Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) and the Impact of Globalization: A Canadian Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This is a case study of participant narratives in the prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) process at The Royal Military College (RMC) in Kingston, Ontario. RMC is under the direction of the Department of National Defence Canada, and has a full-time staff dedicated to the maintenance and expansion of the prior learning assessment and recognition process. The research problem of this thesis is to ask if a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program acknowledges their own knowledge as valuable and how this may be linked to the motivating factors that cause the participant to return to formal study.

In order to provide a context for the research problem, I use the literature review to examine the history of prior learning assessment and recognition programs in Canada. Through a mail survey, the use of participant narratives provides a voice to the literature in discussing the question of how knowledge is valued in a prior learning assessment program. Although the focus ·of the thesis will be prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada, the background to the concept of prior learning assessment is found in the United States. It is therefore essential to begin there in order to provide a context in which to understand the current Canadian situation. As a timeline the study begins with the post-World War II era and continues to the present. The sub-theme of my doctoral research is to investigate how the concept of prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada has been influenced by the broader context of globalization.

RÉSUMÉ

Ceci est une étude cas de témoignages narratifs de participants dans le cadre de la politique de la reconnaissance des acquis du Collège militaire royal du Canada à Kingston, Ontario. Le CMR est dirigé par le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada, qui emploie du personnel à temps complet pour veiller au maintien et à l'expansion de la politique de la reconnaissance des acquis. La recherche sur laquelle cette thèse est fondée consiste à demander aux participants à un programme de la reconnaissance des acquis si les connaissances acquises leur sont utiles, et dans quelle mesure cela peut avoir un lien avec les facteurs incitant les participants à retourner aux études.

Afin de définir un contexte pour cette recherche, j'ai utilisé la documentation existante pour analyser l'historique de la reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences au Canada. Recueillis par le biais d'un sondage postal, les témoignages narratifs des participants confirment les propos de la documentation écrite en discutant de la question visant à savoir comment les connaissances sont évaluées dans un programme de la reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences. Bien que la thèse mette l'accent sur la reconnaissance des acquis au Canada, les antécédents du concept de la reconnaissances des acquis et des compétences se trouvent aux États-Unis. Il est donc essentiel de commencer par là afin de définir un contexte dans lequel on peut comprendre la situation qui prévaut actuellement au Canada. L'étude commence après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, et se poursuit jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Le sous-thème de ma recherche doctorale consiste à enquêter sur la façon dont le concept de la reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences au Canada a été influencé par le contexte élargi de la mondialisation.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family.

To my husband Robert and

Our children Abbey and Matthew.

You complete me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to family who encouraged and listened to my latest: Gram (this convocation is for you!), Aunt Jo, Aunt Jackie and Uncle Harvey and my siblings and their spouses Michael & Yael, Robert & Shari, Maria & Sam, Gordie & Lisa. Also, thank you to friends who cheered me on, Lisa and Tammy.

I have a charmed life and it's because I married my best friend. Robert, you inspire me with your sense of determination, strength and kindness. Thank you for making sure that I could reach for my goals and succeed.

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PREFACE

It is to be expected that when an individual undertakes the endeavor of a dissertation they do so with an understanding that it will become an all encompassing affair – and so it was that I began to see my entire world through the lens of a critical theorist, adult learner and prior learning assessment facilitator. Perhaps it was a coincidence of circumstance, but as I contemplated my first chapter I had to take a taxi ride. My driver and I fell into easy 'small talk', which then turned to more predictable questions of "what is it that you do?" When I answered, it seemed to unleash a floodgate of questions concerning his aspirations to attain his high school leaving certificate and "even though it's a pipedream of mine, maybe go to university or something." What struck me about our conversation was the fact that this seemed to be the talk I have with most taxi drivers – in most cases their education is from a country in the Middle East, India or Africa and is not recognized in Canada. However, the desire to pursue higher education in order to work in a high skilled or knowledge-based employment is consistent. I always leave the car with the same overwhelming feeling that somehow I need to help this individual. I have never considered myself a social activist and have only participated in rallies or protests when it seemed "safe" and non-confrontational. However, I feel a different sense of urgency and outrage when I speak with capable individuals who are missing that one piece of paper (i.e. a degree) or to educated individuals who cannot find work in their field simply because their foreign credentials are not recognized in their adopted country and, for that reason, they lack access to institutions of higher education. This sentiment is continually reinforced by the bombardment of news stories that highlight geography is history, something of the past - we are in a new age of globalization where territorial borders and nation-states are no longer the sole driving force of the world's economy or global trends. The purpose of my research is to highlight a potential

solution for adult learners wishing to stake their claim in the knowledge-based economy; meaning, programs of prior learning assessment and recognition.

Highly educated and skilled workers of the world are continually drawn to the West lured by the benefits of democracy and a capitalist driven economy. However, unless these individuals are recruited by an organization prior to their arrival, they are most often unable to work in their field since their prior learning and experience is not recognized as equivalent. The question then becomes, how is competency judged from across the globe? My assertion is that prior learning assessment and recognition programs can facilitate the movement of people and ideas and create a win-win situation for both the individual and the Canadian economy through the gain of skilled workers. In my lifetime I envision a world where the skilled and educated individuals I encounter have chosen their employment freely and not out of necessity.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

"One of the very best ways of more fully understanding how power works internally and externally in education is to compare what is taken for granted in one's own nation or region with what is taken for granted in another" (Apple, 2003, p. 7).

Justification of the Study

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) is a concept that is deceptively simple. According to Mann (1997) prior learning assessment can be defined as "a system of evaluating and granting college credit to adults who can articulate and document that they have achieved the objectives of a given course or set of competencies"(p. 259). In the corporate sector, prior learning assessment and recognition is used in conjunction with unions and industry-specific accreditation in order to facilitate on-site training and updating skills of workers or granting access to professional orders. In an educational setting the process involves an adult learner *challenging* competencies based on their prior knowledge of the subject or experiential learning in order to gain advanced standing or credit within a program. Methods of assessment and evaluation include:

- A process of demonstrations;
- Participation in an interview with an expert in the occupation, trade or field;
- Performance of a task in the presence of a content specialist in the workplace or training centre;
- Presentation of a certificate of qualification or certification issued by a recognized organization or ministry;
- Challenge examinations;
- Observation in the workplace;
- Personal portfolio;
- Preparation of a video;
- Credit transfer.

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Prior learning assessment and recognition programs are to be considered a gate-opener, a powerful educational tool, for adult education policymakers to help facilitate access to formal study for skilled-immigrants, the unemployed, under-employed and workers in transition. Since education is intrinsically tied to the societal norms in which it takes place, it is significant to view the research problem of this study within a societal context and assess how it can best be explained. Brown (1999) suggests:

> This will involve developing new conceptual tools which contextualize the political economy of adult education and which recognizes that history, class, power, ideology, and the state are all factors which need to be taken into account in coming to grips with changes in education, the economy and society (p. 15).

Education policy is interrelated with the cultural and political priorities of each nation-state, which in turn are influenced by international trends and the needs of the global economy. According to Sansregret (1997), the transportability of skills should be taken into account when planning education policy.

> In a global economy, people with specific skills are needed, people who know how to apply these skills and demonstrate a proper behavior in a given situation. These skills, know-how and behavior must be transferable among academic institutions, from one work place to another, from one province to the next, from one country to another (p. 5).

This transfer of skills, knowledge and people from one country to another for the purpose of supporting the global economy is often referred to as the phenomenon of globalization. The term globalization is used to explain everything from global unity to diversification (Brown, 1999). According to Stromquist and Monkman (2000) globalization is still not a precise concept however it is bringing forth numerous and profound changes in the economic, cultural and political life of nations (p. 21). This relationship between the nation-state and the impact of globalization as it relates to education policy and specifically adult education policy will be discussed in further detail in chapter two.

Why Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)?

The question "whose knowledge is of most worth" (Apple, 2003, p. 7), is a central tenet of a prior learning assessment and recognition program where a learner is requesting a content specialist (who is an expert in their field of study or vocation) to validate the experiential knowledge of the candidate. The educational institution offering a prior learning assessment and recognition program has predetermined standards by which a content specialist will assess and evaluate if a candidate's knowledge and/or competencies would be considered equivalent (or above) the mainstream or traditional student population. The candidate in a prior learning assessment and recognition program must recognize their own knowledge as valuable and of worth in order to participate fully in the process, since the onus is on them to demonstrate their experiential knowledge or competency in a given subject. In asking the question, "whose knowledge is of most worth," - I am interested in seeing if the candidate recognizes the value of their own experiential knowledge and seeks out a program of recognition of learning, or if the institution which offers the prior learning assessment and recognition program (and hence the

possibility of entering with advanced standing) is viewed by the candidate as enough of an incentive for adult learners to return to formal education. What is the primary motivating factor? And are there extenuating circumstances that draw individuals back to formal education?

If education, in general, can be said to be about the socialization of citizenry and a foundation for positive social cohesion in a nation-state, what happens when you turn this concept on its head in a world without borders? Adult learners move from one corner of the globe to the other bringing with them knowledge, skills and experiential learning, most of which is of great value to the host or newly adopted country. What does it say about us as a citizenry of a nation-state if we choose not to recognize that individual's prior learning? Are we commenting on their native country's agenda of values, or our own? Is it really about knowledge or is it inherently protectionism masked as a cultural issue and ultimately about power. Authors such as Apple (2003) and Quinnan (1997) are direct in their respective assertions that education is political and that adult learners are a marginalized group due to relationships between knowledge and power. For Quinnan (1997), this argument is expressed in his work by examining the disenfranchised role of the adult learner in higher education that caters to "young persons" and where "adult learners have attributes comparable to other disadvantaged populations" (p. 54). Apple (2003) situates the learner in the evolving relationship of influence between the state and the production and policing of what counts as legitimate knowledge "both within schools and in the larger society" (p. 7). The question of what constitutes "legitimate knowledge" is a central tenet to define within a prior learning assessment and recognition program.

Adult learners and skilled immigrants are often between a rock and a hard spot when it comes to the validation of their learning. Adult learners are supposed to be self-directed individuals who reach toward the elements that will make this world a better place and form a

strong civil society based on norms of trust and active responsible citizenship. Olssen, Codd and

O'Neil (2004) suggest education is central to such a goal (pp. 1-2). The problem is that most

adult learners and skilled immigrants seeking to enter either formal education or the labour force

are stuck in a quagmire of politically motivated educational policies or restrictive, protectionist

professional orders. Who defines what is responsible citizenship? Whose knowledge is valued in

an *educated* citizenry? And is it the same dominant group making these decisions, regardless of

the nation-state we consider. It is my assertion that with people living and working longer and

with fewer borders separating us, prior learning assessment and recognition becomes a valuable

method of evaluating and validating knowledge, skills and competencies across the globe. This

study incorporates a discussion of these influencing factors related to globalization.

In the literature reviewed, there is a consistent set of themes used to breakdown the

concept of globalization into pieces to analyze. Broadly speaking the categories are: economic,

technological, cultural, political and environmental. The backdrop for most discussions related to

globalization involve the evolution of the nation-state and the question of whether this entity is

subjugated to the powers of globalization or dictating the course of action through its sovereign

power. "Globalization theorists have emphasized the 'new' ways in which the individual nation-

state is influenced by the international world order...each of which is interrelated" (Olssen, Codd

& O'Neil, 2004, pp.1-2). There is, however, little if any literature dedicated to the issue of

globalization and education as it relates strictly to the adult learner and the concept of prior

learning assessment and recognition. On the question of the role of globalization and prior

learning assessment and recognition programs in Canada, it is important to note this study is not

an analysis of how each province and territory's educational policy has evolved to meet the

current climate of changes that may be attributed to globalization. Rather my analysis is a

discussion of how prior learning assessment and recognition as a fledgling concept has the potential to come into its own as a means-to-an-end for adult learners worldwide.

In 1999, the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) published *A Slice of the Iceberg: Cross-Canada Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition*. The study, sponsored by Human Resources Development Canada, is a snapshot of prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada. In the listing of key findings, the authors identify areas for further research – among them "the role PLAR plays in motivating learners to return to formal study" (Aarts, Blower, Burke, Conlin, Howell, Howorth et al., 1999). This issue has always sparked my interest and is an integral motivating factor in this study, since I believe it is the participant who is the defining element in the success or failure of a prior learning assessment program.

> Theoretical examinations of opinion papers have dominated the academic literature on PLA [Prior Learning Assessment]. Empirical studies have been mainly confined to surveys of institution approaches to PLA and the success of PLA-assisted students compared with "conventional" students. The students' point of view – why students undertake PLA, how they view the process, and what they get out of it – has rarely been discussed (Peruniak & Powell, 2006, p. 320).

Through the use of prior learning assessment and recognition participant narratives from the case study of the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC)'s prior learning assessment process, I am contributing to the academic literature in a way that I hope will encourage others to take notice of the motivating factors and experiences of the prior learning assessment and

recognition participant to better their respective prior learning assessment and recognition programs.

The Influence of Prior Research

My research question is based on the evolution of prior research, my experience as a prior learning assessment facilitator and consultant and adult educator and is also inspired by relevant literature in the field. The topic of my Master's comprehensive study entitled *Prior Learning Assessment: A Working Solution for Changes in Adult Learner Demographic in Quebec: 1980-2000,* is an attempt to reconcile the theoretical rift between the practical implementation of a prior learning assessment program, a non-traditional means of gaining access to the formal education system, within the traditional education system (Moss, 2001). The comprehensive study examines the profile of the adult learner between 1980-2000 in Quebec and the factors affecting access to education programs. As a suggested solution for adult learners to gain greater access to the formal education system, the study explains the procedure necessary for the successful implementation of a prior learning assessment program. Prior learning assessment is defined, and analyzed for both the potential conflicts and benefits such a program could offer to the formal education system.

In order to relate my practical experience as a prior learning assessment and recognition facilitator, I wrote a narrative to attempt to reconcile the concept of prior learning assessment with the practical issues I had encountered. My experience took place at a Montreal CEGEP, where I facilitated a portfolio development course through which learners could demonstrate their competencies, through the development of a portfolio, and earn credit for up to three courses in a particular attestation program. My role was to explain the basic principles of a prior

learning assessment program and guide the learners in the development of their portfolios. In my narrative, I discuss how as the course progressed, I was faced with a contradiction between the literature review of my comprehensive study and the practical situation in my class. The literature was primarily concerned with the potential conflict between implementing prior learning assessment programs within the very structure that acts as gatekeeper to the process of validating knowledge, i.e. the school. However, my experience was that the administration was very supportive of the program. To my surprise, it was the student body that initially resisted the idea of participating in the prior learning assessment program. Through discussion it became apparent that the primary reason for their hesitation was a feeling that as learners, their experiential knowledge was of no value. This is significant in that the success of a prior learning assessment program is based on the notion that the participant is aware of the value of their prior learning.

The focus of my prior research was an analysis of the relationship between a prior learning assessment *program* and the formal education system. This work is a continuation of that analysis with the addition of including the voice of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant through the use of a mail survey and narrative which is discussed in chapter five in the results and analysis of the case study of the Royal Military College (RMC). As previously mentioned by Peruniak and Powell (2006), the perspective of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant "has rarely been discussed" (p. 320). The expectation is that with a clearer picture of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant and their experience, this will provide a better understanding of how future prior learning assessment and recognition programs can be implemented with greater success.

The Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter defines the research problem and introduces in broad terms the concepts of prior learning assessment and recognition and the relationship of knowledge and power within the context of globalization. The second chapter traces the political history of prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada from the post-WWII period to the present. Chapter three is a discussion of globalization as a context for the concept of prior learning assessment and recognition and the relationship between knowledge and power in the field of adult education. Chapter four is dedicated to the methodology and procedures of the case study conducted at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC). Chapter five is a presentation of the results and analysis of the case study and narratives of the research participants. The final chapter is a discussion of conclusions I have made and explores the convergences of Canadian education policymaking, prior learning assessment and recognition and globalization.

