching age 65 by 2010. By 2026, 20% of the population will be over 65.
- **Declining population growth:** Over past decade, Canada and Alberta's fertility rates have been around 1.7 babies per woman, below the replacement rate of 2.1.
- **Changing nature of the workforce:** Currently, about 65% of jobs require post-secondary education.
- **Greater competition for labour:** From other provinces and global competition.
- **High energy prices and high energy sector investments:** Contributing to a shortage of skilled trades workers in Alberta.

- Over 400,000 new jobs will be created between 2005 and 2015. New jobs will exceed new workers – there will be an approximately 86,000 shortfall.
- All sectors are seeing a tightening in the labour market and are requiring a more knowledgeable employee base.

The BETW strategy is the Alberta government's current response to the previously noted challenges.

1.4 c)

Provide any evidence of increasing or decreasing economic and social disparities in your country (e.g. poverty rate such as gini-co-efficiency) among certain groups (low skilled, immigrants, youth, older workers, etc.). Provide also, if any, relevant documents addressing policies issues (economic, social, labour market, etc.) that account for such trends.

N/A

1.4 d)

Provide data, if any, which points to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a way of re-distributing human capital and solve the issue of skills mismatch and skills shortage and, therefore, a way to drive economic development.

The final report of the *Gateways Project*, conducted by Athabasca University, indicates that PLAR participants report having received better pay, benefits, improved career prospects, and as an accompaniment to academic accomplishment, have a better quality of life. In addition, communities can also gain economically by using qualified individuals in the labour force where there is an increasingly short supply of them.⁴ The report also indicates evidence that demonstrates employers promote individuals they would not ordinarily promote without further education if progress towards an educational goal is demonstrated.⁵

1.4 e)

Provide data, if any, if there has been any study that points to a certain group that would benefit most from the recognition system for their skills (e.g. retirees, older workers, women, immigrants (highly- skilled or low-skilled), part-time workers, unemployed youth, etc.)?

The *Gateways Project* identifies that **women, in particular, have benefited disproportionately from PLAR.**⁶ There has been a tendency of recipients of PLAR to be over the age of 25, **predominantly women**, and coming from a number of geographical locations including rural, isolated, and urban.

One of the key findings of the *Gateways Project* is:

- Under-served practitioners (individuals who have little opportunity to obtain formal education based on their lack of formal credentials) benefit from PLAR for career

⁴ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 7

⁵ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 18

⁶ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 17

advancement. **Most are women** in low-income employment in the human services field of early childhood, education, allied health services, social work, and special needs or at-risk youths.⁷

The following statistics point to the fact that some groups in Alberta may be left behind in terms of education. Often it is the case that the same groups may also experience poorer employment outcomes.

- Education levels of rural Albertans lag behind those of their urban counterparts. Specifically, 46% of rural Albertans complete some form of post-secondary education, compared to 61% of urban Albertans.
- 44% of Aboriginal Albertans aged 25-64 have completed post-secondary programs compared to 56% of the overall Alberta population. 4% of Aboriginal Albertans obtained a university degree compared to 16% of non-Aboriginal Albertans.
- 14,000 to 16,000 immigrants arrive in our province each year. Individuals come to Canada with a broad range of educational credentials (i.e. no formal education up to graduate level university training). From 2001 to 2004, Alberta received 31,429 immigrants with post-secondary education- **over 5,000 had Master's or Doctoral degrees**. However, although approximately half of newcomers to Alberta are highly educated and qualified 60% of these newcomers do not find employment in their area of expertise.

1.4 f)

Provide data, if any, that discuss some issues linking between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the non-formal and informal economies.

N/A

1.4 g)

Please provide a list of occupations to which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be counted as a part of entrance (e.g. teachers, engineers, journalists, etc.). Of the list, which occupations are regulated professions, i.e. that requires a certain qualification (certificates, licences, etc.)?

The majority of academic credit awarded by post-secondary institutions through PLAR occurs in human services and nursing fields of study.⁸ Other fields where there may be PLAR activity in certificate/diploma courses in some institutions include the following:⁹

- Business Office Technician
- Legal Assistant
- Social Work
- Rehabilitation
- Teacher Assistant
- Early Childhood

⁷ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 41

⁸ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 10

⁹ Barrington Research Group; 12

- Hospitality
- Unit Clerk
- Virtual Office

Component 1.5 Social Developments

1.5 a)

What are the newly evolved ‘skills and competencies’ to live in the knowledge economy, which have been identified to date? Make a list of such skills and competencies.

