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

Report
Province of Nova Scotia

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

OECD
Activity on Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning
Nova Scotia

Component 1. Contextual factors

Component 1.1. Demographic change

1.   The impact of demographic change, especially concerning migration and aging populations, is one major policy concern in many OECD countries. Population aging will increasingly affect most OECD countries over the coming decades. To respond to an aging labour force, in some countries, the labour market has been opened up to those aged over 55 and to the inflows of immigrant workers in order to sustain economic developments (OECD, 2003). Both aging and immigrant populations represent diverse communities. Both old workers and immigrants may behave significantly differently for recognition practices depending on whether or not they are part of the active labour force. It also enables a wider policy vision to identify key policy issues such as education and training policies, labour market and human resource development policies as well as migration policies. Therefore, this section aims to explore possible impact of demographic changes on education, training, and recognition of skills.

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?

The age and gender profile of Nova Scotia university students has changed significantly in the past decade. The percentage of Nova Scotia university students under the age of 30 has increased from 78.8% (27,957 out of 35,483) in 1990-91 to 83.2% (36,914 out of 44,360) in 2004-05. There is also a trend showing more female students go to Nova Scotia universities within the same period of time; the percentage of female students has increased from 55.6% (19,714 out of 35,483) in 1990-91 to 59.1% (26,230 out of 44,360) in 2004-05.

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

While specific data is not available, it is accepted that demographic changes are leading to a shift in participation in different sectors of education and training. An aging demographic impacts post-secondary enrolments. As the population ages, the high school population is declining, and so too is the number of students entering post-secondary education. This decline will inevitably lead to increased efforts to recruit students outside of the province, both nationally and internationally, and an increased focus on continuous learning (or "returning to learning"). Another effect of demographic change, and in particular of an aging population, is the increased need for trained workers in areas such as healthcare and tourism and hospitality. This is leading to new approaches to education and training, and innovative attempts to recognize the skills that people have. For example, steps have been taken in one industry to ensure that skilled workers are available to fill positions. In Nova Scotia, a number of partners collaborated to develop a prior learning assessment and recognition program that would recognize the skills and knowledge of Continuing Care

Assistants gained through on-the-job experience or informal learning. This process change was driven by an aging population and the need to recognize the skills of workers.

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 the skilled trades, Nova Scotia government has recognized the need to include those workers who have gained the necessary skills and experience through informal and non-formal learning. Section 30 of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship and Training Act, allows workers who have attained the necessary training and experience required by specific trades to make application to write the apprenticeship exam for that trade. There is an extensive interview and assessment process with an apprenticeship training officer, and if it is deemed that the worker has met the criteria, they are invited to write the exam for certification in their field.

This change will begin to address the demographic change in the labour force in Nova Scotia, will encourage migration to the province and stem the flow of out-migration to other provinces and countries.

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?

Empirical data is not available.

Higher education institutions have been slow to change, but there are examples institutions informally adjusting admission policies to practice the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The Nova Scotia Community College has established prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) policies and is developing appropriate procedures. Dalhousie University uses a portfolio assessment process to admit students to a Masters Degree in Public Administration (Management), specifically to address the succession planning issue within the provincial government. As well, both Mount Saint Vincent University and Cape Breton University have PLAR policies and can provide anecdotal evidence of admission decisions that were based either partly or solely on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Numbers are very small at this point, but as demand increases it is expected that these numbers will grow and that more formal admission policies and procedures will be put in place to recognise informal and non formal learning.

Component 1.2. Internationalisation

2.   Internationalisation is a growing phenomenon in education and work. International mobility is high on the education and training policy agenda and relevant policies have been developed at regional and international levels such as: the Lisbon Strategy, the Bologna Process, the Copenhagen Declaration, the European Qualification Framework, the European Credit Transfer System for higher education (ECTS), the new credit transfer system for vocational and education and training (ECVET), Europass, and Euro Profile, in Europe; MERCOSUR, in Latin America; ASEAN and APEC, in Asia and the Pacific; and NAFTA, in North America and Mexico; and the UNESCO/OECD guidelines for cross-border higher education, at the international level. Internationalisation is spurred by the increased flow of people due to migration and the growing activities of multi-national firms by transferring functions, expatriating human resources, and increased foreign direct investment. Internationalisation is an important factor, which has impact on stakeholder behaviour and institutional and technical arrangements

for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning especially in a form of recognition of qualification or credit transfer linked to the formal education sector. Therefore, this section aims to explore possible impact of internationalisation of education, training, and recognition of skills.

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)?

Since 2002, the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration has been encouraging immigration of skilled workers to this province to help address the labour shortage through the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP). This program has been providing notable opportunities for immigrants and their families. The goal is to help the province meet its industrial, economic and labour market needs, resulting in a more diverse workforce and economy.

The Skilled Worker stream of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP) is a focused and strategic program to assist employers in hiring workers whose skills may be in limited supply in the province. The stream helps employers recruit and/or retain foreign workers with the required skills for positions that they may have been unable to fill with a permanent resident or Canadian citizen. This stream is employer-driven. The applicant must have a guaranteed, permanent job offer from a Nova Scotia employer before submitting an application to the Nova Scotia Nominee Program. Presently, this program only considers the formal education and training of skilled workers. However, as the recognition of prior informal and non-formal learning evolves in Nova Scotia, the practice will likely become a consideration when assessing a newcomer for this program.