My thesis is a qualitative case study of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at the Royal Military College of Canada. Since prior learning assessment and recognition programs originate from a military setting (Olson, 1974), I was curious to see if this educational program was maintained within the contemporary Canadian military and military college system. Although credit transfers continued, the core principles of prior learning assessment and recognition programs had been dropped and only recently revived at the Royal Military College of Canada. This situation is quite fortuitous from the perspective of a researcher since one is able to study the inception of a prior learning assessment and recognition process and benchmark its progress. This qualitative research study includes both survey and interview findings and an analysis of narratives of participants in the RMC prior learning assessment process.

Throughout its history, which is discussed in further detail in chapter five, the Royal Military College of Canada has demonstrated a commitment to a set of high standards in both military training and academic achievement. To the layperson, a military culture is perceived to be about discipline, the inculcation of a particular set of values and a hierarchy of power. What is often missed is that the Canadian Forces are some of the most educated and well-trained individuals of our society – the job demands a lifelong learner. As an accepted part of military culture, men and women in service often change geographical locations in order to meet the requirements of training or deployment. This situation inherently makes a career in the military one that is time sensitive. These individuals do not have the luxury of time to complete educational degrees on a part-time basis over a number of years as many civilian adult learners do. Another aspect of military culture is the necessity to travel the globe. Currently Canada has more than 2,600 soldiers, sailors and Air Force personnel stationed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haiti, Golan Heights, Sinai, Jerusalem, Cyprus and four countries in Africa (Department of National Defence, 2007). As the political impact of globalization requires Canada to participate in such endeavors as the Allied Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq and other co-sponsored military and peacekeeping operations, the training and educational support for the men and women in service must keep pace. According to the Royal Military College's Division of Continuing Studies 2005-2006 calendar, applicants "who have completed programs or courses at other universities or community colleges, or professional training courses taken either within the CF [Canadian Forces] or through some other organization (whether in Canada or abroad), may seek to have their prior learning at a university level recognized by RMC" (p. 8). The full text concerning RMC's policy on prior learning assessment and recognition is located in Appendix H, p. 197.

The case study of the Royal Military College's prior learning assessment and recognition process is the highlight of a discussion of other Canadian prior learning assessment and recognition programs at the post-secondary level. In order to make full use of the research conducted for this study and to meet a proposed recommendation from the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)'s Executive Summary (Developing Benchmarks for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition), the results of a pan-Canadian investigation of PLAR programs and services has been compiled as a Directory (Appendix A, p. 171).

The intent of this work is to contribute to the existing literature on prior learning assessment and recognition and to public policy decision-making.

The Research Problem

In identifying a research problem, one moves from general interest, curiosity, or doubt about a situation to a specific statement of the research problem. Translating one's general curiosity into a research problem paves the way for defining the case to be investigated (Merriam, 1988, p. 43). In my case, my general interest in the topic of prior learning assessment and recognition for my Master's comprehensive study evolved into genuine curiosity about the role of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant.

From the literature there are three relevant types of research problems to consider: action, value and conceptual. "*Action* problems result from a conflict that seems to provide no clear choice of alternative course of action. *Value* problems come from undesirable consequences according to some standard or another" (p. 42). However, it is the third type, conceptual problems that seem to best fit the design of my intended case study. "*Conceptual* problems stem from two juxtaposed elements that are conceptually or theoretically inconsistent" (p. 41).

Merriam (1988) illustrates this concept with the example of adult learners and their supposed proficiency as self-directed learners. In theory adult learners should possess strong attributes of self-directed learning since they have life experience and supposedly a better sense of direction for their careers and lives than mainstream "youth" learners. However, as I encountered in my own experience as a prior learning assessment facilitator, this is not always the case. Based on my previous research, the preconceived notion exists that the adult student body is not only capable, but willing participants in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their own learning (Moss, 2001). I found a contradiction between the literature regarding self-directed adult learners and the reality of my student body. Similarly, Merriam (1988) points to "studies of adult learners [which] revealed that some do not know how to take control of their own learning" (p. 42). Therefore, the conceptual problem arises since these two notions, in this case the assumption of self-directed adult learners and the pedagogical reality, are theoretically inconsistent. This inconsistency is not acceptable in a prior learning assessment and recognition program.

Methodology

According to Merriam (1988) "case study research, and in particular qualitative case study, is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena" (p. 2). This is due to the nature of case study which utilizes inductive logic moving from a specific issue under analysis to extrapolate generalizations which can then be applied to the research problem. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) suggest "case study analysis is appropriate for intensive, in-depth examination of one or a few aspects of a given phenomenon" (p. 33). In either case, the main objective of the case study remains the same – the intensive analysis of a single phenomenon; in this case, the relationship between prior learning assessment participants

and their experience in a prior learning assessment and recognition process at the Royal Military College of Canada.

In conducting a case study, good observation skills are of paramount importance. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) argue that observations allow the researcher to gather data on the following key elements of a research site: the physical setting (environment); the human setting (organization of people); the interactional setting (interactions that are both formal and non-formal or verbal and non-verbal); and the programme setting (the resources and their organization) (p. 305). The idea here is that although a case study is an investigation of a single phenomenon, it is done in consideration of all variables that may affect the issue. According to Merriam (1988) this is a defining factor of case study in that "the case study seeks holistic description and explanation" (p. 10). It is also important to note that like any other research technique, observation is subject to a myriad of biases and presuppositions.

Like other forms of data collection in the human sciences, observation is not a morally neutral enterprise. Observers, like other researchers, have obligations to participants as well as to the research community (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 316).

The prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC does not necessitate a participant and facilitator meeting in a room and therefore it was not possible to conduct observations of interaction between a participant and facilitator. However, it was beneficial to visit the campus of RMC to conduct interviews with numerous Deans, faculty members and administrators of the prior learning assessment and recognition process in order to observe and

appreciate the unique culture of RMC which is discussed in greater detail in chapter five of this study.

Although the researcher occupies a central role in case study design, this should not distract from the comprehensive ability to gather data. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) caution "it is important for events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher" (p. 182). It is also the role of the researcher to be self-reflective and aware of the standpoint they may bring to their research and their interpretation of the data. "Any inquiry process, scientific or otherwise, is affected not only by ascriptive characteristics but also by a researcher's personal history and the general sociocultural frameworks and philosophical traditions in which he or she lives" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 121). It is incumbent upon the researcher to continually go back to the main research problem and research questions to ensure that there is very little deviation from the original intent of the study. To that effect, in order to be continually aware of one's own standpoint that may affect my conduct in the interview process or analysis of the narratives, I maintained the following protocol: prior to the interviews I read this introductory chapter as well as the consent form. This was done as a mental "warm-up" and a way of focusing my attention on the task ahead. After each interview I wrote my immediate thoughts in a journal – this allowed me to return to the scene while interpreting the narratives that had been collected over time. In both exercises, the goal was to maintain a research practice of self-reflection and an awareness of my interpretation of the data collected.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has defined the main concept of the study: prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR). I have also suggested that prior learning assessment and recognition is a tool, that should be considered by educational policy makers, to facilitate access to formal study by adult learners. The first chapter defined the research problem of this dissertation: to investigate if a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program acknowledges their own knowledge as valuable and how this may be linked to the motivating factors which cause the participant to return to formal study. The motivating factors to the return to formal study are expressed in the narratives received from the case study conducted at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC). As a continuation of my prior research, (Moss, 2001), this work is a contribution to the prior learning assessment and recognition community of Canada by addressing an area that is rarely discussed: the perspective of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant. This first chapter, which acts as the justification of this study sets the foundation for chapter two – the context of inquiry or literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In the previous introductory chapter the outline of the thesis was provided. This second chapter is the literature review which provides the context for a discussion of the research problem of who establishes the value of knowledge and the need for the prior learning assessment and recognition participant to value their own experiential knowledge. This literature review will provide the history of prior learning assessment and recognition programs in Canada. It is concerned with providing a framework for my doctoral research question, namely: how is knowledge valued in a prior learning assessment and recognition program and how is it possible for participants to appreciate the value of their own knowledge. Although the focus will be Canadian, the background to the concept of prior learning assessment is found in the United States. It is therefore essential to begin there in order to provide a context in which to understand the current Canadian situation. ·

According to Merriam (1988) a literature review is defined as a piece of work that "interprets and synthesizes what has been researched and published in the area of interest" (p. 61). I would add that the purpose of a literature review is to provide a context for the research study and a background or a benchmark to the data findings. A literature review allows the reader to gain a deep understanding of the particular research problem without having to be burdened by conducting outside inquiries related to the issue. Although each part of a doctoral thesis is important in its own right, it is my opinion that the literature review is the glue that holds the body of work together. The literature review acts as the foundation of the research problem and provides insight as to why there is a problem worth investigating. As well, it is the

catalyst to show where the research is intended to serve once the data have been analyzed and findings translated into conclusions or areas for further investigation. Finally, the literature review sets the tone for the study as the reader is given insight to the issues of importance to the authors in the field as well as those espoused by the researcher.

The literature review is divided into three sections. The first section is a discussion of the marginalization of adult learners in institutions of higher education. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate to the reader that alternatives, such as prior learning assessment and recognition programs are plausible solutions to an existing problem, namely barriers related to access by adult learners to institutions of higher education. The second section is a historical sketch of the post-World War II era in North American adult education and the development of prior learning assessment and recognition programs. This section will provide background information as well as provide a context for the current status of prior learning assessment and recognition programs in Canada. The third section is an overview of the contemporary status of prior learning assessment and recognition programs in Canada.

Adult Education

Of striking interest in the literature reviewed for this study is the exceedingly political tone of the writing concerning adult learners. The overwhelming consensus among the authors is that adult learners are alienated, under-appreciated and marginalized from the mainstream student body in institutions of higher education. It is also the opinion of the authors reviewed that the field of adult education is a vastly political arena, subject to far greater extremes of power struggles than those experienced in the mainstream student body. The interesting aspect of this political culture is that it is a situation that seems to have been resolved temporarily in the post-

World War II era only to resurface, with a vengeance, once North American society had returned to "normalcy". This section of the literature review explores in greater detail the political issues surrounding the field of adult education which leads into a discussion of the status of adult education in the post-World War II era, the effects of which are still present today.

According to Sissel, Hansman and Kasworm (2001) "one aspect of the politics of adult education addressed frequently in the literature has been the notion of power and privilege and its corollary construct: powerlessness and marginality" (p. 7). The authors go on to identify five issues within the politics of adult education. Although stated as contemporary issues, these provide insight into the development of the field of adult education and the challenges faced in its early conception and implementation.

(1) *Multiple Dimensions: The politics of diversity.* More so than at any other time, the 1990s saw the meaning of diversity in the field expanded beyond that of programming and ideology, to include not only issues of race, class, and gender but also new pedagogies, epistemologies, and research practices.

(2) *Whose Interest?* To think politically is to think critically about the expectations we hold about learners, ourselves, and others with whom we work.

(3) *Material Conditions and Controls*: To think politically is to think critically about how our role as adult educators is constructed and about the working conditions of our lived experiences as adult educators that are the result of programmatic priorities, expectations and mandates, and organizational and institutional contexts and cultures.

(4) Political Activity: Accommodation and resistance. To think politically is to think critically about how we negotiate, accommodate, or resist hegemonic structures, frameworks and practices.

(5) *Strategic Thinking: Politics of resources*. To think politically is to think strategically for purposes of change making, increased visibility, better advocacy around the issues that learners face, programmatic needs and funding initiatives, personal and professional growth and development and a greater voice for the field. (pp. 7-11).

The list above is extensive and covers the primary areas of tension identified by most authors who are critical of the role adult education programs play in institutions of higher education. There seems to be a sense of urgency in identifying adult learners as a forgotten group. Sissel, Hansman and Kasworm (2001) go on to state: "higher education culture and history have positioned adults as not being worthy of study, and few critical questions have been posed of higher education as it relates to adults" (p. 25). Further, the authors suggest that this situation must be analyzed through a lens of critical theory in order to promote "increased access and opportunity for individuals and greater visibility and understanding of the needs of all learners" (p. 25). Echoing this sentiment are critical pedagogues Giroux (1981) and Freire (1970) who are quoted by Sissel, Hansman and Kasworm (2001) as stating "therefore educators must explicitly consider issues of power and domination, for only then can education help the powerless overcome the hegemonic structures that keep their voices, their needs, and their very presence marginalized" (p. 21). In this excerpt Giroux and Freire do not specify what they mean by "issues of power," however, authors such as Quinnan (1997) are explicit in delegating an economic power struggle as the root of the problem. The following section examines the issue of power and the marginalization of the adult learner. This is an area that warrants the attention of both learners and practitioners in order to understand the potential role of prior learning assessment and recognition in relation to the status of the adult learner in formal education.

The Marginalization of the Adult Learner

The central research problem of this study is to ask if a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program acknowledges their own knowledge as valuable and how this may be linked to the motivating factors that cause the participant to return to formal study. At issue here are the variables that usually act as barriers to the adult learner returning to the formal education setting. These barriers can be either extenuating circumstances such as a lack of time or funds or barriers that are internally derived such as a feeling of not being capable or worthy of continuing their education. In a prior learning assessment and recognition program it is essential that the learner acknowledge and embrace the value of their own knowledge – they must demonstrate their competency to a content specialist in order to have their experiential knowledge validated. The field of adult education has begun to address the barriers to the adult learner in formal education and the issue of the marginalization of the adult learner (Quinnan, 1997; Brookfield, 2005). The following section is a brief discussion of the theoretical framework established by such visionaries as Paulo Freire (1970), whose transformative work with adults insists that the learner must be an active agent in their own education and understanding of their own knowledge.

In discussing the marginalization of the adult learner, we can discuss both the theoretical aspect of this situation as well as the practical. The theoretical assertions are most often found in the work of authors such as Habermas (1968, 1981); Giroux (1981, 1991); McLaren (1989); Shor (1993) and Aronowitz (with Giroux,1993). A discussion of the practical ways and means by which institutions of higher education perpetuate a formalized system of disequilibria of power and therefore the marginalization of the adult learner is found in authors such as Freire (1970, 2004); Cross (1981); Brookfield (1990, 1997, 1998, 2005); and Quinnan (1997).

Critical theorists attempt to draw attention to otherwise marginalized voices. Critical theory traces its origins to the work of German theorists associated with the Institute for Social Research or as it is also known, the Frankfurt School. From the literature, it is not clear when and who coined the term "critical theory". According to Morrow (1994) in the 1920s, the founders of the Frankfurt School, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Hebert Marcuse, used the term *Kritische Theorie* to designate their specific approach to interpreting Marxist theory (p. 6). However, White (1995) suggests that it was Horkheimer who first coined the term "critical theory" in the 1930s (p. 4). Regardless, there is agreement on the Frankfurt School's initial conception of critical theory as "a critical sociology which saw society as an antagonistic totality, and which had not excluded Hegel and Marx from its thinking, but rather saw itself as their heir" (Wiggershaus, 1986, p. 1). The founders of the Frankfurt School, often referred to as the "first generation" of critical theorists, associated themselves closely to the principles of Marxism without embracing the orthodox doctrine of a critique of capitalism. In this respect, their initial writing is on the left of the political spectrum, however this sentiment dissipated as the Second World War developed and the subsequent exile of the group by Nazi Germany to the United States. Critical theory is not only a methodology to examine the issues of dominance but also to analyze the ethic of ideologies. According to the basic principles of the Frankfurt School, "persons cannot be free from that about which they are ignorant, liberation depends in the first instance on recognition of that which imprisons the human mind or dominates the human person" (Sabia, 1983, p. 4). The first generation of critical theorists embraced these ideals and worked to develop a process of critique as dialectic and emancipatory. As Turner (1996) states "analogically, critical theory – itself an intersubjective, communicative enterprise – was to perform this function for a society that was similarly trapped in a systematic incapacity to

recognize the true nature of its own history" (p. 452). The critique of ideology and call for emancipation made critical theory a popular methodology in the United States during the politically charged movements of the 1960s.