Some of the skills and competencies which are important in a knowledge based society include the following:¹⁰

- Education
- Training
- Skills development
- Adaptability
- Prosperity
- Innovation
- Human investment
- Creativity

1.5 b)

Provide evidence, if any, that recognition of this type of learning has lead to the uptake of further learning or progression in profession?

While there is no formal Alberta data available, the following examples demonstrate how advancement may be occurring in different areas for participants of PLAR:

- PLAR students have been shown to engage in more continued lifelong learning. They take more courses and are more likely to engage in post diploma studies¹¹
- Specialists in the adult education field at universities study PLAR as a means of advancing their careers¹²
- An employer noted increased productivity among staff. Improved effectiveness on the job among individuals who continue their education while employed is consistent with findings reported by the Canadian Council on Learning¹³

1.5 c)

Provide evidence, if any, of recognition of this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship?

N/A

¹⁰ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 1, 4

¹¹ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 10

¹² Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 12

¹³ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 52

Component 1.6 Others

1.6 a)

Provide other contextual factors or trends that you think are influential – directly or non-directly – that drive changes of institutional and technical arrangements and stakeholder behaviour concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning which have not been addressed in Component 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.

The following feedback was received from post-secondary institutions for the *Best Practices in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Handbook* project:¹⁴

- Collaborate with other post-secondary institutions, communities and industries in Alberta to develop clear definitions, standards and assessment practices for PLAR
- Initiate and support a provincial PLAR network or working group to create a forum for sharing ideas and conducting research
- Increase professional development opportunities by providing access to courses and conferences; promoting opportunities for interaction with and among PLAR practitioners; and by committing funds. There is an abundance of knowledge and experience in this field.
- Provide clear reasons for unsuccessful assessments of prior learning and include a clear explanation as to how the individual's qualifications were assessed.
- Provide unsuccessful applicants the right to appeal. Appeals should not be heard by persons involved in the original decision.

1.6 b)

Provide historical backgrounds concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning in your country.

The shift from educational providers to learner-directed needs based focus has been shown to be so fundamental that it has been favorably compared to the historical transition from feudalism to self-governance. While subject-citizens can be educated through direction, mature adult citizens have the flexibility to choose if, where, when, and the conditions under which he/she will decide to participate in further studies.¹⁵

¹⁴ Barrington Research Group; 2-3

¹⁵ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 16

Component 2.1 Description of Institutional Arrangements

2.1 a)

Describe, if any, clear political will or statements and policy responses in your country on lifelong learning which are explicitly linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Recently, Alberta developed a new policy framework to guide the advanced learning system. One of the key policy recommendations was to expand the ability of institutions and employers to recognize prior learning through developing a framework that supports the assessment of prior learning. The recommendation supports the expansion of bridging programs to address knowledge and skill gaps so that individuals moving from work to learning opportunities do not have to repeat entire programs of study.

2.1 b)

Do you have legal regulatory frameworks concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning? Please state – yes, under development/discussion, or no. For those who answered ‘No’, describe possible reasons for the inexistence as well as possible future prospects. For those who answered ‘yes’ or ‘under development/discussion’, please answer to the following questions.

Although there is a policy recommendation to expand the ability of institutions and employers to recognize prior learning through the development of a framework, there is no formal framework in place as of yet.

Some of Alberta’s public post-secondary institutions do have PLAR policies in place which have been written and approved, or are under review. However, PLAR implementation is not standardized within and among institutions.¹⁶ The development of a coordinated prior learning assessment strategy based on current best practices is something that needs further exploration.

2.1 c)

Describe the aim(s) and principles stated in the framework?

N/A

2.1 d)

Describe the historical background that this issue has been taken up. What are the most important drivers of legislation? If there has been already reform of the legislation, describe the change and the pressure which made the change.

N/A

2.1 e)

¹⁶ Barrington Research Group; 11

What areas of competencies do governments have or intend to have? Are there any specific areas that are/ to be regulated by law or by social partners for professional recognition?

N/A

2.1 f)

Describe, if any, operational systems to put the legal framework into practice. Who set up the system(s)?

N/A

2.1 g)

Provide information, if exists, any evaluation of how they work or how they have not worked.