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?

Nova Scotia is in the developmental stage of promoting internationalisation within the province. At the regional level, the Council of Atlantic Deputy Ministers of Education and Training (CADMET) is conducting a consultation, research and development plan for an Atlantic International Credential and Competency Assessment and Recognition (ICCAR) Centre in Atlantic Canada to facilitate the recognition of immigrants' formal, non-formal and informal learning experience. At the national level, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) has just established the International Education Working Group, with a mandate of identifying and collaborating on International Education initiatives. As a representative of this working group, Nova Scotia will contribute to the discussion and formulation of a pan-Canadian approach on various aspects of Internationalisation; for example, promoting comparability/compatibility, visibility and portability of learning outcomes and promoting cross-border mobility.

Component 1.3. New ICT

3.   The increasing use of ICT in daily life (school, work, households, public domains, etc.) means that ICT is also transforming education and training in various ways, ranging from teaching/learning, administration, research, to social networking. The ever-changing new ICT can have an impact on the institutional and technical arrangements by establishing new

qualifications[1] to recognise new skills that are required for a knowledge society, such as ICT literacy. It may also have an impact on the individual by giving an incentive to take up the recognition process by using a new way of recording and accumulating the individual's learning assets. One relevant example to recognition is the *e-portfolio*[2]. E-portfolios are often discussed as an emerging trend to record learning achievements and to manage knowledge or skills assets and as a potential tool to further develop the knowledge society/economy. Also, the length (e.g. shorter training due to the emerging learning objects) may act as an incentive for an individual to take such training and get the outcomes recognised. The impact of ICT on the issue of recognition is important to explore as it will affect both the demand and supply sides of recognition.

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

There is much discussion of the modularisation of learning but at this point only anecdotal evidence. New information and communications technology are being used to better promote credit transfer. Dalhousie University has developed an online credit transfer guide which is fully accessible on the University's website.   While it serves as a guide only, it can provide students with a very good idea of what credits taken elsewhere will be accepted by Dalhousie University.   Several other universities in the province are following suit by creating online versions of transfer credit guides. To date, there is no comprehensive online credit transfer guide for the province, but discussions are taking place around the feasibility of such a guide.

The community colleges in Atlantic Canada have collaborated in the development of a Guide to Block Transfer Agreements. This guide is available in CD format to all graduates of community colleges in Atlantic Canada.

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.

Not applicable. Nova Scotia does not have data.

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?

As Canada's Portfolio College, the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) requires all full-time students to engage in developing a portfolio. E-portfolio is one option for learners to meet their portfolio requirement to graduate from NSCC programs. E-portfolio is a natural fit for various computer programs and many applied arts and new media programs. Students in these programs work in an online environment and are expected to showcase their skills in this medium. Online learners at NSCC also choose to engage in a portfolio process via technology. Not only students, but many faculty and staff at NSCC also take portfolio development online.

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[1] E.g. Certificates issued by industries such as Microsoft and Cisco, the European Computer Driving Licence, the International Computer Driving Licence, etc.

[2] To date, there is no single definition of e-portfolio. An e-portfolio broadly refers to an electronic way for learners to store, present and manage their learning achievements. E-portfolios can include electronic copies of assignments, essays, test papers, reports by assessors and teachers, CVs, testimonials (written and verbal), comments from peers and colleagues in work. They can store or link to (for example) audio evidence, video evidence, plus video links to the workplace, school or college for 'live' interviews and web links to relevant Internet sites.

<u>Component 1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage/ mismatch</u>

4. Strategies for a move towards a knowledge economy and integration into the global economy should be planned in line with the development of sustainable labour force and active citizenship. This would require appropriate skills formation and matching at various levels: i.e. constant progression of individuals' skills and capacities, better allocation of human capital within organisations, greater flexibility in transferring skills from sector to sector at a society at large, and more focus on regional economic developments such as Learning Regions. The recognition of skills, knowledge and experience (i.e. non-formal and informal learning outcomes) seems to be of increasing importance in giving such human capital assets visibility and portability. Therefore, the economic macro picture of a country (national economic policies, labour policies, etc.) will allow us to add a dynamic dimension of analysis, rather than a snap shot of current practices, to our study.

1.4.a) Describe any legal framework, policy, programmes, 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'?

The *Skills Nova Scotia Framework 2002-2003* documents the province's commitment to addressing the decreasing labour force due to an aging population, declining birthrate and out-migration of youth.

The more recent *Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan 2005-2006* highlights a number of activities that the province is undertaking through cross-departmental agency coordination. These activities include addressing the identified skill needs of the labour market, providing citizens better access to labour market information and strengthening life-long learning opportunities within the province.