Kellner (1989) points to the enthusiastic embracing of critical theory by the radical politics of the 1960s as the catalyst that began a split within the framework of critical theory. Whereas "Marcuse generally defended the most radical wing of student movements…Habermas criticized some of what he considered its excesses, even as he defended many of its goals and positions" (p. 205). Even though the first generation of the critical theorists followed Marx in seeing modernity as the result of capitalist industrialization, this framework would not lend itself to fully explain emergent forms of advanced capitalism (p. 3). As well, the negative dialectic associated with the school of critical theory (specifically with Adorno), had run its course by not providing practical diagnosis that would lead to solutions. According to Alway (1995), "in its principled impotence, negative dialectics represents for Habermas the dead end critical theory had reached" (p. 101). It is at this point that there is a shift in direction from what is referred to as the first generation of the Frankfurt School to the contemporary work of Jürgen Habermas.

Whereas Habermas's predecessors wrote mostly a negative critique of the direction of society, according to Turner (1996), Habermas " grounded his critique not in historical developments as such but in a broad idea of evolutionary progress in communication" (p. 454). The theory for which Habermas is credited with conceptualizing and which bridges critical theory into modernity is "communicative action".

Communicative action is the verbal and non-verbal interaction between two or

more actors who seek to reach an understanding about their action situation and their

plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement (Habermas, 1981,

p. 86).

In a prior learning assessment and recognition program, the learner and the assessor

engage in a form of communicative action whereby the onus is on the learner to demonstrate

their competency in the field in which they are challenging courses or material. If it is

determined that the candidate will not be granted full credit and is required to pursue either a

self-study program or course offered by the institution, this is all determined though open

communication, a plan of action and agreement by both parties. The learner and assessor must

share common expectations of the prior learning assessment and recognition process. Both

parties must demonstrate a high degree of competency in their respective roles. This is of

paramount importance to the understanding of communicative action.

Fundamentally to [Habermas's] understanding of language use, and thus also to

his understanding of the specie's humanity, is the development of competencies.

Humankind's capacity to learn – its capacity to become more competent – is central to

his understanding of history (Alway, 1995, p. 110).

The model of communicative action demands the participant to be self-reflective,

independent of dominating agents, competent and inquisitive. Although these qualities embody

the *model* adult learner, they are not always valued in the formal education system.

According to McLaren (1989), "the dominant educational culture constrains teachers and students so that they see themselves as consumers rather than producers of knowledge" (In Down, 1996, p. 9). McLaren (1989) and other authors such as Freire (1970), Giroux (1991), Aronowitz and Giroux (1993), and Shor (1993) are critical pedagogues who suggest a shift in thinking to ask the question of *why* and the general relevance of the knowledge being taught. The following section discusses the marginalization of the adult learner from the perspective of a critical pedagogue.

Theorists associated with critical pedagogy are concerned with the relationships of power within the formal education system and how this situation contributes to an undemocratic society. Whereas the conception of critical theory was developed as a means to process the relationship between the individual and society, critical pedagogy is specifically interested in the relationships of power within the dynamic of school and society. According to Barakett and Cleghorn (2000), "critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated by the dominant culture, while others are not" (p. 76). In McLaren's (1998) article *Broken Dreams, False Promises and the Decline of Public Schooling,* he summarizes the current role of schools as "protected enclaves that favor the more affluent. The "best" schools nurture cocoons of yuppie larvae..." (p. 9). McLaren's point is a warning that schools and teachers are in danger of becoming technocrats in reinforcing the dominant culture ideology. This toxic dichotomy between learners and schools may explain why some adult learners hesitate to return to formal education, thinking once again they will be in an inequitable relationship of power. However, it is not only the adult learner who is a cog-in-the-wheel. Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) agree with McLaren (1998) and suggest teachers have been reduced to "the status of low-level employees or civil servants whose main

function is to implement reforms decided by experts in the upper level of stated and educational bureaucracies" (p. 33). Their main point is to demonstrate the disempowerment of teachers and suggest schools are run more like bureaucracies. This situation does not help in the fulfillment of the adult learner's objectives of seeking an environment of open learning opportunities with few barriers or the recognition of their experiential knowledge. As a solution, Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) propose that teachers be perceived as intellectuals where they would "take active responsibility for raising serious questions about what they teach, how they teach it, and what the larger goals are for which they are striving" (p. 40). Their suggestion is a theoretical argument. I would ask, how does one teach a prospective teacher to be a transformative intellectual? The authors do not have an answer. Instead they categorize the social functions of educators as intellectuals as "(1) transformative intellectuals, (2) critical intellectuals, (3) accommodating intellectual and, (4) hegemonic intellectuals" (p. 45). My question is whether these categories can be viewed as an evolutionary cycle rather than distinct labels. The rationale for including an excerpt regarding teachers in a section on the marginalization of adult learners is to consider the environment an adult learner finds himself or herself in and whom they interact with. For instance, in a program of prior learning assessment and recognition, will the teacher (who from a critical pedagogy perspective is trying to stay the course of an intellectual pursuit) be open to the concept of recognizing learning that has taken place outside of the formal education institution and will this teacher be accommodating in their role as assessor of experiential knowledge? I see this argument being in the "gray zone" between education, power and politics – a discussion of where education and power relations collide is dealt with in greater depth in chapters three and six of this study.

The work of Paulo Freire (1970) is often cited as the model by which the relationship between education, society and power can be championed by the disenfranchised. This model is distinctly rooted in the context in which Freire worked and wrote and is reflected in the terminology he uses to express his call to action. Essentially, Freire (1970) is concerned with confrontation of the dominant class in order that the oppressed step up and out of their situation of subjugation. His work is practical in nature and provides concise exercises for the attainment of this goal. Freire (1970) defines oppression as "any situation in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or hinders his pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person" (p. 162). Freire's (1970) intent is to move education away from a "banking system" where "students are not called upon to know, but to memorize the contexts narrated by the teacher" to an environment of trust and dialogue (p. 163). The methodology to be employed is "problem-posing education" where the goal is to raise consciousness, provide a voice for the oppressed and empower the learner. Freire's intent is to make overt and examine the relationship of power and education. According to Shor (1993) in his work *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter,* the issue of authority-dependence is central to understanding the significance of Freire's banking concept of education.

In traditional classrooms, students develop authority-dependence, they rehearse their futures as passive citizens and workers by learning that education means listening to teachers tell them what to do and what things mean (p. 29).

Freire's work is political in nature and transformative in intent – two areas the educator did not shy away from but instead chose to strive toward. According to Freire (2004), "my understanding of education as having a political nature came to mark me to such a degree, from a

certain point in my experience as a man and as an educator, that I rarely fail to mention it" (p. 71). The acknowledgement of the political aspect of education, especially as it relates to adults is an important contribution to the field of adult education.

The history of adult education in Canada moves from remedial education settings established in the YMCAs to more transformative and politically motivated work found in the Antigonish Movement. Freire's work is similar in nature to the transformative education of Moses Coady and the novel approach of Frontier College. All share a common feature which is to put the learner in the center of the equation of education and insist that individual get involved in the equation of power, politics and education. In so doing, Freire's work is instrumental in gaining a better understanding of the situation of the adult learner and how education can best serve the individual. Critical pedagogy and the work of such authors as Freire are used in this study to highlight the continued situation of the marginalization of the adult learner. The authors and movements cited above (Freire, the Antigonish Movement and Frontier College), were all initially grassroots in their orientation. This study is influenced by their work and takes their example to the situation of the adult learner who wishes to return to the formal education setting but is unable to do so due to issues of marginalization. My suggested solution is that the learner engage in a prior learning assessment and recognition program to have their experiential knowledge validated. A prior learning assessment and recognition program offers the opportunity to return to formal education with an understanding by the adult learner that their experiential knowledge is of value and they are capable of completing the desired degree or program. The theoretical framework of critical pedagogy informs the prior learning assessment and recognition facilitator in being aware of the relationships of power inherent in school and society.

There are many factors that must be synchronized in order for the successful development and implementation of critical pedagogy. The educators must be self-reflective and aware of how their knowledge is socially constructed, the learners must be active and willing participants and this must all be balanced so that the end goal of higher consciousness and the claiming of a "voice" is not overshadowed by political motives. The relationship of power between school and student, from the perspective of critical pedagogy, is essential to gain a better understanding of how the adult learner is often marginalized in systems of formal education.

The adult learner may be returning to formal education out of personal interest or a requirement to upgrade skills or maintain their employment. These adult learners may have had a negative experience in their previous attempts in the formal education system – baggage they carry with them in their future attempts in returning to formalized education. The presuppositions an adult learner has regarding their own learning style and the structure of the formal education institute may lead to conflict. This relationship between the adult learner and the formal education system is essential to consider in the broader context of school and society.

As Giroux (1981) acknowledges, education is part of wider societal processes which reflect specific socio-economic arrangements that benefit some individuals and groups over others. Giroux's approach focuses on two broad interrelationships: 1) the political and ideological role of knowledge and how it is implicated in the social reproduction of society; 2) and the day-to-day educational practices and routines that generate meanings, values and social relationships. From this perspective, the focus shifts to questions. These questions reflect the core issues faced by the adult learner in a formal education setting. To quote Giroux (1981), the questions raised are:

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- What counts as knowledge?

- How is such knowledge produced?

- How is such knowledge transmitted in the classroom?

- What kinds of classroom social relationships serve to parallel and reproduce the values and norms embodied in the "accepted" social relationships of the workplace?

- Who has access to "legitimate" forms of knowledge?

- Whose interests does this knowledge serve?

- How are social and political contradictions and tensions mediated through acceptable forms of knowledge and social relationships?

- How do prevailing methods of evaluation serve to legitimate existing forms of knowledge? (p. 104).

These questions reflect the research problem of this dissertation and act as a poignant reminder that the study of school and society is laden with political undertones that must be negotiated by the adult learner when returning to formal education. For example, *what counts as knowledge?*, is broadly the overarching question faced by most adult learners who return to formal education and specifically those engaged in a prior learning assessment and recognition program. There is an authority figure who has a predetermined framework for what will count as knowledge. The research problem of this study suggests it is essential that a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program acknowledge their own knowledge as valuable. This may require a confrontation with an authority figure in order to negotiate what will count as knowledge that can be validated for credit in the formal education system. As well, the final

question raised by Giroux, *how do prevailing methods of evaluation serve to legitimate existing forms of knowledge?* is of direct consequence to the adult learner who wishes to participate in a prior learning assessment and recognition program. The traditional pedagogical methods of evaluation will not necessarily be effective in determining the competency of an adult learner. At issue is the relationship of power between the evaluator and the student. In a traditional pedagogical setting, the superior position of authority of the evaluator legitimates this unequal relationship of power.

Patricia Cross (1981) in her book *Adults as Learners,* calls for further research to be directed toward the status of adult learners in institutions of higher education. Sissel, Hansman and Kasworm (2001) concur and state "this dearth of scholarship is particularly noteworthy given the numbers of adults who have pursued postsecondary learning in the past thirty years" (p. 17). In Cervero and Wilson's (2001) book *At the Heart of Practice: The Struggle for Knowledge and Power,* the authors assume "education represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations" (p. 3). The asymmetrical relationship of which is played out in the sociological landscape of school and society is identified by Cervero and Wilson (2001) in three conceptions of the political in adult education practice:

(1) *The political is personal: romancing the adult learner.* This is based on "the belief that by helping adults learn, adult educators improve the lives of the individuals, increase the effectiveness of organizations and meet the needs of society" (p. 4). In this conceptual framework there is a shared optimism about adult education and it can be found in the work of authors such as Knowles (1980).

(2) *The political is practical: the ability to get things done.* This approach to politics is commonly found in the literature that discusses adult educators' inability to get things done due to their marginal institutional status.

(3) *The political is structural: redistributing power.* Politics in this strand is not so much about the ability to get things done but rather "pertains to the operation, exercise, and distribution of power – and the context and struggle for power within the social structure; which shapes human life within a society, having consequences for the interests and life possibilities of its members" (pp. 4-7).

In accepting the reality of the political nature of adult education and by extension adult education policymaking – it is now the responsibility of adult education facilitators to seek out tools that may reduce the barriers to learners that are inherent in an equation of power and politics. Without overtly stating prior learning assessment and recognition, Rubenson (2001) offers a solution to the relational role of school and society and power.

> The evaluation of individuals according to objective and universal criteria is linked not only to the allocation of resources but also to whose opinion is heard and valued. In this respect, the schools take on the function of allocating power in society. Unequal distributions of wealth and power can be justified on the grounds of unequal distributions of knowledge and abilities....equity thus becomes an issue of removing barriers to adult education participation for those who want to take part but are for various reasons prohibited from doing so (pp. 87-88).

The general sentiment in the literature on the marginalized status of the adult learner indicates the need to bring the adult learner onto equal footing with the traditional student in more visible arenas. Exclusion of adult learners is evidenced "by higher education mission statements, publicity and image, and exclusion of adult requirements in the shaping of policies, programs, and outreach" (Sissel, Hansman & Kasworm, 2001, p. 18). There is also the issue of access to services and support for adult learners. "Because adults often represent evening, weekend, and distance learners, they are often denied full access and support, by both design and default" (p. 20). As is often the case with institutions involving bureaucracy, a system is established and then left to ferment into precedence that has no flexibility to change.

In Quinnan's (1997) work entitled *Adult Students at Risk: Culture Bias in Higher Education,* he identifies the debate over access versus quality. "Society has imposed two opposing agendas upon higher education and expects both, regardless of the gulf between them, to be met" (p. 59). Meaning, by letting more students into college and university, which creates revenue, the education system is open to anyone who can afford to attend and not a select few. The select few invokes imagery of an *ivory tower* of formalized education where once only the privileged class or a small group of intellects were considered worthy or eligible to attend. Now it is an issue of who can afford to go and this should be interpreted to mean the ability to afford tuition fees, time for class, time for class preparation and other expenses associated with the endeavor of study. With more adults returning to school, either by choice or necessity, the role and function of institutions of higher education as gatekeepers of validating knowledge becomes paramount. Individuals and the corporate sector look to institutions of higher education as the benchmarks by which to compare candidates. There then exists a whole list of variables to consider: where is the degree from; how old is the candidate; how long ago was their previous

scholastic experience; does the candidate hold any professional designations; is the candidate able to recognize their knowledge as valuable and worthy of accreditation? Livingstone (1987) provides insight into this quandary, and states:

> The inherent contradictions confronting education in a capitalist society functioning under the guise of democracy is the need to *appear* to promote equality while successfully producing the differentiated and unequal labour power demanded by corporations and other employers (p. 134).

To return to the issue of the marginalization of adult learners, another question that might be considered is whether or not it is a good idea to have adult learners and mainstream students in the same environment. Does this mix of personalities and experience provide more benefits to the group than conflicts? Consider the potential tension between adult learners and traditional university students who would not consider themselves children and in need of a specialized form of facilitation. According to Quinnan (1997) the situation is significant.

> To older learners, traditional-age students appear demonstrably less serious about their studies, come to class unprepared, and contribute little to class discussions. For its part, the research (Jacobs, 1989; Lynch and Bishop-Clark,1994) shows that younger students frequently see adults as monopolizing class and instructor time, are combative about philosophical points in class discussions and are preoccupied with recounting life experiences as learning examples (pp. 75-76).