N/A

2.1 h)

Describe outreach activities or awareness-raising activities of the framework or the operational systems. How are the objectives of outreach/awareness-raising activities articulated? Which audience(s) do the activities mainly target?

N/A

Component 2.2 Government and the Role of Government

2.2 a)

List all actors in governance and create a matrix of who (e.g. government, quasi-government, assessment centres, public educational institutions, private for-profit education providers, professional bodies, etc.) does what (provides academic/professional recognition, overseas assessment, etc.) for non-formal and informal learning. If there are more than one body who are responsible for an action (e.g. recognition), list all actors involved and describe how is the coordination managed?¹⁷ If there are more than one ministry of a government are involved, specify which ministries have competencies for what. How clear are the different roles by different actors communicated among themselves as well as to users?

N/A

2.2 b)

Create the above same matrix for recognition of formal learning for comparative purposes.

N/A

2.2 c)

Describe the competencies (direct and indirect role) of government in the practice? Which of the following three models would your country be classified with respect to governance: 1) a 'predominance-of-industry' model; 2) a 'predominance-of-public authorities' model'; and 3) a 'shared responsibility' model¹⁸. Explain why that model fits into your country context. If there is a trend to shift to another model, describe driving forces for such change. Describe the details. If none of which is suitable to your country, describe your own country model.

N/A

2.2 d)

Describe, if any, inter-ministerial approaches to the issue? Describe also the policy objectives behind such approaches as well as positive results and challenges to date.

N/A

¹⁷ See Component 4.1 for complementary data.

Component 2.3 Resources

2.3 a)

Who is/are the financing body(ies) for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What is the policy thinking behind such financing? What is the annual budget 2004/2005? (Please convert to Euro.) Provide data, if possible, on the breakdown of how the budget has been spent.

N/A

2.3 b)

If the system has existed for some years, please provide the budget data since it existed. Has there been any increase/decrease of budget for recognition of non-formal and informal learning since a framework/system has been taken up? If so, describe any elements that have driven such change.

N/A

2.3 c)

Who pays for the assessment and recognition processes? If an individual is to pay, how much is it cost to him/her? Break down the costs by levels assessed or by types of subjects assessed, if relevant. Are there any cost-sharing arrangements between educational institutions and employers, between education institutions and government, etc.? Describe the costs arrangements.

The non-refundable fee for PLAR services is generally 50% of the regular course tuition fee. A general application fee, and possibly, a transcript evaluation fee, are also charged. There are no additional tuition costs if the assessment is successful. However, if the assessment is unsuccessful, regular tuition fees are applied (i.e. the student must pay the full course).

2.3 d)

How many assessment centres and/or assessors exist to date, if any? Where are such assessment centres located? Please specify the areas/regions with characteristics of such areas/regions (e.g. the average income, the income disparity, etc.) How was the decision made where to locate such centers? How much does it cost to maintain such centres and/or assessors? How many training programs exist: specify how many in a given year, if there are significant increases per year? How much does it cost to train such assessors? Break down by levels assessed, if relevant.

Currently, there is no particular “assessment centre” in Alberta. Alberta institutions which offer PLAR may do the assessing at their location. For example, Athabasca University does individual assessments and portfolio development. Assessors are college faculty members who have experience in both the subject and the specific course.¹⁹

¹⁹ Barrington Research Group; 19

Component 2.4 Others

2.4.a)

Provide any other institutional arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

N/A

Component 3.1 Qualifications, Qualification Systems, Qualifications Framework

3.1 a)

What term does your country use for ‘Recognition of non-formal and informal learning’? Please provide the original term in your own language as well as the literally translated term in English. Please describe if the term has certain connotations, implications, specific associations, etc.

The term most commonly used for “Recognition of non-formal and informal learning” in Alberta is “Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition” (PLAR). PLAR can be defined as “an assessment process and a variety of tools that assist adults in reflecting upon and articulating and demonstrating learning for the purpose of having it measured against some standard. PLAR is learning gained through experiences other than taking the formal credit courses including: work, self-directed study, community work, non-credit courses, on the job training, corporate training programs or life experience. Prior Learning Assessment determines what you have learned and whether that learning equals or exceeds the knowledge, skills and competencies defined in the learning outcomes of courses offered at post-secondary institutions.”²⁰

The literal translation broken up into parts is as follows:²¹

- *Prior Learning* is previous learning that has occurred in a variety of settings, including, but not limited to, formal educational setting.
- *Assessment* is the method, process, and procedure for evaluating informal learning to give value to learning that has not previously been recognized.
- *Recognition* equates the assessment of learning to existing formal standards to determine its equivalence.

