

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



**Report
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador**

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

OECD Activity on Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning (NFIL)
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In Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Education, the various types of learning have been defined as follows:

- Formal:** Activities undertaken to obtain an official credential
- Non-formal:** Structured/organized learning through courses that do not lead to a diploma or specific degree
- Informal:** The pursuit of knowledge and skills without organized courses or imposed content

Component 1. Contextual factors

1.1 Demographic Change

- The enrolment profile of full-time students in the province's post-secondary institutions has undergone significant changes in recent years, both in terms of the number of students seeking higher education and the institutions they choose to attend. While post-secondary participation has grown overall, some sectors, such as the public school system, are showing decreases in enrolment. This can be partially attributed to decreasing fertility rates, an aging population and out-migration.
- The decline in K-12 enrolment has implications for the province's post-secondary institutions. Over the past ten years, schools in Newfoundland and Labrador have experienced a 30% decline in enrollment, from 106,205 students during the 1996/97 school year to 74,304 in 2006/07¹. This downward trend is expected to continue with a forecasted 15% decline in enrollment in five years. However, the economic change brought about by growth in the oil industry is likely to soften this projected decline.
- In 2004, faced with a continued projected decline in enrollment, the NL government consolidated the existing 11 school boards into five. This measure was implemented to gain efficiencies in administration and to ensure education resources are targeted to the classroom.

¹ Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education (2007). *Education Statistics 2006-2007*. St. John's, NL: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador p. 13)

- Nonetheless, high school graduates in Newfoundland and Labrador are pursuing postsecondary education in increasing numbers. A provincial follow-up survey of the June 2001 high school graduating class indicated that 71% enrolled directly into postsecondary programs during that year (up from 64.7% in 1996). This represented 76% of females and 65% of males.² (<http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/pub/followup/2001.htm>)
- The province's post-secondary institutions include Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), and 27 private training colleges. The University is comprised of several campuses including the main campus and the Marine Institute in St. John's, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook; a residential campus in Harlow, England, and the Frecker Institute on the neighbouring French island of St. Pierre. The College of the North Atlantic, the province's only public college, has 17 campuses spread throughout the province and includes several satellite sites and a campus located in Qatar.

Fall Enrolments in provincial post-secondary institutions from 2002 to 2006*

Institution	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006
Memorial University	17,394	17,785	17,803	17,509
Marine Institute (MUN)	1,141	1,159	1,197	1,371
College of the North Atlantic	6,627	6,408	6,222	6,200
Private Colleges	2,648	2,521	2,633	2,757

*Note: Includes all full-time and part-time students

- In 2004, at MUN, females constituted 61% of total undergraduate enrolment and this percentage has been increasing in recent years (MUN Fact Books, 2000-2004). At College of the North Atlantic, on average, a slightly higher percentage of students are male.
- In 2004, 87% of the students enrolled at MUN were from within the province. Four percent of Memorial's students were international students.
- In 2004, MUN awarded 2,294 undergraduate degrees, a 4.4% increase from 1995, and 579 graduate/professional degrees, a 70.3% increase from 1995.

² Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education (2003). *Beyond high school: Follow-up study of June 2001 high school graduates*. St. John's, NL: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (pp. 13-15)

1.2 Internationalisation

- The Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment has set out to develop a strategy to increase the number of immigrants who choose to make Newfoundland and Labrador their home. This immigration strategy will:
 - ◆ Enhance the economic growth of the province;
 - ◆ Support the efforts of our post-secondary institutions in attracting increased numbers of international students;
 - ◆ Address demographic changes (e.g., declining and aging population); and
 - ◆ Address specific skill shortages and difficult-to-fill positions
- There is a strong link between the immigration strategy and the province's economic and social development agenda specifically the innovation and regional diversification strategies.
- Another way the province addresses immigration needs is through its Provincial Nominee Program. This program allows the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to nominate immigrants with occupational or entrepreneurial skills that can help further the economic and social development of the province.