In addition, Chapter 7: Agreement on Internal Trade which addresses the issue of mobility of qualified workers also works to help address the skills mismatch/shortage in Nova Scotia. The agreement, signed by federal, provincial, and territorial governments in 1994 delegates authority to government regulators and organizations to set occupational entry to practice standards and/or registration conditions to enable any worker qualified for an occupation in one province/territory to be granted access to employment opportunities in that same occupation in all other provinces and territories. There are nine occupations that have been identified as a priority; all of these occupations, with the exception of teachers, are in the health sector area.

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?

In Nova Scotia, there is a particular shortage of health care sector workers. The federal, provincial, territorial agreement on internal trade begins to address this shortage. Workers from the fields identified as priority, and have signed agreements, are able to move freely between provinces without having to write individual certification exams.

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.

Not applicable

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.

Not applicable.   Nova Scotia does not track the formal recognition of informal or non-formal learning.

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.)?

There have been numerous studies and research papers published that show that certain disadvantaged groups such as older workers, seniors, visible minorities, aboriginals, and persons with disabilities have employable skills and knowledge gained through a combination of formal, informal and non-formal learning. Identifying and recognizing that learning would better position people in those groups to take advantage of available jobs and assist in the growing labour shortage. However, at this stage, Nova Scotia does not have data to make specific correlations.

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.

Not applicable.

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.)?

Such a listing is not available.   Known examples include entrance to the Masters of Public Administration (Management) Degree at Dalhousie University, and as previously mentioned, the prior learning assessment and recognition process to recognise the skills learned on-the-job by Continuing Care Assistants is an example of where industry is 'counting' the on-the-job learning towards certification within the Continuing Care field.

Component 1.5. Social developments

5.   Learning for leisure and pleasure and for personal development is very common in some OECD countries, and it is said that it yields benefits associated with democracy and citizenship and, such participation in civil society will affect economic and social benefits of individuals and, thus, have a positive benefit on the whole of society (World Bank, 2002). A new diverse set of competencies and skills required to participate in the knowledge society and economy is being defined (OECD, 2003c; Rychen and Salganik, 2003; European Commission,

2002). Individuals are expected to be self-reliant in relating to their own learning to acquire new skills and capacities such as media literacy, environmental literacy, health literacy, science literacy, ICT literacy, financial literacy, cultural literacy, literacies for the workplace, etc[3]. Many of the new skills and 'illiteracies,' however, are gained through non-formal and informal learning. Not recognising such skills and capacities may lead to a loss not only for an individual but also for an organisation and even for a society at large. Analytical work on the social aspects and the costs of the failure to recognise such skills and capacities could be an added value of our study.

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.

In Nova Scotia, as in the rest of the world, skills and competencies are changing to allow citizens to live in a continually-evolving knowledge economy. As a government, we are aware that business, labour, industry and education groups are recognizing different skills and competencies as related to technology however there are no specific lists of identified skills.

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?

As mentioned above, although there is no empirical evidence that newer skills related to the evolving knowledge economy are being recognized, anecdotally, it is understood that these skills are being recognized in some form and that this learning will continue formally or through non-formal and informal means.

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

It is well known, if not documented that learning encourages citizens to become involved in their community. In Nova Scotia the development of our prior learning processes have not advanced to the point where there is data to prove the correlation.

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.

In addition to addressing a skills mismatch, the changing skill sets relating to a knowledge economy and changes in the admission policies at post secondary institutions, the province's declining birth rate is resulting in declining enrolments in the provinces public school system. As a result, there are fewer high school graduates to enter the workforce or attend post secondary institutions. Businesses will be forced to look toward investing in more workplace upgrading programs for employees which will include the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and revisiting position requirements to recognize skills attained though non-traditional means.

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[3] A new literacy approach is discussed in the ASEM lifelong learning thematic report 2: integrated approaches in lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning. Available at: http://www.uvm.dk/asem/reports/asem_thematic_report_2.pdf

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

Prior to 1996, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning was very limited and most commonly seen in policies regarding mature student admission practices. While still limited, 10 years later some progress has been made in the recognition of such learning. The following lists some of the milestones in Nova Scotia's development.

1996: Halifax PLA Centre opens - the first independent, collaborative, community-based PLAR organization in Canada with a board of directors representing six universities, the Nova Scotia Community College and a range of on-going community members including the voluntary, business and labour sectors.

1998 - Halifax PLA Centre organizes and hosts the first of four annual Nova Scotia-wide PLAR symposia to heighten awareness of PLAR principles, practices and applications for a variety of settings and sectors.

1999 - As a result of province-wide community consultations, the Nova Scotia Community College becomes the first post-secondary institution in Canada to adopt, as an explicit strategic objective, the goal of becoming a "Portfolio College."

2000 - Dalhousie University accepts portfolios for mid-career public servants who lack the normal undergraduate prerequisites and are seeking admission to the Master's of Public Administration (Management) program. The Halifax PLA Centre offers its first pilot "Portfolio for Academic Purposes" and initial candidates are considered and admitted to the Dalhousie University program on the basis of their academic portfolios.

2001 - 4th International PLAR/QR Forum, "Recognizing Learning-Building Canada's Future Prosperity-A Call to Action," funded by HRDC, is organized and hosted by the PLA Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia and attended by 600 delegates. The legacy of this forum is the Halifax Declaration for the Recognition of Prior Learning that affirms principles for recognition of prior learning and four key actions.