3.1 b)

Describe if recognising of non-formal and informal learning is linked to qualifications, qualification systems, or qualifications framework in your country. Provide data, if any, the impact of such linkages.

N/A

3.1 c)

What kinds of qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas, degrees, licenses, etc.) are more linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What are the difficulties or obstacles in linking recognition of non-formal and informal learning to qualification framework?

For those Alberta post-secondary institutions engaged in PLAR activities, typically the recognition is applied to various certificate, diploma, and degree programs.²² Those

²⁰ Barrington Research Group; 7

²¹ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 5

institutions actively engaged in offering PLAR opportunities have been actively working to reduce barriers.

3.1 d)

Describe if there are differences in such linkages depending on whether the qualifications are professional or academic recognition? Can the link to the qualification systems legitimacy of such recognition be a means for establishing 'legitimacy' both in working life and in the educational system ?

N/A

3.1 e)

If your country has a national qualification framework or in the process of establishing one, has the development towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning been of the drivers for your country to establish one? Is the development of the qualification framework and its implementation in practice with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in parallel?

N/A

3.1 f)

What are some potential threats of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals? How can resistance from the higher education sector be overcome to embed the recognition of non-formal and informal learning into the qualification framework?

Although most participants place high importance on PLAR, there is sometimes the belief that the time commitment to attain the maximum credit available outweighs the benefit.²³

Students interviewed addressed the financial strain of the fees required. PLAR has also been seen to be too timely (e.g. assessment process) and requires many resources (e.g. student, assessor, employer, faculty).²⁴ Pursuit of a formal framework to support PLAR activities could assist with reducing barriers, that would facilitate standardization of activities, best practices, and sharing of information.

²² Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 5

²³ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 6

²⁴ Barrington Research Group; 13-14

Component 3.2 Credit Accumulation and Transfer

3.2 a)

Describe any formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning, if they exist. What are general policies, objectives, and legislative, regulatory or sectoral agreement frameworks for such credit arrangements? How are the arrangements used - at similar levels, between different levels, or between different sectors. Provide data, if any, of actual users (number of users, at what level, which sector, transition path, etc.)

PLAR does not award students with credit for experience, rather for what the student has **learned from that experience**. Learning is measured by the course and the learning outcomes. While there is not a formal provincial framework in place at this time, Alberta has; however, recognized the benefits of PLAR. Recent policy recommendations through the A Learning Alberta review suggest pursuit of a framework that supports the assessment of prior learning.

3.2 b)

Who is/are responsible for credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning? Is it different from the arrangements for formal learning?

Post-secondary institutions are responsible for their own arrangements. According to the Best Practices in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Handbook,²⁵ the following individuals at institutions are responsible for coordinating PLAR:

- An advisor is needed initially to facilitate the flow of information and to conduct the initial screening process. This individual is typically from the Registrar's Office or the Learning Centre of an institution. The advisor then determines where to direct the PLAR request and contacts the appropriate department to identify a faculty member for the assessment.
- The assessor is a content expert. Each discipline has its own values and assessment tools. The content expert has an intimate knowledge of the subject, programs, courses and the types of work experience that are appropriate for PLAR.
- An administrative or record-keeping function is another component of the PLAR process. Someone is needed to check transcripts, work out the fine details, and submit results.

For those institutions in Alberta actively involved in PLAR, one person may fulfill all three roles.

3.2 c)

How is a credit counted? Number of hours of a course? Please specify how credits are counted on what base in your country.

Post-secondary institutions will award credit on a course by course basis. This includes practicum courses. In a few cases, blocks of credits are awarded.²⁶

²⁵ Barrington Research Group; 16

3.2 d)

What are the incentives or disincentives for participants to gain credit and providers to give credit?

Participants have an opportunity to receive credit for prior learning.