On an informal basis, I have had the experience of speaking to some of my older students and heard their dismay at the lack of participation and sense of apathy of the traditional-age student body. The result is that these adult learners, who wish to participate in an open discussion of issues feel intimidated and silenced since they do not want to be perceived by the group as too outspoken.

The Canadian Adult Education Context

Canada enjoys a rich history of adult education not only as a country that has embraced its ideals but as a world leader in innovative programming. Under the Canadian constitution, education is assigned as a provincial responsibility and is therefore not subject to a pan-Canadian set of standards. In terms of the effects on contemporary adult education programs, Selman, Selman, Cooke and Dampier (1998) suggest that this elicits a complacent approach to the development of innovative programs. "It is our view that provincial adult education policies, where they exist, are corollaries of general educational or job training policies" (p. 236).

In the 1950s the talk of professionalism swept the field with several universities offering credit courses on the subject of adult education for the first time (p. 66). In the 1960s UNESCO held its Second World Conference on Adult Education in Montreal. "The conference is generally seen to have articulated for the field the conviction that adult education had passed the stage of being seen largely as a remedial activity...and instead...seen as part of a normal pattern of adult life" (p. 67). Unfortunately, just as the field seemed to be finding its place within the mainstream in the 1970s, the context of Canadian political life took a turn toward neo-conservatism. Whereas the 1960s can be characterized as a decade which enjoyed tremendous Federal support for adult education, the 1970s witnessed a strong shift toward decentralization. According to Selman et al.

(1998) such contextual trends set the benchmark for the issues of contemporary adult education programs in Canada.

The early and mid-1970s brought a wave of fiscal austerity in Canada and, in some quarters, a turning to more conservative government philosophies. The years of flourishing community development activities were over. Once again, the linkage between events in the broader Canadian society and those in adult education were obvious. Trends begun in the 1970s have become even more pronounced since that time (p. 59).

The 1980s were marked by a trend of neo-conservatism which translated into severe fiscal restraint, the results of which continue to be felt by contemporary public education institutions. Cutbacks in the public sector left an opening for the private sector to take hold as an alternative source of education. However, for the most part, this education has been limited to vocational training and industry specific accreditation. These alternative sources of education-providers are banking on individuals wanting to embrace a functionalist mentality of societal relations. In other words, in an era of uncertainty in the workplace, a simplistic equation of "more education equates to a better job" is quite appealing to the masses. According to Barakett and Cleghorn (2000) "the functionalist view then, [is] a source of explanation and justification for the role of schools in maintaining the organization of society in what was perceived as equilibrium" (p. 28). In terms of adult education, a functionalist view of society affects the value perceived by the adult learner of furthering their education. In other words, if more school equates with a better life, then more people may be inspired to return to school. That is not to say

that this scenario is always an equitable one. This equation does not guarantee the results of success for each learner but it does legitimize the role of the school as an active agent in the organization of our society. Authors such as Livingstone (1987) suggest that a functionalist route is the way to go. Perhaps this was true for a finite period in educational history such as the post-World War II era. According to Livingstone "increasing individual equality of educational opportunity was a major rationale for the post-1945 expansion of secondary and post-secondary schooling in Western societies" (p. 128). In retrospect, it is understandable that educational policy moved toward a simple equation of balance and stability after a generation dealt with the momentous upheaval of World War II. At the time, institutions of higher education needed to loosen their role of gatekeepers of accreditation. Everyone (even the Allied Forces) needed to rebuild their lives and in doing so adopted what is termed as a functionalist mentality toward education and the role it played in the stability of society. Meaning, education served a *function* by providing a sense of stability in a simplistic equation that if an individual pursued formal education, they would lead a stable life and enjoy a high quality of life.

The next section of this chapter will investigate in further detail the context of educational policy in the post-World War II era and how this instigated the formal development of prior learning assessment and recognition programs.

The Post-World War II Era

Adult education in the post-World War II era was chosen as the starting timeline of this study since it marks a period of momentous transition for many institutions of higher education as well as the start of formalized prior learning assessment and recognition programs.

The World War II era invites further research. It provides a vital link in understanding the development of adult education as a field, as well as its relationship to other areas of education. For the first time, the rhetoric of adult education was incorporated on a broad scale into both national planning efforts and individual institutional reforms (Rose, 1990, p. 43).

There are volumes of books, movies and narratives that describe the mood of North American society during and after the Second World War. For the contemporary observer of war, it is a far removed reality to imagine not being in contact with loved ones by email or text messaging, or to have twenty-four hour access to a play-by-play account and expert commentary direct from the battlefield care of the major networks. In short, the world was a bigger place relative to now. It was also a time when twentieth century governments were in their infancy in dealing with war policy and the societal shifts which occur when troops are sent abroad. As the Second World War effort continued and more soldiers were sent to fight, government officials in Washington and Ottawa began to question how their respective nations would be prepared for the return of an unprecedented number of veterans. This planning was unparalleled in the history of government policy in relation to post-war efforts. In fact, in the United States, President Roosevelt did not want to officially spend time on a project of demobilization since he thought it would be a distraction to the momentum of winning the war. However, he did appoint his uncle to put together a small group of policymakers to unofficially look at the situation. This group looked for models of demobilization and worked from their own experience as veterans (Olson, 1974, pp. 6-7). Interestingly, one of the first places this unofficial committee looked was north. "Several committee members traveled to Montreal in March 1943 to meet with the Joint

Economic Committee of Canada and the United States to discuss postwar planning" (p. 8). The context of this meeting and the formation of the unofficial committee is significant. No demobilization or reintegration plan existed for World War I veterans. These veterans actually had to "march on" Washington in order to receive a veterans' severance (p. 8). The committee knew that the numbers of returning World War II veterans would be immense. The need to put a plan into place was born out of fear that America would be slighting their veterans with detrimental consequences. The committee cited the dissatisfaction of World War I veterans in Europe coupled with massive unemployment and the rise of fascism as a possibility for the United States. The committee worked on a bill which then became a law on June 22, 1944. This bill is officially called "The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944" however it is more commonly referred to as The G.I. Bill.

The G.I. Bill

It is the original G.I. Bill which is essentially the blueprint from which all prior learning assessment and recognition programs derive. In the post-World War II era there was acknowledgement that war service equated with the attainment of maturity and a certain level of competency. More importantly, it was determined these competencies and experiential knowledge should be recognized by institutions of formal education. According to Warren H. Aherton, the National Commander of the American Legion between 1943-1944, "the provisions of the G.I. Bill came largely from the best rehabilitation ideas and procedures developed between 1918 and 1943, the contents were not new" (Olson, 1974, p. 1). The Bill contains six titles, of which only part of one title relates to higher education.

The final education title provided one year of schooling for veterans who had served at least ninety days and who were not over twenty-five years old at the time of entry into service. Veterans were eligible for an additional period of education beyond the first year, equal to the time they had spent on active duty (p. 17).

Under this law, the veteran's association determined whether the veteran was eligible for benefits. The veteran selected the school of his choice and the school evaluated his qualifications for admission. Prior to the G.I. Bill there were special veteran committees at major universities and colleges to mostly deal with injured veterans returning home and to school. On this issue, the literature shows little consensus on the issue of motivation for returning veterans and the institutions of higher education or in regards to how veterans perceived their experiential knowledge. According to Olson (1974) "the fear of unemployed veterans, not the fear of maladjusted veterans motivated the persons who enacted the G.I. Bill" (p. 24). However, Cartwright (1944) suggests a dissimilar idea and perspective written in a considerably different time.

So the need to move men back into productive life in the nation's communities is imperative, not only from the point of view of the difficulties and expense of continuing hospitalization and convalescent camp maintenance, but more importantly from the psychological point of view of the men themselves. The quicker an incapacitated soldier or sailor can be made to take his part in the economic system of the country, the better for him and for his morale and that of his family (p. 440).

A very different perspective in a different time. Although at odds with Olson (1974), Cartwright (1944) embodies the tone of the literature surrounding the development of the original G.I. Bill. There is no reference to servicewomen, women who were substituting in the workforce or women who worked at home. One of the redeeming features of Cartwright's (1944) analysis is the need to treat the returning veterans as "men" or adults. "The returning veteran constitutes a challenge to adult education – the greatest in history. And it should be borne in mind – first, last, and all the time – that the returning veteran, irrespective of age, is adult. War service precipitates maturity" (p. 443).

The need to treat veterans as adults refers to the unsatisfactory experience of post-World War I veterans who were often "reintegrated" into society by age and not experience. It was a lost opportunity on the part of the government of the United States not to treat World War I veterans differently. Veterans of the era were disgruntled having served on the battlefields of Europe only to return home and not have their experience or experiential knowledge validated or accredited. According to Olson (1974) "above all, however, the G.I. Bill was a child of 1944; it symbolized the mood of a country immersed in war, recalling the Depression, and worrying about the future" (p. 24). In his work entitled *The G.I. Bill, Veterans, and the Colleges,* Olson (1974) uses a case study of the University of Wisconsin to demonstrate the beginnings of prior learning assessment and recognition programs. This post-War excerpt demonstrates a new tone in the University where greater acceptance and flexibility are emphasized.

(1) The general policy of the University should be to absorb the war veterans into the general student body as far as possible and to organize separate courses and provide special services only as the desirability of these is clearly evident and (2) the University should permit a

maximum of flexibility in such matters as entrance requirements, attainment examinations

and substitution of courses or the earning of credit by examination, but without any lowering

of the standard of quality (p. 81).

The Canadian Post-War Experience

In Canada, the concern for a plan of demobilization was the same. In 1943 the mood of

the nation was focused on planning. According to Selman et al. (1998) "at this time in the war,

much attention was being given to the problems of reconstructing, and ideas for reform were in

the air" (p. 60). This mood was exemplified in the Canadian Association for Adult Education

1943 Manifesto. Although politically benign, the document symbolized the general consensus of

educators and policy planners.

It [the Canadian Association for Adult Education 1943 Manifesto] was a brief statement

containing a general introduction and statement of seven principles. It refers to the need

for a 'new Canadian and world society' and invites interested individuals and groups to

join in the 'urgent educational task' of working towards that end (p. 59).

The task of planning and the victory of the Allied Forces brought on a rush of Federal

initiatives and a generally vibrant post-war period for Canadian society. The post-war period was

also a time for readjustment in terms of priorities in the workforce and the education system. In

the late 1950s there was "shock which came with recognition of Soviet leadership in space

technology [that] produced a large scale attempt to upgrade the competence of the Canadian

workforce" (p. 61). Whereas the Federal government had encouraged adult education programs

before, the initiatives seemed to go into overdrive. According to the authors "whereas in 1945 only one province in Canada had a formally constituted adult education section within its department of education, by 1957 seven provinces had taken that step and by 1961 they all had done so" (p. 66). This explosion of activity in the field of adult education is the backdrop for a discussion of the history of prior learning assessment and recognition programs in Canada.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)

The assessment of prior learning is not a complex theory or difficult concept to understand, however it does require a philosophical shift in the way a traditional pedagogical relationship operates. In a program of prior learning assessment and recognition, the student is no longer the empty vessel but is instead a learner with acquired competencies and experiential knowledge. As well, the teacher who traditionally is charged with bringing new ideas, concepts and knowledge to the student is now a content specialist and assessor. In their new role the teacher is assessing whether the candidate posses the knowledge and competency being evaluated – they will decide if credit is granted. This relationship between learner and content specialist in a prior learning assessment and recognition program requires that all parties accept the fact that learning takes place outside of a traditional classroom. According to Hamilton (1997) the acceptance of informal learning as valid may not be forthcoming at the university level. "It has been almost a hundred years since Dewey (1938) developed his theory of experience, and fifty years since the advent of the G.I. Bill and the start of the influx of adults to college campuses, yet the mission, philosophy and practice of most universities have not kept pace with the significant advances in the assessment of learning" (p. 38).

The purpose of this section is to investigate the possible reasons or root causes for this resistance as well as the current status of prior learning assessment and recognition programs across Canada. Through an analysis of the history of prior learning assessment and recognition programs in Canada, it is also expected that a better understanding can be achieved of the optimal conditions required to implement a successful program within a formal education institution. This section will limit itself to prior learning assessment and recognition programs within the academic setting and will not address the corporate sector or activities undertaken by Canadian unions or professional orders.

Prior learning assessment (PLA) and prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), what is the difference? Most of the literature in the field uses one without mention of the other or uses the terms interchangeably. The basic difference is in the translation between French and English (which has the most significance in the implementation of prior learning assessment and recognition in the Province of Quebec). This issue came to a head at the Canadian Labour Force Development Board between 1995 and 1996 (Scott, Spencer, Thomas, 1998, p. 61). Apparently there was some hesitation by the English Canadian post-secondary institutions to use the word "recognition" even though the translation of the French term *reconnaissance des acquis* is in fact "*recognition* of acquired knowledge" (p. 61 italics added).

Hamilton (1997) defines prior learning assessment as "a process of identifying, articulating, measuring, and accrediting learning that is acquired outside the traditional classroom and frequently prior to enrollment in college" (p. 32). This definition offers both a step-by-step procedure of what is to take place as well as the stated purpose of enrollment in college. Wong (2001) adds further clarification to the relationship of entry to a formal education system by defining prior learning assessment as "a systematic process to evaluate and accredit

43

learning gained outside formal educational institutions, by assessing relevant learning against the standards required by post-secondary courses and programs" (p. 159).

This definition infers the idea of "challenging" courses at the post-secondary level in order to gain credit or advanced standing in a program. Finally, for a uniquely Canadian perspective, Alan Thomas (2001) offers the following definition: "Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), known in Canada as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), is a process of demonstrations, challenge examinations, and the personal portfolio allowing informal learning outcomes to be translated into academic credit" (p. 343). Internationally, prior learning assessment and recognition programming (in its varying degrees) is also referred to as Recognition for Learning (RFL), Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

Many institutions implementing prior learning assessment and recognition have developed a model of delivery that indicates the process involved in order to complete a prior learning assessment and recognition program. The following example is from the Winnipeg Technical College where they refer to prior learning assessment and recognition as RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning). This model is used since it exemplifies the standard model of delivery of the prior learning assessment and recognition process.