2002 - Halifax PLA Centre, with support of HRDC, conducts an impact evaluation to sample and analyze the immediate and long-term outcomes from the more than 2000 Nova Scotians who completed a 'Skills and Learning Portfolio.'

2002 – Nova Scotia Department of Education, Skills and Learning Branch launches the Skills Nova Scotia Framework and 2002-2003 Action Plan, "Strong Workforce – Bright Future." The document was a plan to identify and address the labour and training needs and challenges of all Nova Scotians. The framework sets up guidelines and a plan to work towards an improved labour force to help manage the job growth identified through labour market research. One of the objectives is the need to make education and training more relevant to the emerging skill needs of learners and employers. Each year since the launch, the department has released an annual action plan and in each year the focus on the recognition and assessment of prior learning has increased.

2003 - Halifax PLA Centre undertakes a major three-year research initiative - with support and cooperation from HRDC, federally and regionally - to provide professional development and capacity building support to Employment Assistance Services agencies

across Nova Scotia, to enable them to offer "Skills and Learning Portfolio Programs" to their clients.

2003 – Healthcare Human Resource Sector Council, in collaboration with the Department of Health, Department of Education, Continuing Care Assistant Program Advisory Committee, and Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations initiated a PLAR pilot project to address the credential gap and potential resulting in limited employment mobility of individuals working as personal care workers and home support workers.

2004-2006 – Interest in the recognition of learning continues to grow. PLA Centre continues to work with a number of organizations to develop and deliver PLAR programs and services. Nova Scotia Department of Education, Skills and Learning Branch includes specific PLAR goals and initiatives in its annual Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan 2003-2004. Continuing Care Assistant PLAR program is successful and moves from pilot phase to implementation phase.

2006 – Nova Scotia Department of Education establishes a broadly-based Provincial PLAR Advisory Committee to review current PLAR practices in the province, share information and resources, identify gaps, and create a PLAR framework.

Component 2. Description of institutional arrangements

Component 2.1. Political and legal framework

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.

The government of Nova Scotia through the Department of Education has launched a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition initiative as stated in the *Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan 2005-2006*. The goal of this initiative is to work towards establishing a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition framework for the province of Nova Scotia, increasing the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

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.

Nova Scotia does not have legal regulatory frameworks concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning. However, Nova Scotia is exploring the development of a prior learning assessment and recognition framework. Through further research and discussions with business, labour, industry, and education groups, a plan to address these statements will be developed.

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

Not applicable as per above.

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.

In 2002 the Department of Education released Learning for Life, a plan to improve the quality of education for Nova Scotia students. To complement this initiative, the Skills and Learning Branch of the department released the Skills Nova Scotia Framework and 2002-2003 Action Plan to develop a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. In subsequent years, the Skills Nova Scotia action plans and annual reports have included the development and implementation of prior learning assessment and recognition as a key objective to support the life long learning of Nova Scotians.

2.1.e)   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?

At present, Nova Scotia is in the research stage of developing a prior learning assessment and recognition framework. Therefore, competencies have not been identified at this point.

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

Not applicable

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

Not applicable

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?

Not applicable

Component 2.2. Governance 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?[4] 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?

List of 'who does what' for non-formal and informal learning and recognition of such learning

Through the work of the PLA Centre, established in 1996, Nova Scotia has come to be recognized as a leader in PLAR in Canada. The work of the PLA Centre has focused on

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[4] See Component 4.1 for complementary data.

portfolio development as a method to identify, articulate, and prove formal, non-formal, and informal learning. The assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning by external bodies has developed more slowly and, as previously mentioned, Nova Scotia is currently working toward the development of a provincial framework. There are many examples in Nova Scotia of the practice of recognizing non-formal and informal learning, and the list below is an attempt to capture those efforts. As there is no central collection of data in the province, it is not intended that this list is complete.

Who?	What?
PLA Centre	Assists candidates in the preparation of materials for assessment; helps candidates to identify, articulate and prove non-formal and informal learning, trains practitioners, advocates on behalf of candidates, partners with organizations and institutions in the development and delivery of PLAR services
Nova Scotia Community College	Recognizes non-formal and informal learning through credit challenge and advanced standing. Through credit challenge, students can receive credit for individual courses; advanced standing allows students to receive block credit (one semester) or enter the 2nd year of a two-year program. Partner with other organizations.
Nova Scotia Department of Education, Apprenticeship and Adult Education Divisions	Apprenticeship Division – recognition of non-formal and informal learning as equates to hours of experience Adult Education Division -- The adult learning program has at its foundation the recognition of prior learning. Adults returning to learning enter the program at whatever point is most suitable for them and can meet curriculum outcomes through assessing prior learning.
Nova Scotia Department of Health, Continuing Care Division	Assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning towards certification as a Continuing Care Assistant in the Province of Nova Scotia.
Dalhousie University, Faculty of Management	Use portfolio development and assessment processes to admit students to the Masters of Public Administration (Management) program. Admission is based on the learning articulated in the candidate's portfolio rather than on formal learning requirements.
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services	Portfolio development process delivered to social assistance recipients. Primary goal is self-recognition of skills and learning, and employment but can also prepare portfolio for purposes of seeking credit or advanced standing.
Service Canada, Employment Assistance Agencies	Portfolio development process delivered to unemployed and underemployed. See response for Dept. of Community Services above.
Mount Saint Vincent University	Use portfolio assessments and credit challenge to award credit for non-formal and informal learning. Also, one or two examples of acceptance into Masters level programs without an undergraduate degree.
Cape Breton University	Use portfolio assessments and credit challenge to award credit for non-formal and informal learning.
Nova Scotia Boat Builders Association	Use of interview process to assess skills and learning of boat builders. Process leads to certification.
Department of National Defence	Use of portfolio development process as a transition tool for the self-assessment and self-recognition of skills and learning. Can also seek credit or advanced standing with articulation of relevant learning.