Additionally the following incentives are noted: ²⁷

- Employers can add value to their organization by providing PLAR services to their employees for their professional development.
- When a college facilitates its provision of PLAR, college alumni can be attracted back to education by providing administrative support for the activity. In turn, an extended relationship between college and alumni can be developed.
- Using PLAR as part of their service provision to the community, organizations retain flexibility as well as control to adapt tools, procedures and processes to local needs.
- Employers also commented on enhanced productivity in the workplace after implementing PLAR.²⁸

Disincentives relate to the barriers of non-formal and informal learning provided in **3.1 f**.

3.2 e)

Describe, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your VET system through credit system: e.g. the dual system to integrate experiential learning.

N/A

3.2 f)

Provide data, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your HED system through credit system: e.g. research on the growing number of take-up of internships, etc.

N/A

²⁶ Barrington Research Group; 13

²⁷ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 42

²⁸ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 75

Component 3.3 Assessment Methods and Procedures

3.3 a)

Describe the assessment arrangements. Who carries out assessments, and with what type of approaches? Who validates the results of the assessments? How long will the assessment procedures take? If methods or procedures vary depending on sectors, list the name of the sectors and the methods used for the recognition for the sector. What assessment procedures do participants go through to get their non-formal and informal learning recognised? Describe different stages.

For those institutions in Alberta practicing PLAR, as mentioned in **2.3d**, assessors are college faculty members with experience in both the subject and the specific course. The assessor will compare the individual's learning with the stated learning outcomes of the course. They will also verify the individual's documentation, and may contact his/her employer or references. If the individual submits a portfolio, a team of assessors will review it and either interview him/her, or set a challenge process. The individual will be informed about whether they will receive credit for the course. Their may be a supplementary challenge process.²⁹ The time taken for the assessment procedure to take place will vary based on individual circumstances.

3.3 b)

Describe different types of assessment methods and procedures. Provide data on advantages and challenges for the different types of assessment (e.g. competence-based assessment, summative assessment, portfolio assessment, etc.) What are the principle drivers of costs of different types of assessments to different actors? Provide evidence, if any, of certain types of assessment may become beneficial or a barrier to participants (e.g. psychological, financial, etc.).

As mentioned in **1.3 c**, portfolio assessment is typically the primary method used in PLAR in Canada. This method has "resulted in a groundswell of appreciation for and implementation of various portfolio methodologies in recent years."³⁰

There are two different ways assessment is discussed in portfolio production:³¹

1. Self- assessment: occurs throughout the preparation of the portfolio
2. Third-party jury assessment: values the learning in relation to skill set in order to award credit.

Participant feedback suggests both barriers and benefits³² include the difficulty with the assessment process being somewhat overwhelming. To be able to deal with the intensive process of recording life history, the process needs to be handled in small pieces rather than looking ahead to the completed product. However, overall the individual realizes an awareness of skills sets they would not normally recognize.

²⁹ Barrington Research Group; 19

³⁰ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 12

³¹ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 72

³² Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 72

In addition, jury assessment is considered by many institutions as an unjustifiable expense. This is because in many courses, the teaching as well as the evaluation component is done by a single individual. Jury assessment, however, ensures fairness to both the learner and assessor in that the learning being presented meets an academic, professional, and experimental standard. As the jury method uses three kinds of subject-matter experts, the effectiveness of the assessment process is increased.³³ Participant have spoken favorably about having their work reviewed by more than one person.³⁴

3.3 c)

Describe the current relationship between academic standards, professional standards, and occupational standards in your country. Who owns and controls such standards?

N/A

3.3 d)

Has the issue been raised in your county of how the assessment practice should be balanced with the right of individuals to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes be retained? Describe the debate to date, if any.

No, this issue has not been raised.

3.3 e)

How is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning quality-assured in your country? Who is responsible for the quality assurance process? How is the issue of quality assurance treated in the internationalization context?

N/A

³³ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 73

³⁴ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 73

Component 3.4 Others

3.4 a)

Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

N/A

Component 4.1 Characteristics of Stakeholders

4.1 a)

Identify all possible stakeholders involved (with specific characteristics) and complete a list below concerning non-formal learning and informal learning in your country to complement the list for Component 2.2. The 2.2 list is to map out governance and the role of government while this list aims to map out the relationships between providers of non-formal learning or types of informal learning, recognisers of such learning, recognition to be received, regulatory of such recognition, and main users of such recognition. Please note, due to the difference of nature of non-formal and informal learning, that the grid for non-formal learning uses a provider of non-formal learning or an input-side as a starting base- first column – as non-formal learning seems to be more recognised after going through a non-formal learning programme. On the other hand, the grid for informal learning uses output/ skills as a starting point because it is not feasible to list all types of informal learning where there is no such supplier as the individual is the active entity to create such learning opportunities. Therefore, there is a separate grid for non-formal and informal learning. The annex also aims to examine characteristics of users for aggregation of data, but please provide micro-level data about users in this section.