WINNIPEG TECHNICAL COLLEGE
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Process Map and Description

a. Pre-entry

⬇

b. Initial Interview

c. Referral

⬇

d. Individual's Learning Identified and Articulated

⬇

e. Individual Provides Evidence

⬇

f. Instructor's Assessment

⬇

g. Instructor's Recording

⬇

h. Gap Training

⬇

i. Post – Assessment Guidance and Follow-up
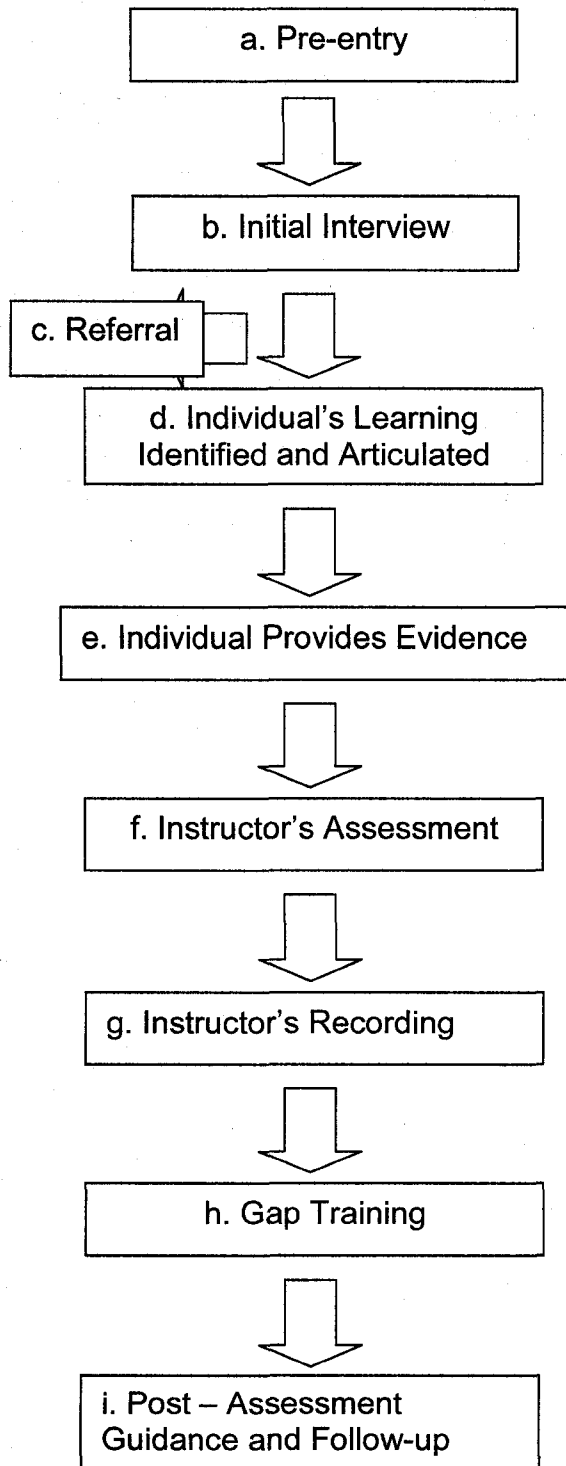
Individuals involved in the RPL process are:

a. Provided with information on College services through brochures, websites, etc.

b. Informed about the RPL process and provided assistance to determine if they have the required learning.

c. Referred to other organizations (RPL services, literacy, upgrading or EAL services, etc.) as appropriate.

d. Given assistance identifying and matching their learning against the outcomes of course(s) for which they seek credit.

e. Required to provide evidence of learning through tests, demonstration, portfolio presentation or other means agreed upon by the instructor / assessor and the individual.

f. Administered an assessment and / or review of demonstrated learning against the course outcomes to evaluate equivalency.

g. Provided a record of the outcome of the process.

h. Required to complete any gaps in training as identified during the RPL assessment process.

i. Asked to participate in an evaluation of the RPL process.

(source: www.wtc.mb.ca/index.cfm?pageID=92)

There are three primary stakeholders in a prior learning assessment and recognition process. The first is the participant who is responsible for demonstrating their experiential knowledge or competency. The second primary role is the content specialist – usually a teacher who is an expert in their field and can act as the assessor of the candidate's knowledge and competency. The third role is the prior learning assessment and recognition facilitator who acts as a liaison between the prior learning assessment and recognition participant, content specialist, administration and support staff. The prior learning assessment and recognition facilitator is also responsible for the initial interview with the prior learning assessment and recognition candidate, orientation of the potential prior learning assessment and recognition candidate and training for the content specialist and staff involved in the process.

In their article entitled *The Utilization of Prior Learning Assessment in Canada*, Thomas and Klaiman (1992) define prior learning assessment as "both a movement and a technical procedure for assigning academic standing to learning outcomes achieved outside of formal educational settings" (p. 8). One of the issues of contention in the prior learning assessment and recognition community is to reconcile the idea that assessors in formalized education do keep pace with "outside formal educational settings" and are capable of assessing the most current of acquired skills and competencies. This issue is most prevalent in the field of adult vocational studies where many skills and competencies are acquired in the field. According to Challis (1996) the curriculum for mature learners has not kept pace with the changes in student demographics. The author suggests a more realistic curriculum would draw upon "the principles of andragogy as a learning strategy, whilst marrying this with the outcome-based processes involved in the accreditation of prior learning" (p. 32). Thomas (1998) suggests that it is not only a change in student demographics but also the "character of the educational systems in which

PLAR is being introduced" that might impede the successful implementation of prior learning

assessment and recognition (p. 331). This section will now address the possible reasons or root

causes for the resistance of prior learning assessment and recognition programs at the post-

secondary level in Canada.

In Thomas's (1998) piece *The Tolerable Contradictions of PLA,* the potential of a prior

learning assessment and recognition program is inspiring. He states that in order for a prior

learning assessment and recognition program to be successful, there must be support and

participation from the formal education system, "PLAR can only survive if it is system-wide in

acceptance, if not in direct practice" (p. 335). According to Peruniak and Powell (2006) one of

the main defaults in establishing prior learning assessment and recognition at the post-secondary

level is the lack of focus on the adult learner population as a source of students.

> PLA has been a marginal practice in the Canadian university system for at least one
>
> reason. Universities have always been primarily focused on traditional students under the
>
> age of 25. After all, most people under the age of 25 have not had the time to acquire
>
> informal university-level learning (p. 319).

This is a valid point to consider – the success of a prior learning assessment and

recognition candidate will only be as good as the experiential knowledge and competencies they

wish to have validated. If the candidate does not yet have these competencies, the prior learning

assessment and recognition process is not appropriate. In the terminology of prior learning

assessment and recognition programming, when it is assessed that a candidate is able to enter a

program with advanced standing but are still deficient in some areas, the assessor and prior

learning assessment and recognition facilitator will recommend *gap filling* ("gap training" –

according to the Winnipeg Technical College model of delivery, p. 49), meaning, the candidate

will undertake a self-study or take courses in order to meet the requirements of the program.

Another point of contention in the implementation of a prior learning assessment and recognition

program that is eloquently stated by Thomas (1998) is "PLAR is the culmination of the effective

separation of these three activities – teaching, evaluation and learning" (p. 331). The

differentiation in terminology between education and learning is significant in order to

understand the point made by Thomas. In the sociology of education it is understood that

education (in this case *teaching*) is an external operation, a process that a teacher does in a

classroom – whereas *learning* is the internal process experienced by the learner. Often these

terms of teaching, learning and education are all mixed together. Separating them in terminology

is the place of academic theorists. The separation of these terms in practice is the area of prior

learning assessment and recognition and herein arises the discomfort of the post-secondary

institutions. "The discomfort of academics is understandable. A necessary but usually tiresome

and unrewarding aspect of their university role now comes to the forefront [evaluation].

Moreover, one must attest to what one has not taught" (Peruniak & Powell, 2006, p. 319). In a

prior learning assessment and recognition program, the teaching, learning and evaluation process

is not fluid like as a traditional pedagogical setting and this may be an uncomfortable role for

academics who are now entrusted with being evaluators of pre-existing knowledge that is on par

with the expected outcomes of their instruction. These issues continue to be addressed and

reconciled in many contemporary Canadian post-secondary institutions that represent best

practices of prior learning assessment and recognition programming. This issue is discussed in

further detail in the section entitled *Prior learning assessment and recognition today: A*

Canadian perspective. This section will now address the history of prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada.

The History of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Canada

The history of prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada is reflected in the experience of the United States in the post-World War II years. "From 1946 until the early 1950s, higher education was completely preoccupied with the problems of absorbing the veterans" (Rose, 1990, p. 32). There was unprecedented cooperation between the Federal government, provincial governments and institutions of higher education to recognize life experience for college credit. However, this exceptional period of collaboration was short-lived.

The issue is not only the recognition of adult experience, easy enough in abstract terms, but the problem then of incorporating this knowledge into the curriculum itself. While colleges and universities were willing to do this in an emergency situation, as a form of veterans' benefits, they immediately stepped back from this in the early 1950s (p. 43).

The notion of "stepping back" was not the original intent for most of the authors of the demobilization plan. These planners seemed to have had far greater expectations for the complete overhaul of the system of higher education. As well, there were those who were insightful enough to recognize that the unique post-war situation offered a tremendous opportunity for education policymakers in the form of a "laboratory" of activity. One of the most drastic changes that still is a profound factor in contemporary higher education is the shift away from a strictly liberal arts curriculum to one that is more vocational in nature. Rose (1990) quotes

Forkner (1944), a policymaker of the post-World War II era, as saying "we can be certain that the boy who dropped out of college is not going to want to return to much of the time-wasting type of education which colleges frequently provided before he went to war" (p. 34). The reference to "time-wasting" has more to do with the required length of residency in a program than the actual curriculum. This effect is still in evidence today and is a striking element in the argument for implementing programs of prior learning assessment, where an adult learner may not be able or willing to commit to a standardized time-line of residency in a university or college program.

Throughout the literature dealing with returning veterans and higher education, an interesting theme emerges concerning the character of these "new" students. I found it fascinating how the education policymakers in the 1940s and 1950s took great pains to emphasize the adult nature of the veterans who would be students and how this would make a huge difference in their planning. According to Rose (1990) "writers noted that the veterans would be motivated to complete their education; have a good idea of what kind of education they wanted and would demand good teaching" (p. 34). These are the very characteristics espoused by most contemporary authors of adult education literature. Not only was the present-day model for such programs as prior learning assessment and recognition formulated in these post-war years but the definition of "the adult learner" was as well. Cornelius Turner, the director of the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experience stated:

But for the benefit of those who do not complete formal schooling, we must be prepared to measure, and recognize their educational growth, no matter how attained, not only to serve the welfare of the individual citizen but also to serve the needs of our democratic

society. A program of accreditation by means of examinations supplements the educational program of our schools and colleges and, when fully recognized, will enable the educators of this country to assume more completely their responsibility to the American people (in Rose, 1990, p. 42).

At the time, there was the recognition of a need to treat adult students as adults and to award credit for experiential knowledge. In Canada, a concerted effort to organize around the concept of prior learning assessment did not come to fruition until the 1970s. According to the report *A Slice of the Iceberg: Cross-Canada Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition*, prior learning assessment and recognition programs began in 1977 as a pilot project at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario (Aarts et al., 1999, p. 1). In the late 1970s, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) took "a leadership role in promoting experiential learning as an important part of higher education. The academic and administrative standards of [prior learning assessment] PLA developed by CAEL have guided practitioners and institutions for a decade" (Wong, 2001, p. 160). In 1980, prior learning assessment and recognition programs commenced at Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Aarts et al., 1999, p. 1). Red River College continues to be a leader in the field of prior learning assessment and recognition and currently offers courses and certification in prior learning assessment and recognition facilitation. National policy recommendations concerning programs of prior learning assessment and recognition did not take place again until the mid-1990s. Perhaps due to the cyclical nature of politics there is only recently a resurgence in Federal Government activity in the area of prior learning assessment and recognition. Between 1995 and 1996, the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB), "a national advisory body comprising labour market partners,

initiated a national consultation that resulted in the development of national standards for prior

learning assessment and recognition" (Wong, 2001, p. 161). However, since education is under a

provincial mandate, these and any other prior learning assessment and recognition standards

would have to be officially adopted by each province and territory.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Today: A Canadian Perspective

Currently, the place to look for Federal activity in the area of prior learning assessment

and recognition is Human Resource and Skills Development Canada (www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca).

HRSDC is the primary sponsor of the sixth international forum on prior learning assessment and

qualification recognition which took take place October 15-18, 2006 in Fredericton, New

Brunswick. The conference entitled *Recognizing Learning: Recognizing Skills* was hosted by the

Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) which began its work in the

early 1990s as the "national voice" for prior learning assessment and recognition. The

organization finds its roots in the First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI) located in Belleville,

Ontario. According to the CAPLA website, their members have "worked tirelessly within their

communities, institutions and organizations to build a culture for adult learning and recognition,

in order to facilitate social inclusion, individual growth, equity and economic prosperity for

all"(www.capla.ca). CAPLA's latest endeavor is the creation of an online community of practice.

It is called *recognitionforlearning* and its goal is to bring together learners and prior learning

assessment and recognition practitioners to a common forum to continually share ideas and

resources and build a viable prior learning assessment and recognition community across

Canada. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) in the United States is the

equivalent organization to CAPLA in terms of promoting the concept of prior learning

assessment (www.cael.org/index2.html).

Another organization that deserves mention in this activities list is the work being done in

the area of foreign credential recognition. There are both private, semi-private (joint endeavors

with the Federal Government) and government funded initiatives to recognize foreign credentials

and these groups work in tandem with the prior learning assessment and recognition community.

One example is the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program under the direction of

Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC).

> The Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program is one of the key components of the
>
> government's Internationally Trained Workers Initiative. This initiative is an integrated,
>
> comprehensive strategy in which over 14 federal departments work together to address
>
> the barriers to working in Canada that internationally trained workers face.
>
> (www.hrsdc.ca/en/cs/comm./hrsd/news/2005/050425bb.html)

There are also "think-tank" organizations that count prior learning assessment and

recognition as part of their mandate such as the not-for-profit Canadian Council on Learning

whose mandate in the adult learning sector is based on the following:

> In its 2002 review of adult learning, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and
>
> Development (OECD) identified a significant lack of coordination in adult learning
>
> programs in Canada. This gap occurs between federal and provincial governments, as
>
> well as between the public and private sectors. The OECD also identified the absence of a

national forum for adult learning as a major barrier to developing adult learning initiatives that are coherent, consistent, effective, and universally available (www.ccl-cca.ca).

These think-tank groups are also found within universities, either within departments or as independent study groups. The following is a listing of the most prominent and their most recent studies:

- *Workers in Transition: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition.* Prepared by The Centre for Education and Work, Winnipeg, Manitoba;

- *Best Practices in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Handbook.* Prepared for the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer by Barrington Research Group, Inc.;

- *The Gateways Project.* On-going research project housed at Athabasca University, Alberta;

- *Feedback From Learners: A Second Cross-Canada Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition.* Prepared by the Cross-Canada Partnership of PLAR;

- *A Spring 2003 Snapshot: The Current Status of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in Canada's Public Postsecondary Institutions: Part One.* Prepared for the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada by CAPLA.

- *Recognizing the Prior Learning (RPL) of Immigrants to Canada: Moving Towards Consistency and Excellence.* Prepared for The Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program by Margaret Rifell, Red River College;

- *La Reconnaissance Des Acquis Dans Les Universités Québécoises: État De La Situation.* Prepared by Association Canadienne D'Éducation Des Adultes Des Universités De Langue Française.

From the list above, it should be clear that there is substantial research activity in the prior learning assessment and recognition community in Canada. At this point it is necessary to discuss prior learning assessment and recognition program activity in Canada at the post-secondary level. There is a fair amount of exchange between institutions that have established prior learning assessment and recognition programs in order to share best practices. Most of the institutions listed in Table A (p. 57), have sent representatives to a CAPLA conference to either participate as a panelist or present their work (see list above of studies –most of them have been presented in some form at a CAPLA conference). Often these institutions participate in each other's studies. Of interest is the fact that almost half of the institutions listed are in the technical training sector – an area of study and employment where much can be learned on the job and not only in a formalized education setting thereby being good programs to institute prior learning assessment for qualified candidates. These institutions were selected on the basis of their expertise in prior learning assessment and recognition programming but also because they represent a cross-section of academic prior learning assessment and recognition activity that is currently taking place across Canada. This is significant since these institutions and the provinces and territories are under no obligation to implement prior learning assessment and recognition. The prior learning assessment and recognition programs function on their own merit. To that effect, the institutions in Table A have commonalities that support prior learning assessment and recognition as an established program and not as an after-thought or add-on to adult education.

Among these commonalities are: having formal prior learning assessment and recognition policies (usually within the institution's academic calendar), hired staff dedicated to the prior learning assessment and recognition program or advising learners pursuing the prior learning assessment and recognition process, most have a prior learning assessment and recognition office and offer prior learning assessment and recognition orientation sessions.