Association of Professional Engineers of Nova Scotia	Uses in-depth interview process to assess and recognize the non-North American experience of engineers who have gained their work experience outside of Nova Scotia. Process can lead to registration as Professional Engineer in the Province of Nova Scotia.
Corrections Canada	Offers portfolio development programs to help inmates in institutions identify their own skills and learning for the purposes of personal development, career development, and possible academic advancement. Partner with PLA Centre and NSCC.

2.2.b) Create the above same matrix for recognition of formal learning for comparative purposes. List of 'who does what' for formal learning and recognition of such learning

The following list of "who does what" for formal learning and recognition of such learning is not comprehensive, but does reflect the current situation in Nova Scotia.

Who?	What?
Universities	Transfer credit on course by course basis; articulation agreements with other institutions.
Nova Scotia Community College	Transfer credit – course by course basis, block transfer, articulation agreements with other institutions.
Private Career Colleges	Various private institutions, registered with the Nova Scotia Department of Education, Private Career Colleges Division as stated in the Private Career Colleges Act provide occupational training for Nova Scotians. Schools currently registered offer skills training for adults in a wide range of fields including massage therapy, truck driving, information technology, esthetics, multimedia, travel, tourism, and business education.
Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning	Awards an adult high school diploma on the successful completion of six compulsory credits and six elective credits. Credits are awarded after successful completion of courses taken from the NS Community College or regional adult high schools. Credits are also awarded for prior education, which includes but is not limited to, successful completion of courses from grades 11 and 12 attained in Nova Scotia, apprenticeship training and former military training.

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' model5. 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.

Nova Scotia follows a "predominance-of-public authorities model." The Government of Nova Scotia continuously consults with partners from other sectors of the province, including labour, business, and non-profit organizations.

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5 See UNESCO UIE Report (Draft) at: http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/pdf/recognitiondraftsynthesis.pdf

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.

To date, the Nova Scotia Department of Education has taken the lead in the province. The department has established a provincial advisory committee to review prior learning assessment and recognition practices within the province, including the recognition of formal, non-formal, and informal learning. The advisory group includes representation from the Departments of Immigration, Community Services, Health, Education (which include apprenticeship, higher education and the labour market partnership divisions) as well as representation from the universities, The Nova Scotia Community College, labour, sector councils, the PLA Centre, and professional associations.

The group was formed to share information, review current practices, and identify gaps in prior learning assessment and recognition services in Nova Scotia. The advisory committee makes recommendations but is not a decision-making body. Established in 2006, the group has not yet documented any results or findings for disclosure. However, positive results to date include the sharing and gathering of information regarding current PLAR activities taking place throughout the province, and an identification of the need and desire to further develop services to identify, assess, and recognize learning in all its forms.

In June 2005, the Council of Atlantic Deputy Ministers of Education and Training (CADMET) established a steering committee on assessment called the International Credential and Competency Assessment and Recognition (ICCAR). In April 2006, a proposal was submitted to HRSDC for funding to determine the feasibility of an Atlantic Centre of International Credential and Competency Assessment and Recognition.

Component 2.3. Resources[6]

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.

In Nova Scotia a dedicated department or division for the recognition of non-formal or informal learning has not yet been established. However, budget dollars from various departments across government are set aside each year towards the establishment of a prior learning assessment and recognition initiative, of which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning would be included. At this point, it is not possible to give specific dollar amounts as the breakdown for specific processes.

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.

Not applicable as per 2.3a.

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[6] Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

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.

Nova Scotia does not have a comprehensive system for the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Assessment within academic institutions and by other credentialing bodies is on an individual basis and fees for such services are determined by the institution or credentialing body.   In most cases, fees are the responsibility of the candidate.

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 programmes 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.

At present, Nova Scotia does not have an independent centre for the assessment of non-formal and/or informal learning, nor does the province employ assessors.   However, government officials are part of an International Credential and Competency Assessment and Recognition committee to determine the feasibility of an Atlantic assessment centre.

The PLA Centre (Prior Learning Assessment Centre) assists candidates in identifying, articulating, and providing evidence of their learning in preparation for possible assessment. The PLA Centre does not assess candidates; the assessment is always carried out by a subject matter expert within the institution or organization within which the candidate is seeking formal recognition.   A current project, cited earlier in this report, involves the assessment and recognition of the non-formal and informal learning of individuals working in Continuing Care. As part of this project, the PLA Centre trained approximately 20 assessors; this is the first documented training of PLAR assessors in this province.