1.3 New ICT

- The Province recognizes the increased value of e-learning and distance learning. In 2000 it created the *Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation* (CDLI). Applying information and communications technologies (ICT), CDLI's e-learning team strives to provide access to educational opportunities for students, teachers and other adult learners in both rural and urban communities within Newfoundland and Labrador by:
 - ◆ Providing access to educational opportunities for students, teachers and other adult learners in both rural and urban communities in a manner that renders distance transparent;
 - ◆ Eliminating geographical and demographic barriers as obstacles to broad, quality educational programs and services; and
 - ◆ Developing a culture of e-learning in our schools which is considered to be an integral part of school life for all teachers and students.(<http://www.cdli.ca/index.php?PID=AnnounceFull&NewsID=6352>)
- In 2005/06, CDLI expanded its course offerings from 97 to 103 rural and remote high schools located throughout the province. In addition, CDLI has continued to develop multimedia learning objects (MLOs) as tutorials for a number of courses. As of 2005/06, over 1250 MLOs have been posted online providing over 150 hours of review students are able to access through the internet.
(http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/pub/ann_rep/doe_ar05-06.pdf)

- In September 2005, CDLI was chosen to coordinate and administer a \$24.9 million agreement among the Government of Canada, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Persona Communications Corporation to provide broadband access to 68 schools and 103 communities in rural and remote regions of the province.
- There is an overall expectation and demand for computer skills across most, if not, all, industries. Funding has been provided to the public college system to purchase new equipment in keeping with current technology now used in the workforce and by industry. State-of-the-art technology is critical to providing employers with graduates who are ready and able to contribute to the workplace.
- In 2006, to further prepare its K-12 students for a career in skilled trades and improve technology skills, the province invested \$2 million in a technology integration program targeted towards course development and improving the technological infrastructure within the province's schools. This investment will include the acquisition of state of the art science and computer equipment providing for the distribution of 1,200 computer systems as well as other modern, multi-purpose equipment (such as digital instructional cameras, electronic top-loading balances, and advanced optical microscopes) to schools throughout the province. This reflects the government's commitment to ensure students have the opportunity to strengthen their information technology and literacy skills. This promotes informal learning and allows students the opportunity to develop skills transferrable into post-secondary studies and the workforce.
- At the secondary level, \$4 million has been invested into the development and piloting of a new skilled trades and technology program, *the Futures in Skilled Trades and Technology Program*. This initiative provides the opportunity to modernize the provincial technological curriculum through both the development and implementation of new courses in skilled trades and technology education and the availability of new machinery, tools and technology. Through course development and equipment upgrades, students can improve their skills in technology and decide if a career in skilled trades is right for them.

1.4 Economic developments and skills shortage/mismatch

- The people of this Province have long recognized that an educated population is the strongest foundation upon which to build the province's future. Newfoundland and Labrador's investment in education is high: about 6.4 percent of our provincial Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2004, compared to 4.5 percent for Canada.

- Released in July 2005, the *White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education*³ forms a critical part of government's continued commitment to provide affordable and accessible post-secondary education and training opportunities throughout the province. The *White Paper* and its initiatives strongly emphasize the importance of the post-secondary system for the future social and economic development of the province, and for building strong institutional links to economic development.
- In communities and regions throughout the province, the educational system plays an invaluable role through formal and informal economic development activities by providing community leadership and by way of graduates.
- Newfoundland and Labrador has a growing older population accompanied by an overall decline in population and a smaller proportion of youth. Between 1991 and 2005, the province's population dropped by 10 percent and our working age population by 4 percent. Although out-migration rates have slowed in recent years, most of the people leaving the province are between the ages of 15 and 39 and have higher-than-average levels of education. Consequently, attracting and retaining enough workers with the right skills and expertise to meet this province's labour force demands is of increasing concern.
- Subsequently, the Adult Learning and Literacy Division, Department of Education, recently undertook a study to examine the range of factors which inhibit and promote the engagement of Newfoundland and Labrador's adults in educational activities. The *Barriers Research Project* focused on adults aged 20-54 who currently have, or at some time in their adult lives had, a low level of education (less than high school, high school only or some post-secondary). Three forms of learning were investigated: formal, non-formal and informal. Participation and interest was also investigated, and data was gathered on demographic characteristics, as well as on self-concept and life satisfaction. Preliminary results find that respondents show a high level of belief in the importance of education and of interest in further education, that work status and the perceived connection between education and work drive individuals to higher interest and participation in learning, and that enhancing workplace education might be a fruitful area for policy development.
- In its Budget 2006, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced the creation of a Skills Task Force, made up of 22 representatives from industry, labour, community, government, and post-secondary institutions, to identify future workforce skills requirements, to assess the province's ability to meet these needs, and to identify education and training strategies that satisfy industry demands, particularly for large-scale development projects.
- The Province also launched a new Labour Market Development and Client Services division within the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment to provide timely and accurate labour market information and services to assist employers, workers, new and returning job seekers and to help students make informed labour market choices.