I developed Table A to provide a Canadian sampling of contemporary prior learning assessment and recognition programs in formal education institutions at the post-secondary level. The criterion for selection in this Table was made primarily by access to information – mostly web-based access. Each of the institutions and their respective prior learning assessment and recognition programs that are in Table A have posted prior learning assessment and recognition information on their website and have therefore integrated prior learning assessment and recognition into the core programming and offerings of the institutions. This step would be applauded by someone like Quinnan (1997) whose work is typically critical of most formal education institutions for the marginalization of the adult learner population by not including their programming offerings in the mainstream. Table A provides an important overview of the best practices of prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada.

Table A   A sampling of Canadian Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

(PLAR) programs in the formal education sector at the post-secondary level.

Institution Name	British Columbia's Institute of Technology	Athabasca University	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology	Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface	Winnipeg Technical College	Red River College
Founded	1964	1970	1988	1871	1985	1938
Location	Burnaby, BC	Athabasca, AB	Throughout Saskatchewan	Saint-Boniface, MB	Winnipeg, MB	Winnipeg, MB
Student enrollment	15,500 Full-time 32,500 Part-time	32,000	13,347	735 Full-time 520 Part-time	N/A	7937 Full-time 23,500 Part-time
No. of campuses	1	1	4	1	2	8
Primary language of instruction	English	English	English	French	English	English
Field of study	-Business & Media, -Computing & Information Technology, -Engineering, -Applied & Natural Sciences, -Health Sciences, -Trades & Apprenticeship	-Business, -Computing & Information Systems, -Distance Education, -Global & Social Analysis, -MBA, -Integrated Studies, -Language & Literature, -Nursing & Health, -Psychology, -Research, Science, -State & Legal, -Work & Community, -World Indigenous Knowledge & Research	-Business, -Agriculture, -Health and Science, -Technology, -Industry, -Nursing, -Hospitality services, -Community Services, -Basic education	-Faculté des arts et d'administration des affaires, -Programmes des français, -Traduction, -Administration des affaires, -Faculté des sciences, -d'Éducation	-Health Care & Human Services, -Information & Business Technology, -Skilled Trades	-Applied Arts, -Sciences, -Business, -Community Services, -Developmental Education, -Health, -Aboriginal & Teacher Education, -Trades & Technology

Institution Name	British Columbia's Institute of Technology	Athabasca University	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology	Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface	Winnipeg Technical College	Red River College
PLAR start date	N/A	2000	1996	2002	In-Formally 1985 Formally 2002	1980
Assessment fee	Usually between half and full tuition	$250 separate from General Application Fee and/or transcript evaluation fee	$150 each course assessment or course tuition (whichever is less). A fee for specific method: Challenge test $60, Practicum $100	Half the cost of the course	$200	$60 per portfolio assessment; $50 per challenge to a maximum of $200 per course; $30 per hour for demonstration to a max. of $150 per assessment plus cost of consumables (Note: possible to have more than one assessment per course)
No. of course credits that can be obtained with PLAR	N/A	Depends on program	Up to 100% however this depends on the program	Depends on the program	75%	75%
Formal PLAR policies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcript policy	Grade plus "L" to indicate PLAR eg: %L	As PLAR credit	CR – for credit which is no different than mainstream students	Same as mainstream students	Mark, %, grade or where this is not possible the designation of CT or credit transfer will be used	Grade or CR (credit)

Institution Name	British Columbia's Institute of Technology	Athabasca University	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology	Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface	Winnipeg Technical College	Red River College
PLAR staff	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1 full-time Facilitator, 1 part-time support staff
PLAR office	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PLAR orientation	N/A	As required	Yes	As required	Yes	Yes
PLAR availability	N/A	Depends on the program	All programs	Depends on the program	All programs	All programs
Model of delivery chart available	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Info available on-line	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Website	www.bcit.c/admission/transfer/plar.html	www.priorlearning.athabascau.ca	www.siast.sk.ca	www.cusb.ca	www.wtc.mb.ca	www.rrc.mb.ca/prior

Institution Name	Fanshawe College	Mohawk College	Algonquin College	Centennial College	North Atlantic	New Brunswick Community Colleges (NBCC/CCNB)
Founded	1967	1966	1972	1966	1997	1972
Location	London, ON	Hamilton, ON	Ottawa, ON	Scarborough, ON	Newfoundland and Labrador	Throughout the province
Student enrollment	12,494 Full-time 40,159 Part-time (based on course enrollments)	8,433 Full-time	16,000 Full –time 32,000 Part-time	N/A	12,000 Full-time 8,000 Part-time	N/A
No. of campuses	5	4	3	4 and 6 satellite locations	17	11 colleges (7 are English and 4 are French)
Primary language of instruction	English	English	English	English	English	English and French (depending on the college)
Field of study	-Applied Arts, -Business & General Studies, -Health Sciences, -Human Services, -Technology	-Applied Arts & Access, -Business, -Health Sciences & Human Services, -Engineering Technology	-Advanced Technology, -Health & Community Service, -Media & Design, -Transportation & Building, -Trades, -Language Institution, -School of Business, -Hospitality & Tourism, -Police & Public Safety, -Career & Academic Access Centre.	-English & General Education, -General Arts & Sciences, -Community Studies, -Health Studies, -Business, Communication, -Arts, -Engineering Technology, -Computers & Telecommunication -Transportation	-Academic / Access, -Applied Arts /Business, -Engineering Technology, -Health Sciences, -Industrial Education/Trade, -Information Technology, -Natural Resources	-School of Applied Arts, -Business, -Health & Academic Services, -Technology & Trades

Institution Name	Fanshawe College	Mohawk College	Algonquin College	Centennial College	North Atlantic College	New Brunswick Community Colleges
PLAR start date	1994	1986 policy	1998	N/A	N/A	N/A
Assessment fee	Up to $77 per course or $100 program advanced standing fee	$96 per course	$103.79 per course	$100	$50 per course	$50 per course – additional fees may apply
No. of course credits that can be obtained with PLAR	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%	N/A
Formal PLAR policies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcript policy	Alpha Grade or Credit, Pass/Fail	Alpha Grade or CR, credit	PLA credit recorded as grade when possible – otherwise "CR"	PLAR next to a grade	N/A	N/A
PLAR staff	1 part-time Facilitator	1 full-time Coordinator 1 part-time support staff	Yes	Through the staff in continuing education	No	Yes

Institution Name	Fanshawe College	Mohawk College	Algonquin College	Centennial College	North Atlantic	New Brunswick Community Colleges
PLAR office	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Each college has a PLAR advisor
PLAR orientation	Yes	Information package, in-person, by phone or mail	As required	As required	As required	As required
PLAR availability	All programs	All programs	PLA in Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts & Technology is evaluated on a course by course basis.	PLA in Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts & Technology is evaluated on a course by course basis.	All programs	Depends on college and program
Model of delivery chart available	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Info available on-line	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Website	www.fanshawec.on.ca	www.mohawkcollege.ca	http://www.elearning.algonquincollege.com/pla/index.html	http://www.centennialcollege.ca	www.cnal.nl.ca	www.nbcc.ca/calinfo.asp?year=2007id=70&mid=1

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All Provincial and Territory Governments have educational policy as it relates to adult learners. This policy varies from such initiatives as the Quebec Government's policy on *Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (www.mels.gouv.qc.ca), which incorporates declarations of the rights of citizens to prior learning assessment and recognition, to other provinces where education policy related to adults focuses on issues of basic literacy, for example, Nunavut. The majority of the provinces and territories even have some mention or policy related to prior learning assessment and recognition. Where they differ is in the details. The following section will explore prior learning assessment and recognition related activity within each province and territory where it is applicable.

British Columbia was a leader in moving prior learning assessment and recognition into the twenty-first century by making information available on-line through the partnership of PLA On-line, developed by the Open Learning Agency (OLA) which links users to over fifteen colleges that recognize prior learning assessment and recognition in some form. This resource is no longer being updated, however the links that are established and the basic information posted concerning prior learning assessment and recognition is still of great value.

The Prairie Provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) each have tremendously innovative prior learning assessment and recognition programming both at the provincial government level and within formal education institutions. In February 2005, the Government of Saskatchewan held the official launch of Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL) in Regina – a government initiative which provided funding for "the coordination of professional development activities that enhance staff and/or faculty expertise in PLAR advising and/or assessing leading to the delivery of PLAR services for learners" (www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=bd). Through the

Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), prior learning assessment and recognition programs are offered at four SIAST offices located throughout the Province.

Manitoba has a rich history of pioneer work in prior learning assessment and recognition programs and has maintained itself as a leader in the field. Through the Canadian Association for Prior Learning and Assessment (CAPLA) website, Manitoba is one of only two provinces that have a provincial link to prior learning assessment and recognition resources (the other being Nova Scotia). The "Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Manitoba" site is an up-to-date website that defines the concept and provides a listing of government services, frequently asked questions and the outline of the MPLAN (Manitoba Prior Learning Assessment Network), whose mission "supports and promotes the concept of building interconnected learning communities through the formal recognition of prior learning" (www.plarinmanitoba.ca). Within the website's contact list are non-profit groups such as *The Centre for Education and Work*, four universities and four community colleges that offer prior learning assessment programs, among them Red River College which offers prior learning assessment and recognition practitioner training and accreditation programs.

The situation in Ontario is perhaps the most interesting since it is full of anomalies and contradictions. On one hand, prior learning assessment programs seem to enjoy great support within the Province in terms of government policy, union activity, associations and think-tanks that promote the concept. And yet, there are few programs that are actually taking place on a full-time basis. According to Thomas (1998), "in Ontario, the discrepancy between the sometimes unstated expectations of the early implementation groups and the reality of demand has been dramatic. Since the period of initiation, demand has grown slowly" (p. 337). Some examples of the more innovative programs and initiatives are: CAPLA, which is based in

Ontario as well as The Research Network for New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) under the auspices of the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education at the University of Toronto. The NALL website has an extensive list of prior learning assessment and recognition research projects and bibliographical entries (www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/sese/csew/nall). The First Nation Technical Institute (FNTI), located in Belleville, Ontario hosts an annual PLA conference and is home-base for researcher and practitioner Paul Zakos, who is lead on the Adult Learning Focused Institution (ALFI) (www.fnti.net).

According to Greason (1998), "unfortunately, while Quebec was one of the leaders in this emerging field in the 1980s, it fell behind several other provinces in the 1990s" (p. 96). This was mostly due to budgetary cuts to the education portfolio. Quebec's unique CEGEP system was at the forefront of the prior learning assessment movement in the 1980s. The contemporary scene is delineated along linguistic lines and the respective school board system. In the French school board system prior learning assessment and recognition is known as *La Reconnaissance des Acquis et Compétences* (RAC) and is currently being implemented in mostly the adult vocational programming sector. The English school boards are currently organizing themselves to implement *The Recognition of Prior Learning Assessment and Competencies* (RPLC) – the current government mandated translation of RAC. The model of delivery established by the Government of Quebec for implementation in both the French and English school boards is innovative in the sense that any missing competency can be attained either through self-study or formal course work. This government model is one of the few to open the door to informal methods of completing gap filling (Appendix I, p. 205). Whereas information in French is readily available, there is still a discrepancy in access to information in English from the Quebec Ministry of Education's website. The Ministère de l'Éducation, Loisir et Sport (MELS)

continues to pursue their policy program entitled *Learning Throughout Life – Government Policy on Adult Education, Continuing Education and Training,* in which prior learning assessment and recognition is a key element within the mandate for adult learners in Quebec – an example of such activity is the annual RAC *colloque* (conference) held in April (www.rac2007.org/colloque/).

In Halifax, Human Resources Development Canada has funded the PLA Centre. "The Prior Learning Assessment Centre (PLA Centre) is a joint project involving five Halifax universities, the provincial community college system, and representatives from community groups, voluntary organizations, labour, the private sector and the government" (www.placcentre.ns.ca).

In New Brunswick and Newfoundland there appears to be substantial studies and policy reports that have been undertaken in the area of prior learning assessment – however the activity does not seem to see fruition at the stage of implementation. Instead, the focus of most programs appears to be on the promotion of job-training skills related to areas representative of these communities – for example, the fishing industry.

In Nunavut, the government is still dealing with an education system inherited from the Federal Government, residential schools and the former Northwest Territories (Rigby, 2005). In a presentation made at the Canadian Association for Prior Learning and Assessment (CAPLA) Fall Forum in 2005, Bruce Rigby, Senior Advisor for the Nanuvut Adult Learning Strategy presented a plan of action to address the adult learning needs of Nunavummiut [which will] "create a plan to deal with generations of learners who have not been able to obtain training, recognition or employment" (Rigby, 2005). Currently there are no prior learning assessment and recognition programs in Nunavut.

As part of my research endeavor I undertook the challenge of creating a Directory of prior learning assessment and recognition programs in Canada (see Appendix A, p. 171). The Directory is a coast to coast to coast look at the official prior learning assessment and recognition initiatives that are currently in practice in the Canadian education system at a post-secondary level. This Directory may become dated information within the next five years, however, it should provide a comprehensive and informative benchmark for looking at the future progress of prior learning assessment and recognition initiatives in Canada. Table B is an overview of the findings of the Directory. Table B offers the reader a clear and succinct view of which provincial and territorial governments have an official policy related to prior learning assessment and recognition and where the significant organizations and institutions that practice prior learning assessment and recognition are located.

Table B: **Overview of findings from Directory of prior learning assessment**

and recognition (PLAR) programs in Canada*.

*   The Directory is found in Appendix A, of this study (p. 171).

TABLE B

Province/Territory	Govt. policy on adult education	Govt. policy on PLAR	Govt. publication(s) in area of PLAR	Significant organization/institutions in practice of PLAR
British Columbia	Yes	Yes – dated	Yes	PLA On-line
Alberta	Yes	Yes	Yes	Athabasca University
Saskatchewan	Yes	Yes - current	Yes	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST)
Yukon Territory	Yes	No	No	
Northwest Territory	Yes	No	No	
Manitoba	Yes	Yes	Yes	Manitoba Prior Learning Assessment Network (MPLAN), Red River College
Nunavut	Yes	No	No	
Ontario	Yes	Yes	Yes	Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA), First National Technical Institute (FNTI), Ontario Institute for the Study of Education (OISE) at University of Toronto
Quebec	Yes	Yes	Yes	
New Brunswick	Yes	Yes - current	Yes	Canadian Council on Learning (CCL)
Prince Edward Island	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Nova Scotia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Halifax PLA Centre
New Foundland and Labrador	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Source

Government of Alberta. From: http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/

Government of British Columbia. From: http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced/

Government of Canada. From: http://www.canada.gc.ca

Government of Manitoba. From: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/

Government of New Brunswick. From: http//www.gnb.ca/0000/index-e.asp/

Government of New Foundland and Labrador. From: http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/

Government of Northwest Territory. From: http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca

Government of Nova Scotia. From: http://www.ednet.ns.ca/

Government of Nunavut. From: http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/

Government of Ontario. From: http://www.gov.on.ca/

Government of Prince Edward Island. From: http://www.gov.pe.ca/education/

Government of Quebec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Québec. From:
    http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca

Government of Saskatchewan. From: http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=bd
    http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/

Conclusion

This chapter examined the literature related to the field of adult education and more

specifically investigated theoretical concepts dealing with the marginalized status of the adult

learner in institutions of formal education. The adult education context established, this chapter

then reviewed the literature related to the original conception of prior learning assessment and

recognition as an initiative of the post World War II era. The chapter then delved into the topic

of prior learning assessment and recognition in terms of both its contemporary status in Canada

and some of the issues associated with the hesitancy of post-secondary institutions to implement PLAR.