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.

As Nova Scotia is still developing a prior learning initiative, the above questions capture the current status within the province as it relates to legal frameworks, governance, budget and resources.

Component 3. Description of technical arrangements

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.

Currently, in Nova Scotia, the term used to refer to formal, non-formal and informal learning is prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) or recognition of prior learning (RPL). The province, through an advisory council on prior learning, is reviewing these terms to decide which one best represents prior learning.

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.

Not applicable

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?

Not applicable

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 ?

Not applicable

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 paralell?

Nova Scotia does not have a qualifications framework nor are we in the process of establishing one.

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?

The potential (or perceived) threats of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals are listed below:

1) **Higher education institutions: the classroom is no longer seen as the place where all learning takes place, issues of credibility ("back-door entry") of programs and institution, concerns about students taking fewer courses and thereby bringing less money into the institution, issues of time and commitment in carrying out recognition procedures.**
2) **Employers: issues of credibility, issues of compensation (threat of demand/requirement for increased compensation if learning is recognized?), issue of increasingly complex processes**
3) **Individual: issues of credibility – others' perceptions of back-door entry ("If I had to do it all, so should she."). Fear of rejection if non-formal or informal learning is not recognized.**

Resistance from the higher education sector can be overcome by demonstrating to faculty and institutions that processes for recognizing non-formal and informal learning are rigorous and effective, and that recognition of learning does not in any way take away from or "water down" the academic level of the student body. Resistance can also be overcome by demonstrating, through research, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a tool for recruitment and retention, bringing students into the institution who might not otherwise enter, and retaining them at higher rates than "regular" students.   In this way, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be seen to contribute to, not detract from, the financial health of the institution.

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 of 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.)

Not applicable

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?

Credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning is essentially no different from the arrangements for formal learning, and is the responsibility of the individual institution or credentialing body.   One difference in the credit arrangements might be in the transcription of credits awarded; credits awarded through the recognition of informal and non-formal learning are likely to be transcribed in a different way from those awarded through formal learning.   There are also likely to be differences in processes and procedures.

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.

In the university system, credit is counted on a per-unit or per-credit basis. A full-unit or credit course is approximately 70-80 hours of study; a half-unit or half-credit course is approximately 40-45 hours of study. A "normal" course load is five half-credit courses per semester, for a total of five full units or five full credits over a two-semester period (e.g.

fall/winter).   At the Nova Scotia Community College, a unit of credit is equivalent to a 60 hour course.

3.2.d)   What are the incentives or disincentives for participants to gain credit and providers to give credit?

Providers in Nova Scotia (colleges and universities) who offer formal education courses for credit receive government funding towards the operation and management of their institutions. Through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, adults who have not completed their high school diploma are offered tuition-free programs in English or French. Substantial social incentives for participants include but are not limited to, increased self-esteem, increased employability and increased literacy skills.

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.

Not applicable

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.

Not applicable

Component 3.3. Assessment methods and procedures[7]

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.

In Nova Scotia, there is not, at this point, a co-ordinated approach to assessment. Decisions regarding assessment methods and procedures are made by the individual organizations that are carrying out assessments. Methods of validating results and the length of time to carry out assessment procedures will vary. Methods and procedures are not prescribed according to sectors, so it is not possible to list the sectors and the methods used for each. Known assessment procedures include portfolio assessment, in-depth interview, and observation/practical exam. An assessment might also involve a combination of methods. Assessments are carried out by subject matter experts within the field.

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[7] Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

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.).

Specific data is not available regarding the advantages and challenges for the different types of assessment; the following description is based on observation and anecdotal evidence.

However, portfolio assessment is a common assessment method. A common but not exclusive procedure would be as follows: 1) candidate approaches organization regarding admission to a program, advanced standing, etc. 2) candidate is requested by organization to complete and submit a portfolio 3) candidate enrols in portfolio development course, most likely but not necessarily at PLA Centre, or completes portfolio on own 4) candidate submits portfolio to organization 5) portfolio is assessed by subject matter experts within the organization 6) organization informs candidate of result.

The portfolio development process itself is beneficial to participants. This process helps participants recognize for themselves their skills and learning, and is known to significantly increase self-esteem and self-confidence. Research carried out by the PLA Centre confirms these benefits.   Although, the portfolio requirement can also raise barriers because it requires a heavy investment of time and also requires, in most cases, a great deal of writing which may present problems to those with low literacy skills.   Portfolio assessment may be the optimum approach for many areas of skills and learning, but for many others, alternative approaches such as practical exams, observation, and in-depth interviews – or a combination of two or more methods – may be more appropriate.

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

Nova Scotia's institutions must adhere to the acts and regulations that regulate their operation. The Government of Nova Scotia through the Department of Education, and in some cases the Department of Labour, are responsible for the administration of those acts and regulations.   In addition there are various legislative bodies that monitor and ensure that employers are adhering to the acts and regulations relative to their business or trade.