³ Department of Education (2005). *Foundation for success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education*. St. John's, NL: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

- Not unlike other jurisdictions, there are workers in this province who are classified as “unskilled” when they have, in fact, acquired many valuable skills that have not been formally assessed and recognized. With a declining working-age population and increasing skills shortages in many industries, the availability and use of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) processes becomes increasingly important. Many people are not aware that formal recognition and certification is possible without going back to school.
- Several good PLAR processes already exist in the province. For example, a trade qualifier is a person who has been employed in a designated occupation for a length of time not less than one year in excess of the apprenticeship term as specified in the *Conditions Governing Apprenticeship Training* (http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/app/doc_pub/pdf/gen_conditions.pdf) for that occupation and subsequently wishes to become certified. Through assessment of the prior learning and verification of the work experience, the Division of Institutional and Industrial Education, Department of Education, determines the individuals’s readiness to write the certification examination and if necessary, prescribes in-school training. Journey person certification is not granted without writing the Provincial or Interprovincial examination.

1.5 Social Developments

- Recognizing the importance of literacy and numeracy skills, the Province has made increased investments in adult learning programming, including funding to the many non-profit community-based sites that offer Adult Basic Education (ABE). Since 2002-03, Newfoundland and Labrador has invested approximately \$22,754,000 in literacy through early childhood grants, adult literacy grants, and support to province’s public College of the North Atlantic’s ABE Level I, II, and III programs.
- *Newfoundland and Labrador’s Blueprint for Sustainable Economic Growth through Innovation*⁴ (January 2005) emphasizes fostering a culture that values and encourages skills and knowledge-- creative, scientific, technical, market, management, legal, and production, as well as providing the tools – access to infrastructure, fiscal resources, and research and business networks.
(http://www.intrd.gov.nl.ca/intrd/pdf/Discussion%20Paper_Feb2005.pdf)

1.6 Others.

- Newfoundland and Labrador’s economy has traditionally been dependent on its resource sectors (e.g., fishing and mining). The passing of knowledge and skills from generation to generation typically occurred in informal fashion. The energy sector has emerged as another major resource. There is increased interest about the potential for skills training and employment related to its future development and the availability of a qualified workforce.

⁴ Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development (2005). *Newfoundland and Labrador's blueprint for sustainable economic growth through innovation: A discussion paper*. St. John's, NL: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Component 2. Description of institutional arrangements

2.1 Political and legal framework

- The Province's Department of Education is charged with the responsibility for providing the enabling structures for the education of over 74,000 students in the K-12 system, as well as the over 25,000 students in the post-secondary system. The department also encourages and promotes lifelong learning for all of the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador
- The Department of Education's mandate is built around the following mission statement: *To provide an affordable, high quality education to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so that they are able to acquire - through lifelong learning - the knowledge, skills and values necessary for personal growth and the development of society. Our vision:*
 - ◆ Learners who are self-reliant and prepared to meet personal and work-related challenges;
 - ◆ Active partnerships among communities, community organizations, and educational institutions;
 - ◆ Educational personnel who are challenged to be creative and innovative in the pursuit of excellence, and;
 - ◆ Delivery of education that is efficient, effective and of high quality(<http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/dept/mandate.htm>)
- Released in July 2005, the *White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education* forms a critical part of government's continued commitment to provide affordable and accessible public post-secondary education and training opportunities throughout the province. The *White Paper* and its initiatives strongly emphasize the importance of the post-secondary system for the future social and economic development of the province, and for building strong institutional links to economic development. Through its *White Paper*, the Province has committed almost \$90M over three years to strengthen the base of the Province's post-secondary education system and to support the capacity for skills training. Its 28 recommendations strengthen the province's public post-secondary base, improve its capacity, help students, maintain stable funding, and enhance governance.
- Both Memorial University of Newfoundland, through its Centre for Career Development and Experiential Learning, and College of the North Atlantic, through PLAR, are promoting and recognizing non-formal and informal learning.
- There is no legal framework in the province to recognize non-formal and informal learning. However, indirectly, the *Memorial University Act*, *Colleges Act*, and the *Private Training Institutions Act* provide a legislative framework for the recognition on non-formal and informal learning that is done through these educational institutions.