With a better understanding of what is happening in the provinces and territories, this study now shifts focus to the relationship between prior learning assessment and recognition programming and the relationships of power within the context of globalization. It is within the context of globalization that the significance of prior learning assessment and recognition programs can best be understood as it relates to the Canadian adult leaner. Since most adult learners return to formal education for the purpose of job retention or upgrading of employment skills, it is important to investigate the influencing factors that affect such trends (Statistics Canada, 1997). Canadian education policymakers should consider the intent of the post-Second World War era education policy for adults as a blueprint for contemporary challenges. The returning veterans have been replaced by skilled immigrants and Canadian citizens in career transitions – both could benefit from prior learning assessment and recognition programs in their reintegration to the labour market.

CHAPTER THREE

Globalization: A Context for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

The previous chapter on the marginalization of the adult learner provides the reader with a context in which the contemporary Canadian adult learner finds themselves – a situation where there continues to be barriers to entry to the formal education system. The logical progression is to ask, "how is this context established", or "where do these barriers come from"? The answer is found by looking beyond Canada to the external influences on decisions related to education by the provincial and territorial governments as well as the federal government. Canada is a participant in a global village of countries aligned in different trade organizations, defence alliances, conflicts and partnerships. The feature that encapsulates it all is the phenomenon of globalization. The current context of globalization has redefined who is considered a "have" or a "have-not" in this world. Those who possess not only material goods but the *knowledge* of how the globalized market functions are the new generation of "haves". From lessons learned from such authors as Freire (1970, 2004) who championed the disenfranchised – it is evident that the contemporary field of adult education is most definitely political and in many cases the issues and influences are global. One such issue is the movement of knowledge and people across the global and the assessment of their equivalencies. For instance, is a university degree from Russia, Mexico, Africa or Australia recognized as equivalent to that of a Canadian university degree? Are the skills of a tradesperson from India, China, Dubai or Peru recognized as equivalent to those of a Canadian-born tradesperson? There is a need for systems and tools to facilitate the movement of people and their ideas that is a result of the current context of globalization. I suggest prior learning assessment and recognition as a viable option.

In order for individuals to successfully participate on equal footing in the global village they must be aware of and value the knowledge they possess – otherwise their direction will be dictated by the dominant minority of "haves". Likewise in a prior learning assessment and recognition program, the candidate must acknowledge their own knowledge as valuable. This chapter is a discussion of globalization as a context for prior learning assessment and recognition and the relationship of knowledge and power affecting the adult leaner. In the first part of the chapter I briefly discuss some of the definitions of globalization offered by authors in the field. The chapter then moves to a discussion of the relationship between knowledge and power and how this affects the adult learner. The final section is an overview of the international organizations that influence Canadian education policy. These international organizations act as stakeholders in bringing the influencing factors of globalization to the Canadian adult learner.

According to Burbles and Torres (2000), "the more we know about it [globalization], the greater the uncertainties about the consequences it brings with it" (p. 11). In reviewing the literature on globalization it became clear that authors first had to clarify any presuppositions concerning whether they perceive the current phenomenon of globalization to be a negative or positive trend. For some, it is a destructive force that is eliminating the ethos of identity in cultures – the "McDonaldization" of the world lead by notoriously unscrupulous multinational companies (Klein, 1999; Murphy, 2000; Carnoy, 2002). For others, usually of the less academic field, the current state of globalization is a continuous exploration of riches in both the literal sense of reaching further across the globe with less effort to amass natural resources and the advent of immediate information and communication which can be interpreted as gathering pertinent knowledge on a timely basis (Friedman, 2000). For the purpose of this study, the discussion of globalization leans on the academic shoulders of those who question not only the

legitimacy of this phenomenon as new and unique but as something to be embraced as legitimated ideology, that is "a set of beliefs that justifies or supports the status quo" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000, p. 135).

There are two camps of thought in attempting to define globalization, or at least ground the concept in a historical framework. There are authors who choose to provide the reader with an often sketchy timeline of major international events from the Middle Ages to the present in order to make the point that globalization is not a concept born out of contemporary events alone, while others suggest globalization is a relatively new phenomenon. According to Brown (1999), it is the new world order coupled with a distinct theoretical view which makes the concept a contemporary phenomenon.

It is this discourse of accepting globalization as an inevitable product of technological development coupled with a real politik view of the rearrangement of the international order in the wake of the Gulf War and the demise of the command economies of Eastern Europe which is new (p. 13).

Stromquist and Monkman (2000) provide what they refer to as an open definition of globalization and suggest it is "a phenomenon that comprises multiple and drastic changes in all areas of social life, particularly economics and culture" (p. 3). They continue to state that not surprisingly the meaning of the definition varies depending on the angle that is emphasized when defining globalization (p. 3). For example here the emphasis is on the internationalization of the globe:

[Globalization is] a set of processes by which the world is rapidly being integrated into one economic space via increased international trade, the internationalization of production and financial markets, the internationalization of a commodity culture promoted by an increasingly networked global telecommunications system (p.4).

It is not necessarily the internationalization of economic trade that defines the current phenomenon of globalization – that argument would neglect the rich and extensive history of international trade. Rather it is the speed at which this trade takes place and the volume of capital that is moved that is of importance. The agent of this change is the multinational corporation which is often cited as an instrumental factor in defining the uniqueness of the current state of globalization. Murphy (2000) states that according to the globalization thesis, this dramatic recent development of the rise of the multinational corporation as a major power player on the world stage is both the deciding characteristic of the new global economy and the major threat to the economic sovereignty of nation-states (p. 170). Murphy (2000) is quick to point out that there is no inherent conflict between the nation-state and capitalism. "Instead it needs to be read as an interconnection between national governments and multinational corporations" (p. 171). According to Carnoy (2002) it is a nation-state's economy "whose strategic, core activities, including innovation, finance and corporate management, function on a planetary scale in real time" which makes it unique (p. 129).

For the purposes of this study, globalization is understood to mean that economics, politics, technology, environmentalism and communication are interrelated through a global market that is driven by capitalism. Stakeholders in this relationship are the world citizenry. The question then is who decides which voice will be heard? Whose opinion do we trust? Whose

knowledge is of most worth? The following section is a discussion of knowledge and power and the stakeholders involved. Since prior learning assessment and recognition is mostly applicable to adult learners and to those adult learners with experiential knowledge of their field – the likelihood is these individuals have work experience. The argument that prior learning assessment and recognition programming is influenced by globalization is rooted in the understanding that most prior learning assessment and recognition is done to secure employment, enter a field of practice (skilled-immigrant community) or change career paths. In other words, most prior learning assessment and recognition is somehow related to entry in the labour market.

Knowledge and Power

The world no longer sleeps. Industrialized economies of the world unite under multiple trade organizations and agreements in the hopes of trying to put their respective workforce at the forefront of a new world economy dubbed "the knowledge economy". In so doing they seek out the skills that will be necessary to be the most competitive. Ashton and Green (1996) suggest many turn to a Post-Fordism model "which argues that the onset of flexible productive systems requires the advent of multi-skilled workers" (p. 70). Brown (1999) points to many workers who are forced to sell their labour power in order to gain access to what he terms as "the means of life" (p. 9). As an example, he cites the rural workers in Asia who are forced off their land to migrate to the cities as a "spread of the social relations of capital" (p. 9). Most authors agree that it is the perceived innovative skill formation of an economy's workforce that will lead to an increase in living standards (Ashton & Green, 1996; Carnoy, 2002; Brown, 1999; Mann, 1997). According to Bouchard (2006) the context of globalization is powered by the needs of the worlds' markets and as a result has caused the reprioritizing of our workforce.

With the removal of trade barriers such as tariffs and import taxes, "poor" countries can sell their goods anywhere at a cheaper price than "rich" countries can, to such an extent that in developed economies the exploitation of natural resources, as well as many – if not most – of their manufacturing sectors, is quickly becoming irrelevant. Hence our need to develop "knowledge capital" more or less as a substitute for the loss of our other competitive capabilities on the world markets (p. 164).

Brown (1999) touches upon the advent and significance of technological developments relative to both the market and population within which it is introduced as an attributing factor to the impacts of globalization. It is not simply fiber optic equipped office space, cellular phone towers or advances in medical research which define the current situation. According to Held and McGrew (2000), "to reduce globalization to a purely economic or technological logic is considered profoundly misleading since it ignores the inherent complexity of the forces that shape modern societies and world order (p. 6).

The priority of globalization seems to be preoccupied with bolstering systems that favor capitalism. One of the most prominent contributing factors to this situation is the development of new technology and communication systems. Communication, for the most part, is now borderless – ideas move instantaneously. There is also a distinct direction in which these ideas move – it is to the West. In Alvin Toffler's (1990) study of trends entitled *Powershift* he discusses the changing balance of power in relation to globalization. It is his contention that the very nature of power is being transformed during the period within which we live. He maintains that "we stand at the edge of the greatest powershift in history". And, in this massive transformation of human and economic relationships, the instruments of change will be violence,

wealth and knowledge. And of the three instruments, knowledge, its generation, its management, and its control will be the most powerful (Hall, 1996, p. 108).

The production, management and control of knowledge are the very issues at stake in understanding the significance of prior learning assessment and recognition as it relates to the dominant powers dictating the trend to embrace globalization as inevitable. In a knowledge-based economy, the individuals capable of producing knowledge deemed valuable by those in power are sought after. In a prior learning assessment and recognition program, the learner has knowledge and competencies they want validated by a formal education system. This is reflective of the relationship between the individual and the knowledge-based economy, where an individual seeks to have their knowledge validated by an authority figure. The impact of globalization is felt when those in power change their priorities and standards of what knowledge to recognize as valid, capable and pertinent. A tangible example of this is the situation of physicians residing in Quebec who have undertaken education and training elsewhere and now wish to practice medicine in Quebec. These professionals are faced with a multitude of barriers; from the professional orders they seek recognition from, to the standardized tests, to assess their overall comprehension of the French language (Beauchesne, p. A12). Such situations draw attention to the plight of the skilled immigrant communities of Canada who are unable to practice their chosen field due to a lack of recognition of their prior learning. As adult educators in the field of prior learning assessment and recognition, we need to challenge this legitimated ideology by asking *whose* knowledge is of most value and why.

It is important to focus on who is involved in this relationship of knowledge and power. Hallack (2000) offers a succinct summation of globalization which encompasses not only what happens but also whom it happens to.

Globalization is highlighted by the emergence of three types of players: those who globalize, those who are globalized and those who are left out by globalization. Those who globalize concentrate on capital resources, knowledge and the control of information. Those who are globalized are 'information poor' and 'knowledge poor' workers and consumers. Those who are left out have little or no access to information and knowledge with no absorptive capacity as consumers and no relevance to production (p. 25).

Hallak (2000) insinuates that it is the dominant culture's interpretation of knowledge that one must have in order to be a player in this new context of globalization. That is, the context of globalization defines who will be valued, what knowledge will be of value and who will have power. The validation of knowledge is at the core of prior learning assessment and recognition. *Who* defines what knowledge is valid is at the core of globalization. Carnoy (2002) suggests that knowledge plays an integral part in the definition of contemporary globalization issues. He states "today's massive movements of capital depend on information, communication and knowledge in global markets. And because knowledge is highly portable, it lends itself easily to globalization" (p. 130).

With the rise of multiple techniques and globalization dynamics, there are no permanent structures of knowledge or meaning today (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000, p. 11). This idea of ever-changing meaning making is the cornerstone to the concept of the Canadian experience of moving from a natural resource-based economy to a knowledge-based society or at least an attempt to do so in order to be considered a global player. Stromquist and Monkman (2000) make a substantial argument for the importance of being aware of this transition. Their work

should be read with the idea of how this seemingly macro concept of knowledge-based technology in a global arena has a significant impact on education policymaking.

> In addition to the increased speed of circulation of knowledge there has been growth in quantity, quality, and density of knowledge embodied in the design, production, and marketing of even ordinary products. Consequently, knowledge will be increasingly embedded in technical capital. Countries that depend on natural resource extraction will build only minimal technical capital. Extrapolating from this trend, it follows that the knowledge composition of capital will be differentially distributed. If so, relations between labor and capital may remain the same as before, even though the knowledge component of capital may be today far more sophisticated than in the past (p. 12).

The authors suggest there must be "a cadre of individuals" whose knowledge is not substantial enough or not validated in this equation to provide services in the menial task labor force. Carnoy (2002) concurs with this argument and suggests that globalization is a driving force in the reorganization of local culture and identity.

> …globalization necessarily changes the conditions of identity formation. Individuals in any society have multiple identities. Today, their globalized identity is defined in terms of the way that global markets value individuals' traits and behaviour. It is knowledge-centered, but global markets value certain kinds of knowledge much more than others (p. 133).

The commonly known expression "knowledge is power" has never before held such practical implications. According to Ashton and Green (1996):

> We are said to be in the new knowledge society and the successful members of society are going to be those who have the fullest access to knowledge, and the best ability to manipulate it for profitable ends (p. 69).

As well, it must be recognized that substantial power rests in the hands of those who determine what will be considered valuable knowledge in this new knowledge-based society. These gatekeepers of validation are the determinant influencers in what constitutes knowledge in today's world, how knowledge is valued and the types of knowledge to be valued. These questions are at the core of the rationale behind a prior learning assessment and recognition program and this is where the complexities of globalization and the concept of prior learning assessment intersect.

According to Michelson (1997) any prior learning assessment program cannot be considered knowledge-neutral.

> It is a material practice through which specific knowledge and, therefore, specific knowers are publicly and institutionally valued, and in which questions of epistemological authority explicitly confront questions of social inequality (p. 146).

This issue is one which critical theorists would trumpet as the identification of potential marginalized voices. Douglas Kellner (1989) in his chapter entitled *Globalization and New*

Social Movements: Lessons for Critical Theory and Pedagogy, inspired me and captured my focus as I reviewed literature and research data. Kellner ties the issues together by stating:

> A critical theory of globalization attempts to specify the interconnections and interdependencies between different levels such as the economic, political, cultural and psychological, as well as between different flows of products, ideas and information, people, and technology. Critical theory describes the mediations between different phenomena and processes into a social system, and the relative autonomy of the parts, such that there are both connections and disjunctions between, say, the economy and culture. Concerned to relate theory to practice, critical theory also attempts to delineate the positive potentials for greater freedom and democratization, as well as the dangers of greater domination, oppression, and destruction. Grounded in historical vision, critical theory stresses the continuities and discontinuities between past, present, and future, and the possibility of constructive political action and individual and group practice, grounded in hopeful potentials in the current constellation of forces and possibilities (p. 304).

By looking at the relationships between "different levels such as the economic, political, cultural and psychological" the knowledge that is of greatest value or rather whose knowledge is of greatest value is determined. These benchmarks of achievement become the framework of formal educational institutions and in some cases the criteria of validation in a prior learning assessment and recognition program. With a broad discussion of the context of globalization and the substantive issue of knowledge and power, this section now focuses on the international

organizations that influence Canadian education policy. The purpose of the following section is

to provide examples of the non-governmental organizations and think-tanks that set international

education policy trends based on the interdisciplinary influences of globalization.

International Organizations That Influence Canadian Education Policy

With changing demographics, Canadian education policymakers need to use the current

climate of challenges faced by adult learners as an opportunity.

Paul Zakos of the First Nations Technical Institute of Ontario, for example, explicitly ties

RPL [Recognition of Prior Learning] to a growing demand and an urgent need for

improved access to education and employment opportunities for aboriginal Canadians

and newcomers from other cultures at a time when the mosaic of the Canadian population

is undergoing significant change and the non-white population of Toronto is approaching

50 percent (Michelson, 1997, p. 142).

International organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and

Development (OECD) continue to influence Federal initiatives in education. UNESCO, founded

in the post-World War II era in November 1945 has evolved with the society it serves.