- Employers
- Educators
- Policy makers
- Citizens
- Government
- Post-secondary Institutions and providers

Component 4.2 Access

4.2 a)

What are the eligibilities to go through the recognition process? If it differs in different sectors/levels (e.g. HEd, VET, upper secondary, basic education, professional, etc.), describe different eligibilities for different levels/sectors.

Recognition processes would be the responsibility of each institution. The eligibilities to go through the recognition process would vary according to different institutions. Some examples of the recognition process for specific institutions are provided in **1.3a**.

4.2 b)

How many educational institutions (in comparison with the total number of educational institutions) at different levels practice the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as an admission policy?

Based on a study in 2005, 62% of Alberta post-secondary institutions (18 of 29 surveyed) had PLAR policies in place. However, information is not available on how these are related to their admission policies.

4.2 c)

Describe the situation of access to information and communication. Is there one-stop information service centre or help-desk concerning questions which may arise about the recognition system? What medium has been used (leaflet, CD-ROM, website, etc)? If there is a website, please provide the figure of ‘click ratio (how many clicks per month – please provide all the records available since the launch of the website.’). Attach an example. What media channels have been used to publicize the existence of such medium (newspaper, journals, free journals, publicity on the metro, etc)? Specify the names of such media channels.

Questions can be asked by contacting the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) or by accessing the ACAT website: www.acat.gov.ab.ca. ACAT includes different services including PLAR, and the Alberta Transfer Guide. Due to this, there is no way of telling how many clicks have been allocated towards PLAR specifically.

Component 4.3 Participation

4.3 a)

How many people have actually taken up the process at different educational levels? Provide any evidence on the patterns of participants (gender, age, socio-economic groups, ethnicity, employment status, marital status, educational levels and their family educational levels)?

In most of Alberta's post-secondary institutions, the percentage of students who receive PLAR credits is small. In smaller colleges, the percentage is 1-2%; in larger ones, it is estimated at 5%. For example, in Athabasca University, out of 32,000 students, just under 200 students received PLAR. Many practitioners who were interviewed felt PLAR requests had increased in the last five years and it is expected that requests will continue to increase in the future.³⁵

4.3 b)

Provide details of any survey – national household survey, user survey, etc. – that explains any linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process.

Following the *Gateways* Project, 40 participants completed the Project Completion Survey. 17 participants reported they have applied to a post-secondary institute to further their education – 14 participants had their application accepted. 15 participants reported the *Gateways* Project was “very useful” in preparing them for their new studies, and 28 reported they plan to enroll in another post-secondary program for credit.³⁶

4.3 c)

Provide evidence, if any, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning worked as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the ‘learning leads to learning’ and ‘training leads to training’ track ? Who constitutes the ‘disadvantaged group’ in your country?

Please refer to 1.4e for more information.

³⁵Barrington Research Group; 12

³⁶Arcott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 56, 122-123

Component 4.4. Incentives and Disincentives

4.4 a)

Provide evidence of any, if not all, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning functions as a transitional or multi-directional pathway in your country (e.g. a way to further studies, shorten study period, find a job, change a job, get a better salary, etc.) If it functions as a way to find a job from the unemployment status, is there any evidence that the length of unemployment influences the transition.

The following points extracted from the *Gateways* Project provide evidence that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning function is a transitional or multi-directional pathway:³⁷

- PLAR recipients report having better pay, benefits, and improved career prospects, as well as the enhanced quality of life that accompanies academic accomplishment.
- PLAR students have been shown to engage in more continued lifelong learning. They take more courses and are more likely to engage in post diploma studies
- Some specialists in the adult education field at universities study PLAR as a means of advancing their careers.
- For PLAR participants, success in using PLAR is a means to other ends. PLAR affirmed what coursework had already been taught. A lifelong learner incorporates new opportunities for further study as a way of life that defines an important aspect of the individual's self concept.
- The benefits experienced by participants ranged from the creation of new career opportunities and flexible responses in meeting the needs of individual adult learners to both formal and informal validation of learning recognition of credentials and demonstrations of respect for diverse learning pathways and networks.
- Participants would not have returned to education without having had their prior learning recognized.
- Participants achieved a variety of goals: credentialing, professional certification, desired work, career advancement, and increased self-confidence.
- PLAR students have been shown to continue to engage in lifelong learning. They take more courses and are more likely to engage in post diploma studies than non-PLAR students.