2.2 Governance and the role of government

Who?	What?
Government	
Department of Education: Adult Learning and Literacy Division Department of Education: Institutional and Industrial Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall promotion of life-long learning and specific support for community-based learning and literacy programs • Provincial Apprenticeship Program
Public Post-secondary institutions	
Memorial University of Newfoundland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrar's Office- enrolls and approves entrance to learning centres: • Centre for Management Development offers professional development and non-formal learning opportunities • Centre for Life Long Learning offers non-formal courses
College of the North Atlantic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrar's Office- formally recognizes/approves PLAR (e.g., gives credit) • Individual programs/departments do PLAR assessment
Centre for Nursing Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrar's Office- formally recognizes/approves challenged courses and gives credit
Private Post-secondary Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrar's Office- formally recognizes/approves • PLAR (e.g., gives credit) • Individual programs/departments do PLAR assessment

2.3 Resources

- The Province has assigned priority to the revenue needs of our public post-secondary institutions who are key partners in our efforts to create an environment conducive to learning. In the 2005/06 Budget, Government provided operating grants of \$173.4M to Memorial University of Newfoundland and \$52.5M to College of the North Atlantic, representing an increase of 10.2% and 6.7%, respectively, over 2004/05 grants. Similarly, in 2006/07, MUN's operating grant increased to \$197.0M, an increase of 13.4% over the previous year and CNA's increased to \$60.7M, a 15.6% increase over 2005/06.
- In 2004/05, the latest year for which comparable data is available, the Provincial transfer to public post-secondary institutions per FTE student was the highest among all Atlantic Provinces and comparable to the Canadian average.

- The Province wants to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have access to post-secondary education at an affordable cost. Tuition fees at Memorial University of Newfoundland and College of the North Atlantic were frozen in 2004/05 and remained frozen for 2005/06 and 2006/07.
- Excluding Quebec, with its differential rates for resident and non-resident students, MUN's tuition (\$2,377) was the lowest university tuition in the country in 2005/06, and 45% lower than the national average (\$4,446). College of the North Atlantic's tuition (\$1,452), in addition to being the lowest in Atlantic Canada, is also 40% lower than the national average (\$2,410).

Costs specific to non-formal and informal learning:

- ◆ In the public and private post secondary system, it is the individual's responsibility to pay for the Prior Learning Assessment.
- ◆ At the College of the North Atlantic, part-time students must pay a \$50 assessment fee per course. No charge exists for full-time students.
- ◆ Within MUN, the assessment fee is one half of the credit value of the course.
- ◆ At the Centre for Nursing Studies, assessment fees range from \$50-100.

Component 3. Description of Technical Arrangements

3.1 Qualifications, qualification systems, qualification frameworks

- The Newfoundland and Labrador Council on Higher Education (est.1998) uses the term *Prior Learning Assessment Recognition* for the 'Recognition of formal and informal learning'. This is defined as:

"A process whereby previous learning is recognized and credited" (the basic premise is that credit is not awarded for experience, but for the learning that has resulted from an experience) (<http://www.edu.gov.nf.ca/council/>).

- Typically, skilled trades programs lend themselves more to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. This includes various apprenticeship programs, certification under the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board, and the Nurse Practitioner Program.
- Most educational institutions and professional licensing and certification bodies offering PLAR have developed formal policies and procedures to guide their work.
- Potential threats to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning include:
 - ◆ Inability to reach consensus on minimum experiential criteria and how best to link formal course requirements and credits
 - ◆ Inadequate documentation of prior learning
 - ◆ Inequity amongst programs in terms of their compatibility with prior learning assessment tools and processes

3.2 Credit accumulation and transfer

- Credit arrangements for recognition vary by public post-secondary institution.
- Within College of the North Atlantic, the maximum number of credits available to be awarded through the Prior Learning Assessment process is 75% of the number required to complete the certificate/diploma. If a student is successful in challenging for more than 75%, and has verified the learning, the assessment team in consultation with the student, will decide which courses will be credited to make up the 75%.

3.3 Assessment methods and procedures

- Academic institutions are responsible for deciding the scheduling and appropriate method of evaluation, which may consist of a variety of possible modes of evaluation including written, practical and oral. Therefore, assessment methods will vary.
- Quality assurance occurs in-house. For example, within the College of the North Atlantic, assessment procedures are subject to ongoing, continuous review and evaluation and necessary revisions are made to keep abreast with current practice standards and changing needs.
(<http://www.cna.nl.ca/About/PoliciesPDFs/SS208%20Prior%20Learning%20Assessment.pdf>, p6)