3.3.d) Has the issue been raised in your country 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.

Not applicable.

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 internationalisation context?

In Nova Scotia, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is not regulated; therefore, responsibility for quality assurance has not been assigned. Quality assurance procedures are the responsibility of each individual organization carrying out assessments.

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.

Not applicable

Component 4. Stakeholder behaviour

Component 4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders[8]

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.

As per previous questions, Nova Scotia is in the early stages of research at present and is not in a position to provide detailed data as requesting in the tables below.

Non-formal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

Provider of non-formal learning (e.g. universities, for-profit private companies, company's in-house training, government, NGOs, etc.)	Recogniser of such non-formal learning (e.g. government, quasi-government, universities, companies, professional bodies, trade unions, etc.)	Types of recognition received (e.g. academic qualifications – degrees, diplomas, credits, awards, certificates, professional qualifications, etc.)	Regulator (e.g. quality assurance agency, professional body, government, etc.)	Main user(s) (Specify)	
				☐	Working professionals
				☐	People after army service
				☐	High skilled immigrants
				☐	Low skilled immigrants
				☐	Retired people (Specified the retirement age in your country.)
				☐	Unemployed (over 30 years old)
				☐	NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) age between 15/16-30

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[8] Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

				☐	Others (Specify)
Add more.					

Informal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

Types of skills gained by informal learning (e.g. ICT skills by using computers, literacy by reading books, numeracy, business protocol, negotiation skills, etc.)	Recogniser of informal learning	Types of Recognition received	Regulatory body	Main users (specify)	
				☐	Working professionals
				☐	People after army service
				☐	High skilled immigrants
				☐	Low skilled immigrants
				☐	Retired people (Specified the retirement age in your country.)
				☐	Unemployed (over 30 years old)
				☐	NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) age between 15/16-30
				☐	Others (Specify)
Add more.					

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.

A regulated recognition process for non-formal and informal learning in Nova Scotia has not yet been established; therefore, eligibilities cannot be documented at this point.

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

Nova Scotia has 11 universities, 13 campuses of the Nova Scotia community college and a number of private training schools and programs. There is unofficial evidence that some form of recognition of non-formal and informal learning is being carried out at various institutions within the province. However at this stage of the process, Nova Scotia is not yet in a position to provide an official statement that specifies the institutions that are practicing recognition of prior learning in any form.

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 publicise the existence of such medium (newspaper, journals, free journals, publicity on the metro, etc)? Specify the names of such media channels.

Currently, access to information and communication is through the individual organizations/institutions offering processes and procedures for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Information is limited; in some cases, such as that of the

Nova Scotia Community College, initial information can be found on the organization's website, and additional information can be learned through the individual at the institution who is identified as the contact. In other cases, information can be obtained directly from the organization only. To this date, there is little evidence of the use of other media such as leaflets or CD-ROM; although, it is known that some organizations are working toward the production of such pieces. The PLA Centre does have a website, and distributes information pieces such as brochures, fact sheets, and DVDs.

Component 4.3. Participation[9]

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)?

No data to report. However, there is documented evidence that approximately 3,500 individuals have completed skills and learning portfolios through the PLA Centre or through organizations trained by the PLA Centre. Participants range from those who have not completed grade 12 to those who have several university degrees; from those who are on social assistance to those who have enjoyed long-term employment. A portion of the participants who completed portfolios through the PLA Centre went on to use their portfolios to seek formal recognition for their non-formal and informal learning, but a greater majority complete their portfolio for personal recognition and career development purposes.

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.

Not applicable, as per response in 4.3a.

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?

Research carried out by the PLA Centre (*Impact Evaluation of the PLA Centre Learning Portfolio Programs, Praxis Research, 2002)* demonstrates that completing the portfolio development process results in increased self-esteem and self-confidence for the vast majority of participants. Self-recognition of skills and learning appears to be the key to this increased self-esteem and self-confidence. Learning about themselves and their learning leads participants to engage in further learning opportunities. This has been found to be the case for disadvantaged groups such as those on social assistance, the unemployed, or underemployed. Thus, the recognition by participants themselves of their non-formal and informal learning works as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the "learning leads to learning track."

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[9] Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

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.

Although limited, there is documented, as well as anecdotal, evidence that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning functions as a transitional pathway in Nova Scotia (*Impact Evaluation of the PLA Centre Learning Portfolio Programs, Praxis Research, 2002*). Presently, a more extensive research study is being carried out which should provide further concrete evidence in this area. The evidence shows that recognition of non-formal and informal learning---be it self-recognition, recognition by an employer, academic institution or other credentialing body---has successfully led to further studies, a shortened study period, to entering or re-entering the workforce, or to changing jobs. The self-recognition of skills and learning shows an individual who is intimidated by formal learning that he/she is learning every day, and this encourages the pursuit of further learning. The boost in self-confidence as a result of self-recognition of skills and learning encourages individuals to seek employment, and the increased self-awareness gained through the portfolio development process leads participants to change jobs. Recognition by employers of an individual's skills and learning also leads to job entry and job change, although there is little hard evidence to back this up. Formal recognition by an academic institution or other credentialing body has lead to further studies that may not have been undertaken otherwise.