4.4 b)

Provide evidence, if any, of detailed case studies where the actual length of studies was shortened by their recognition of non-formal and informal learning (e.g. number of such cases, the maximum and minimum reduced length and, thus, the costs of the study, the most practiced subject areas, etc.)

³⁷ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 7, 10, 12, 18, 19, 24, 27, 46, 56, 57,

Results from the *Gateways* Project show that those who went through PLAR “produced consistent awards of academic credit of a substantial magnitude that represented, on average, a year of full-time study for each participant.”³⁸

Detailed case studies N/A.

4.4 c)

Provide data, if any, of the returns of investments for different stakeholders. Any evidence of better private returns of investment (e.g. earnings) afterwards? Any evidence of fiscal returns? Any evidence of recognition that this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship as social outcome of learning?

N/A

4.4 d)

Provide data, if any, of practices of fiscal incentives for employers (e.g. tax incentives).

N/A

4.4 e)

Has the government made an explicit statement about promoting equity and social cohesion by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? If so, what kinds of schemes exist?

N/A

4.4 f)

Describe a situation in your country if stigmatisation exists for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as opposed to the formal recognition) in the academic word and/or in the labour market? If yes, have there been any attempts to change such effects and to increase up-take of such recognition? What strategies have been tested so far?

Although most PLAR participants indicate that PLAR was valuable, some believe that too much work was involved for the maximum amount of credit that could be received.³⁹
See 3.1f and 3.2d

4.4 g)

Describe any incentives or levers that promoted public-private partnership in the recognition practices in the labour market? What schemes or incentives exist to encourage SMEs to engage in the recognition arrangements?

N/A

³⁸ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 5

³⁹ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 6

Component 4.5 Others

4.5 a)

Provide any arrangements of collective bargaining that exists in your country. If there are accomplishments gained by collective bargaining for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, please provide details (driving forces, technical arrangements, beneficiaries, etc.)

N/A

4.5 b)

Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

N/A

Component 5.1. Economic Benefits

This section aims to collect data in a systemic way by case studies. The Secretariat has identified benefits from existing work and framed them into categories, being aware that some overlap in categories: i.e. economic, educational, social and personal. Please provide some evidence with case studies if such benefits are identified in your country. On the contrary, if tension or resistance exists as barriers to such benefits, please also describe such cases.

5.1 a)

Shortening the formal education process and thus reducing direct costs of learning and opportunity costs for individuals.

The following examples extracted from The *Gateways* Project relate to either shortening the education process or reducing the direct costs of learning for individuals:⁴⁰

- Participants report the saving of time and money as well as the valuing of their experiential learning.
- Savings to participants included savings in tuition which varied from \$150 to \$325 dollars per three-credit course charged by college partners to \$ 630 dollars at other types of institutions.
- The credit earned saved participants an average of a year's worth of tuition
- Participants also saved attendant supporting costs such as living costs, potential loss of income, and time away from employment for study.

5.1 b)

Increasing the visibility of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and thus enhancing potential benefits for future economic gains.

N/A

5.1 c)

Improving the allocation of human capital within organizations by matching the appropriate demands and supplies of skills and competencies.

N/A

5.1 d)

Reducing skills shortages or skills mismatch by allowing more mobility within the labour market (occupational mobility).

N/A

5.1 e)

⁴⁰ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 13, 52, 57

Ensuring labour force to support economic growth by the active use of the potential labour population (older workers, women, immigrants, unemployed youth, etc.).

N/A

5.1 f)

Ensuring labour force to support economic growth by improving productivity of the current labour force.

N/A

Component 5.2. Educational Benefits

5.2 a)

Reshaping the established concept of education from ‘terminal education’ to ‘lifelong learning’.

According to The Gateways Project, “PLAR students have been shown to engage in more continued lifelong learning. They take more courses and are more likely to engage in post diploma studies.”⁴¹

5.2 b)

Providing flexible personalized learning pathways.