3.4 Other

n/a

Component 4. Stakeholder behaviour

4.1 Characteristics of stakeholders

Learning Provider of non-formal learning	Recognizer	Type of recognition	Regulator	Main users
College of North Atlantic	College	Academic qualification	College	College students with previous experiential learning
Memorial University of Newfoundland: Centre for Life Long Learning	University	Certificate of attendance upon request	University	Students/non-students/ residents with interests related to program/class offered/public service or private enterprise management staff
Memorial University of Newfoundland: Centre for Management Development		Professional Development		
Non-governmental/ Volunteer sector	Institution itself	Certificate of participation	Institution	Community residents with different needs e.g. literacy

4.2 Access

- To apply for recognition of informal learning through the PLAR, an individual must be a student of the institution
- For non-formal learning at Memorial University of Newfoundland, formal registration is necessary through the Registrar's Office
- Non-formal and informal learning at the community/non-governmental level would vary depending on the type of learning and institution e.g. drop-in without registration, or formal registration

4.3 Participation

- From January to December 2006, through College of the North Atlantic, 483 people used PLAR compared to 1,269 in 2005. These consisted mostly of a Challenge for Credit and Exemptions.

4.4 Incentives and disincentives

- There is general agreement that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can help:
 - ◆ Remove barriers and open doors to adult learning
 - ◆ Formally recognize the skills and knowledge learners have acquired outside a formal classroom
 - ◆ Award credit, where appropriate, for post secondary level learning that leads to a recognized credential
 - ◆ Avoid having students unnecessarily repeat learning
 - ◆ Shorten the time required to complete the program of study
 - ◆ Reduce overall costs to the student.

4.5 Others

n/a

Component 5: Case Studies on benefits and barriers

- There are no provincial case studies available at this time on non-formal and informal learning.

Component 6: Conclusion

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to the promotion of lifelong learning, as further evidenced by the following additional examples of recent initiatives within the Secondary Education system:

- Renewed emphasis on career development training for high school students.
 - ◆ Government invested \$2 million this year to assist female and male high school students develop new career development skills and concrete experiences.
 - ◆ The addition of a compulsory Career Development 2201 course in senior high is designed to help students develop the skills required to continuously make effective career decisions throughout their lives. Students will be required to complete a community contribution requirement (minimum 30 hours) and to develop and maintain an “Employability Skills Portfolio” that they can continue to maintain and enhance throughout their academic studies and working career.
- Development of *Cultural Connections*-A K-12 Arts and Cultural Strategy
 - ◆ During 2005, \$10 million in funding was announced for a new three-year initiative to increase, update and strengthen the presence of cultural content in the curriculum and foster links between artists and students. This program has been expanded to continue on beyond the initial three year period.

- ◆ The “Cultural Connections Strategy” is one of the fundamental building blocks of the Strategic Cultural Plan, which will further develop a partnership with the provincial arts community, and preserve, protect and strengthen the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador.
 - ◆ Students will experience the music, art and other aspects of Newfoundland and Labrador’s unique culture through observing and participating along side with local musicians, artists and other members from the provincial arts community. This will allow them to develop a:
 - Critical awareness of the role of the arts in creating and reflecting our heritage;
 - Respect for the contributions of individuals and cultural groups to the arts, in local and provincial contexts;
 - Recognition of the value of the arts as a record of our human experience and
 - Greater understanding and appreciation of the province’s unique culture
 - ◆ Students’ knowledge and awareness will, therefore, be strengthened through both formal and non-formal learning.
- Continued investment in its Public Post Secondary system:
 - ◆ \$200,000 for advanced training for faculty at College of the North Atlantic;
 - ◆ \$1.5 million for new skilled trades programs at the college;
 - ◆ \$1 million for the development of two high tech programs at College of the North Atlantic targeted at the oil and gas industry;
 - ◆ \$600,000 for an Apprenticeship Training Program that will address the shortage of skilled trades workers at MUN and in government buildings;
 - And strong desire to address Community need:
 - ◆ Increased funding to public libraries to lengthen the hours of operation at forty-seven libraries where local demand exceeds existing hours.
 - ◆ The creation of the Skills Task Force to identify the province’s future skills requirements, particularly those associated with large-scale development projects; identify skills gaps and their potential impact on attracting large-scale development projects; assess the province’s current ability to respond to these requirements; and identify and develop strategies to ensure a proper training, education and support system to meet industry demands.

- ◆ Initiatives aimed at strengthening the public service and ensuring it continues to achieve excellence, including extensive learning and development programs to help frontline program staff within departments enhance their knowledge and skills in support of their departments' service delivery priorities.