As a method of identifying and proving the non-formal and informal learning of individuals, portfolio development is recognized as an excellent tool for adults undergoing any transition.

Universities in Nova Scotia are making portfolio assessment and challenge for credit available to students who wish advanced standing or admission to programs based on learning acquired throughout their lives through a combination of formal, informal and non-formal training. As an example, the PLA Centre in Nova Scotia has provided training for students to develop a portfolio as part of the application package for the Masters in Public Administration program at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

As recognition of prior learning becomes more advanced in the province, it is expected that this process will become part of the admission policies and practices of all post secondary institutions.

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 practised subject areas, etc.)

Not available.

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?

Not available.

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

Not available.

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?

Not available.

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?

Not available.

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?

Not available.

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.)

Not applicable

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.

Component 5. Case studies on benefits and barriers

5.) A number of OECD activities (OECD 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c) and existing work outside OECD (European Commission; ILO; ECOTEC; UNESCO Institute of Education; ASEM) all point to the importance of recognising non-formal and informal learning and facilitating credit accumulation and transfer. However, currently, the existing work provides the evidence of benefits in fragments. 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.

As discussed, Nova Scotia is in the early stages of development and research regarding informal and non-formal learning and as a result tracking programs and individuals for evaluation purposes have not yet been initiated. Therefore, we do not have a response for Component 5.

Component 5.1. Economic benefits

Not applicable – see above response for Component 5.

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

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

5.1.c)   Improving the allocation of human capital within organisations by matching the appropriate demands and supplies of skills and competencies.

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

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

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

Component 5.2. Educational benefits

Not applicable – see above response for Component 5.

5.2.a)   Reshaping the established concept of education from 'terminal education' to 'lifelong learning'.

5.2.b)   Providing flexible personalised learning pathways.

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

5.2.d)   Increasing the tertiary participation rates of non-traditional learners.

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

Component 5.3. Social benefits

Not applicable – see above response for Component 5.

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.

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

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).

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

Component 5.4. Personal benefits

Not applicable – see above response for Component 5.

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

5.4.b)   Developing the aspirations of those who have 'dropped out' to resume learning and to complete a qualification.

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

Component 5.5. Others

Not applicable – see above response for Component 5.

5.5.a)   Describe any cases where you identify other benefits or barriers to such benefits.

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.

Nova Scotia is committed to lifelong learning as stated in the Skills Nova Scotia Framework and 2002-2003 Action Plan. The creation of the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) is a concrete example of the provinces commitment to lifelong learning. Presently, lifelong learning continues to be a major part of the skills agenda, and through continued research, the process of recognizing prior learning as a way to address economic, social and education issues is being developed.

6.b)   What strategies (short-term, mid-term and long-term) are needed to operationalise 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?

The creation of the Skills and Learning Branch of the Department of Education and coordination with labour, industry and education groups to establish a Skills Nova Scotia Framework and Action Plan in 2002 was the beginning of a strategy to prepare Nova Scotia's citizens to live and work in a changing economy.

Annually, the province releases an action plan with specific goals to address the identified issues related to this changing economy. Each year the province builds on the past successes related to initiatives to support lifelong learning. The recognition of formal, informal and non-formal prior learning, has gained increasing recognition as a concrete way to address issues such as an aging population and general skills shortage.

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

An aging population and declining enrolments in the public school system leads to fewer graduates to enter post-secondary institutions. This leads to fewer skilled workers to meet the growing needs of business and industry. Nova Scotia is involved in international recruitment as one way to address this issue.

In addition, Nova Scotia is committed to ensuring that children are successful in the early years which will lead to continued learning throughout their adult lives. *Learning for Life: Planning for Student Success* and the follow-up document, *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together,* have detailed initiatives to address quality education for students and their parents.

Family literacy is another area where lifelong learning is supported. Family literacy programs support the whole family learning together which promote life long learning.

These programs provide an environment for non-formal and informal learning to occur. As the province moves towards recognizing non-formal and informal learning, the learning gained through these initiatives will be valuable for adults who later want to enrol in formal programs.

6.d)   Please describe how much the 'Lifelong Learning for All' strategies are implemented at post-compulsory education level in your country?

All universities and colleges within Nova Scotia have mature student admissions programs and encourage students to return to school to continue to upgrade skills throughout their adult lives. Another example of a life long learning strategy at the post-compulsory level is an initiative between the Nova Scotia Community College and the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning. A program has been developed whereby a student can earn their adult high school diploma and apply to work on a college program concurrently.

6.e) Please list some 'factors' which you think as unforeseeable and yet necessary conditions to realise the 'Open Learning Society' scenario, which gives value to formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Every province works to ensure that the immediate and long term economic future is secure for their citizens. In regards to non-formal and informal learning, Nova Scotia is working on a path to establish ways to evaluate this learning in order to address issues that will be detrimental to a healthy economic future. However, unforeseen factors could occur, such as, a shift in immigration patterns which would result in demand for new services; or new technological advances, which could impact service delivery and access; or the introduction of new assessment tools, procedures, or policies; all of which could directly impact existing programs, services and protocols.