The following examples, extracted from The Gateways Project, provide evidence of PLAR’s flexible and personalized approach to learning:⁴²

- Some PLAR participants discovered that portfolio development, assessment and recognition provided ample flexibility for them to integrate its demands on their time and attention.
- According to the **Best Practices** component of The *Gateways* Project, the power of PLAR, its capacity to empower the adult learner, lies in its flexible and adaptable approach. Program PLAR can meet the needs of adults in a wide range of individual circumstances; valuing the flexibility and adaptability of PLAR will expand its range of applications.

Please refer to **5.4a** for more information.

5.2 c)

Raising educational attainments levels by increasing the completion rates of secondary education qualifications.

N/A

5.2 d)

Increasing the tertiary participation rates of non-traditional learners.

N/A

5.2 e)

Improving the teacher work force through more flexible entrance to teaching occupation.

N/A

⁴¹ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 10

⁴² Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 20, 28

Component 5.3. Social Benefits

5.3 a)

Building social institutions to arrange smoother transition from education to work and from work back to education; increasing socio-cultural equity and social cohesion by providing pathways for formally excluded disadvantaged groups to be included.

N/A

5.3 b)

Leading to the better societal values (e.g. promotion of democracy, intercultural understanding, better health, lower criminal rates, etc).

N/A

5.3 c)

Enhancing flexibility to allow more mobility within the education and training sector (e.g. between VET and HE and from FE to HE, etc).

N/A

5.3 d)

Building a stepping stone for prisoners to be re-integrated into a society.

N/A

Component 5.4 Personal Benefits

5.4 a)

Empowering individuals to have more control over where and when they learn.

PLAR participants tend to provide individual success stories from portfolio development due to the strong motivational aspect of consistent and clear prior learning. Learners are empowered to take ownership of their learning as they are best situated to determine what they should learn. PLAR participants remain in control of how involved they should be in evaluating their success, and what they would like to do with the results of their assessment.⁴³

5.4 b)

Developing the aspirations of those who have ‘dropped out’ to resume learning and to complete a qualification.

Some examples which have been extracted from The *Gateways* Project regarding “drop outs” who have resumed learning through PLAR are as follows:⁴⁴

- Participants would not have returned to education without having had their prior learning recognized.
- Learners attracted to continue their studies through PLAR represent a different grouping of prospective students, a grouping that would not ordinarily return to post-secondary education.

5.4 c)

Reducing the stigma of qualifications associated with non-formal and informal learning.

One PLAR participant reported finding she “lacked the formal education that would have provided (her) with more opportunities for advancement.”⁴⁵ She then took advantage of workplace training, gaining certifications and training in various skills related to her work as a therapist.

⁴³ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 16

⁴⁴ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 2, 9, 15

⁴⁵ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 19

Component 5.5. Others

5.5 a)

Describe any cases where you identify any benefits or barriers to such benefits.

N/A

Component 6. Conclusion

6. a)

Which national goals, if any, in your country, are ‘the recognition of non-formal and informal learning’ most closely associated with? Are these goals associated with lifelong learning agenda or something else? If something else, specify.

N/A

6. b)

What strategies (short-term, mid-term and long-term) are needed to operationalize the ‘recognition of all types of learning outcomes – including formal, non-formal and informal learning’ in your country? What are the most challenging tasks for policy-makers in the due course?

For Alberta, an initial strategy includes the development of a PLAR framework to expand the ability of institutions and employers to recognize prior learning. This includes expanding bridging programs that facilitate individuals transitioning from work to learning to address specific knowledge and skills gaps so that individuals do not have to repeat entire programs of study. In addition, skilled tradespeople must be provided with more opportunities to receive credit towards other degrees and diploma programs as they continue with lifelong learning.

Some of the challenges include providing adequate resources for recognition activities, training and development of faculty and staff, access to information and resources, development of best practices and breaking down barriers of traditional recognition practices.

6. c)

Address important policy issues for your counties which have not been addressed in any of the previous Components.

N/A

6. d)

Please describe how much the ‘Lifelong Learning for All’ strategies are implemented at post-compulsory education level in your country?

N/A

6. e)

Please list some ‘factors’ which you think as unforeseeable and yet necessary conditions to realize the ‘Open Learning Society’ scenario, which gives value to formal, non-formal and informal learning.

- A future consideration that requires attention is the ingoing changes in provincially established education standards within various professions.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 76

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