Today, UNESCO functions as a laboratory of ideas and a standard-setter to forge

universal agreements on emerging ethical issues. The organization also serves as a

clearinghouse – for the discussion and sharing of information and knowledge – while

helping Member States to build their human and institutional capacities in diverse fields (http://www.unesco.org)

In the 1960s, UNESCO championed the concept of lifelong learning "where education is connected with democracy and the development of the individual" (Ibid).

Around 1980, however, the position of UNESCO was clearly weakened and the OECD had an increasing influence on educational policies. The OECD stressed the importance of adult education for economic development. The philosophy is based on a neo-liberal way of thinking, regarding education as an investment in 'human capital' and human resource development (Korsgaad, 1997, p. 18).

This change in priorities had been reflected in fiscal policy in the education portfolio of each province. Welton (2001) confirms this and highlights why it is important to consider learning and the influences of globalization.

Learning is now placed in the foreground by United Nations policymakers (e.g. in UNESCO and OECD) and by adult education theorists, primarily because of the deep transformation of forms of knowledge and skill in the new information work milieu and the reverberations of these transformations within the lifeworld (pp. 48-49).

The need exists to reprioritize the role of education and the concept of lifelong learning. According to Korsgaad (1997) education is the gateway to the global market for the following reasons:

- Education will give the individual better employment possibilities throughout life;

- It is a key variable for the competitiveness of the individual enterprise on the global labour market where symbol-work plays an increasing role;

- It is of overwhelming importance for the individual nation to persevere in the climate of international competition that has intensified as a result of the different free-trade agreements (pp. 17-18).

Another international influence on globalization and Canadian educational policy comes from adult learning organizations such as the International Council for Adult Education which holds international conferences – the latest of which was held January 17-19, 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Established in 1973, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is a global partnership of adult learners and adult educators and their organizations, and others who promote the use of adult learning as a tool for informed participation of people and sustainable development. In the emergence of knowledge-society the ICAE promotes lifelong learning as a necessary component for people to contribute creatively to their communities and live in independent and democratic societies. Adult and lifelong learning are deeply linked to social, economic and political justice; equality of gender relations; the

universal right to learn; living in harmony with the environment; respect for human rights and recognition of cultural diversity, peace and the active involvement of women and men in decisions affecting their lives (http:/www.icae.org.uy).

Significant policies are developed and adopted by policymakers at conferences held by this organization. Most significantly is the Hamburg Declaration adopted by the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, held in Hamburg, Germany in July 1997 (http:/www.unesco.org/education/vie/confintea/declaeng.htm). An example of the trickle down effect of international organizations developing policy statements is the report from the Study Mission to Europe (*Lifelong Learning and Quebec's English-Speaking Community*) prepared in 2003 for the Quebec Ministry of Education. The report cites the Hamburg Declaration as a key philosophical orientation of their work – clearly indicating the direct influence of an international organization on Canadian education policy planning (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Québec, 2003).

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the literature regarding globalization and how this phenomenon provides a context for the movement of knowledge capital across the globe – something that a prior learning assessment and recognition program is meant to facilitate. The final section of this chapter highlighted the international organizations which are the primary stakeholders in bringing the influencing factors of globalization to the Canadian adult learner.

It should be noted there is very little, if any, published literature that deals with prior learning assessment and recognition programs and globalization. This is an important

relationship to investigate considering the current situation of the adult learner and the need for

tools to facilitate the validation of their experiential knowledge in order to expedite their entry

into formal education or the labour market. In order to illustrate my point I return to the work of

Habermas (1968, 1981) and Freire (1970, 2004) who share a commonality in emphasizing the

use of communication and language awareness in the field of adult education. Both authors insist

that language carries meaning. For the adult learner the language used in a global market is laden

with the value system of the dominant group. For many it may seem as if they have entered a

conversation where everyone else is speaking in code. This can lead to issues of alienation,

marginalization and a disinterest in being an active stakeholder in the equation of education,

knowledge and society. The work of Habermas (1968, 1981) and Freire (1970, 2004) insist the

adult learner participate actively in this communication. As previously stated in chapter two of

this study, Habermas (1981) concentrates on the use of communicative action as a solution to

this issue and Freire (1970) offers the transformative work of changing the perception of the

learner through an understanding of the knowledge they possess and a move away from

regurgitating information given to them. The research problem of this study is inspired by the

work of these authors in the suggestion that change can be accomplished by the adult learner

themselves.

One of the core tenets of a prior learning assessment and recognition program is that the

participant recognize the value of their experiential knowledge. This study asks whether this is

the reality – do participants in a prior learning assessment and recognition program actually

acknowledge their own knowledge as valuable and how is this linked to the motivating factors

which cause the participant to return to formal education. In a prior learning assessment and

recognition program, good communication between the candidate and the content specialist is

imperative. In this relationship it is expected that a prior learning assessment and recognition candidate and their assessor would engage in communication that involves some form of shared coded language. For instance, a prior learning assessment and recognition candidate who is a carpenter should be discussing tools, methods of working with wood and the terminology appropriate to the trade. An outsider may feel lost and intimidated but the adult learner returning to formal education will feel reassured that the content specialist is speaking their language. The shared coded communication between an adult learner and content specialist should be able to happen regardless of where or how the candidate has attained their experiential knowledge. This is why prior learning assessment and recognition is an important tool to consider in facilitating the validation of experiential knowledge in the context of a labour market and education system influenced by globalization.

In the next chapter, I build on the contextualization of the case study by examining the methodology and procedures of case study research.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology and Procedures

"Seldom is an entirely new understanding reached but refinement of understanding is."

(Stake, 1995, p. 7)

Methodology

In conducting research for my methodology, I happened along a book with an imaginative play-on words for its title. Editors Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991) cleverly entitled their work *A Case for the Case Study*. The title is an appropriate double meaning considering the majority of the literature concerning case study research seems always to have a section reserved for the justification of implementing this methodological approach. Case study research is often lumped together with other qualitative research methods as being falsely considered a lesser method of choice in conducting accurate or "real" research. The authors reviewed in this chapter make it very clear that case study methodology is a legitimate, reliable and effective methodological approach for conducting research in the field of education. I intend to use this forum to make my own case for the case study. The focus of this chapter is to justify the use of case study as the methodology in my doctoral research and to demonstrate why a case study makes the most sense to gain a better understanding of my research question. The central research problem I address in my doctoral research is how it is essential that a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program acknowledge their own knowledge as valuable. To illustrate this question, I conducted a case study of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) located in Kingston, Ontario. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section defines what is meant by case study as well as provides a brief justification for this methodological approach. The second

section is an overview of the different types of case study and other methodological options that a researcher could pursue. The section is by no means exhaustive, however I felt it necessary to include this overview if only to differentiate and make apparent the logic of my own choices. Third is a discussion of the practical aspects of my research design, the development of research tools, collection of data and all other procedural issues related to the case study.

Defining Case Study

The literature reviewed for this chapter does not assume the reader will automatically understand what is meant when referring to 'case study' or case study research. In fact, the majority of the authors reviewed provided very concise definitions not only of the term "case study" but also of the educational context in which it was most appropriately implemented. Considering the breadth of usage that case studies are known to have, authors such as Merriam (1988) chose first to define case study by what it is not. "Case study research is not the same as case work, case method, case history, or case record" (p. 15). Similarly, Stake (1995) states "case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case" (p. 4). As well, most authors took great pains to emphasize the valid application of case study to the field of educational research in anticipation of the potential presupposition that this methodology is only applicable to pure and applied scientific inquiry. What was refreshingly surprising was the common thread among the authors of an encapsulated and succinct definition that was not repeated or simply restated from one author to the next. For instance, Berg (1998) suggests "case study methods involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions" (p. 212).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) relate case study to a snapshot of life. "A case study is a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle, it is the study of an instance in action" (p. 181). Stake (1995) seems to suggest a more outwardly view of the repercussions of case study research. "Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). Authors such as Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991) suggest a multidimensional aspect to case study research. "A case study is here defined as an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon" (p. 2). In similar fashion, Anderson (2001) suggests "a case study is a holistic research method that uses multiple sources of evidence to analyze or evaluate a specific phenomenon or instance" (p. 152). Finally, Merriam (1988) suggests specific areas where this multifaceted investigation could take place. "A case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (p. 9). The common thread among the authors reviewed is their insistence that a case study is an examination of one phenomenon. In this case study, the analysis is based on the relationship between prior learning assessment and recognition participants and their experience in a prior learning assessment and recognition process at the Royal Military College of Canada. Having defined the term, the authors then turn to the process of getting started. According to Anderson (2001) "the first major issue in case study research is to focus on the problem – what issue or issues are being investigated?" (p. 154). It is the role of the researcher not only to define the methodological approach chosen but also to justify its appropriateness to the research study. Like all methodologies, case study research comes with a set of limitations which will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Limitations of Case Study

According to Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991) "some of the most frequent critiques raised in regard to case studies have to do with how or whether such studies can cast light on propositions derived from prior research and on variable interrelationships" (p. 15). Considering the definition of a case study is the investigation of one phenomenon, this concern is not without merit. Merriam (1988) identifies three main limitations of a case study. First, is the idea that readers may assume the case study accounts for the whole when really it is "a slice of life" (p. 33). This relates to Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg's (1991) point of the variable interrelationships which may be assumed to take place by the reader but which may not be within the scope of the case study. Second, Merriam (1988) suggests that the researcher, as the primary instrument of data collection, is both a weakness and strength to the case study (p. 33). Third, are the issues related to ethics, biases, reliability, validity and generalizability that are inherent in any research design (p. 34). The issues of validity and reliability in case studies are substantial issues to be addressed especially as they relate to traditional research methodology. According to Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991):

> The data collection procedures associated with case studies frequently are said by mainstream quantitative researchers to be more suspect on the issue of reliability than those associated with quantitative procedures (p. 17).

This critique refers to the inability to recreate the research environment usually associated with qualitative case study design. There may also be the issue that a case study design and

report may not look like a traditional quantitative research design. Merriam (1988) attempts to address this issue with the following:

> Although rich, thick description and analysis of a phenomenon may be desired, one may not have the time or money to devote to such an undertaking. And assuming that one does take the time to produce a worthy case study, the product may be deemed too lengthy, too detailed, or too involved for busy policymakers and educators to read and use (p. 33).

Merriam's (1988) explanation of why a case study may not be deemed as useful as a traditional research design is one of those instances where the author felt the need to put in a benign critique of the research methodology they employ that does little to show its weakness. A proper case study should include an abstract or synopsis of its research questions, findings and analysis and therefore be of great use to policymakers and educators, who like everyone else, are generally busy people. A more substantial critique is found with Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991) and their concerns related to the role of the researcher.

> Consequently, it is sometimes said that the case study, like all other kinds of qualitative research, is vulnerable to the idiosyncratic biases of the investigator and can be at best descriptive because it can invoke no more general principles than those supplied by its own data. Therefore, the interpretations and claims of qualitative research are likely to be too unreliable to permit the construction of solid, scientific evidence (p. 18).

Perhaps the biggest issue to surmount in dealing with the weaknesses of one research design versus another is to accept these differences not as something that is bad or "less than" but rather something that is simply different. Qualitative research methodology does not attempt to be quantitative and vice versa. "In a qualitative approach to research the paramount objective is to understand the meaning of an experience. In contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts" (Merriam, 1988, p. 16). It is the issue of meaning making which adds a new dimension and strength to the case study.

Although the case study must rely on a good deal of judgment, exercised by the observer, the great strength of this form of research is that it does permit the observer to assemble complementary and overlapping measures of the same phenomena (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991, p. 19).

Using a case study does not limit the researcher to a fixed set of variables in order to gather data and make conclusions. A researcher implementing a case study is able to investigate and cross-reference a variety of data sources such as diaries, narratives, observations, interviews and newspapers in order to make meaning. The result is "a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon" (Merriam, 1988, p. 32).

Types of Case Study

In the literature differentiating types of case study, Yin (1993) is most often referred to as the authoritative voice in the field of educational research. Therefore, this discussion begins with his synopsis of the three main types of case study models:

An *exploratory case study* (whether based on single or multiple cases) is aimed at

defining the questions and hypotheses of a subsequent (not necessarily case) study or at

determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures. A *descriptive case study*

presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context. An *explanatory case*

study presents data bearing on cause-effect relationships – explaining which causes

produced which effect (p. 5).

In his work entitled *Applications of Case Study Research*, Yin (1993) ponders the

reputation of the exploratory case study as being the "notorious" precursor to some confusion

surrounding the viability of case study as an independent and reliable methodology. He states

that since the "fieldwork and data collection are undertaken prior to the final definition of study

questions and hypotheses…the exploratory case study, therefore, has been considered a prelude

to much social research" (p. 5). In other words, the case study is sometimes mistaken for not

being an 'end' in itself but only the means to an end. However, knowing that case study is an

accepted methodology in educational research, the question then becomes which type to

implement based on the researcher's discipline, research question and desired end-product.

In Merriam's (1988) work entitled *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative*

Approach, she succinctly defines the most popular case study choices. The case study types

identified below are not meant to be interpreted as a definitive list. Rather, these are a sampling

of those most often highlighted in the literature reviewed for this chapter. In no particular order

of importance to the field, there is the psychological case study where the focus is on the

individual and counts Freud and Piaget as role models (p. 25). Next, "the sociological case

studies attend to the constructs of society and socialization in studying educational phenomena"

(p. 26). In an ethnographic case study it is the "concern with the cultural context which sets this type of study apart from other qualitative research" (p. 23). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) "historical organizational case studies concentrate on a particular organization over time, tracing the organization's development" (p. 62). Merriam (1988) adds that "the historical case studies may involve more than a chronological history of an event. The key to historical case studies…is the notion of investigating the phenomenon over a period of time" (p. 25). Finally, there is the life history – "in this form of case study, the researcher conducts extensive interviews with one person for the purpose of collecting a first-person narrative" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 64). I consider this last entry an important addition to the list with the stipulation that there exists an entire field of narratology research that does not consider itself a part of, or a subsection, of case study methodology. There is also the issue of "sharing between disciplines".

Case study research in education seeks to understand specific issues and problems of practice. In so doing, case studies in education draw upon other disciplines such as anthropology, history, sociology and psychology both for theoretical orientation and for techniques of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1988, p. 23).

Procedures

As a facilitator of adult learners I have consistently found a contradiction between the literature regarding self-directed adult learners and the hesitancy and apathy of my student body. As previously mentioned, Merriam (1988) points to "studies of adult learners [which] revealed that some do not know how to take control of their own learning" (p. 42). Therefore, a conceptual problem arises since in this instance the assumption of self-directed adult learners and

the pedagogical reality are theoretically inconsistent. Herein lies the root of my research endeavor. Since my area of interest is in a prior learning assessment and recognition program where it is essential that a candidate be pro-actively aware of their experiential knowledge and its value, I was curious to see if this was in fact the case or whether participants need an orientation to the recognition and validation of their own learning. This conceptual problem was refined with the help of my supervisor and committee to be the following: The research problem to be addressed is how it is essential that a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program acknowledge their own knowledge as valuable and how this may be linked to the motivating factors which cause the participant to return to formal study. With a conceptual research problem established, the next step is to identify sources of data collection and formulate solid research questions.

Data collection

The authors reviewed for this study seem to deviate into two schools-of-thought concerning the issue of sources of data collection. Anderson (2001) represents most strongly the group who advocate distinct areas to search for case study data. He suggests that "in conducting case studies, one typically uses seven sources of evidence: documentation, file data, interviews, site visits, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts" (p. 155). This is a very concise list and valuable to the novice researcher who may not be comfortable or knowledgeable about various sources of data. Following suit with Anderson (2001) is Gillham (2000) who provides a somewhat broader idea of sources and suggests "documents, records, interviews, 'detached' observation, participant observation and physical artifact" (p. 21). The second group of authors highlighted here by Yin (1993), do not contradict the first, however they

are not as specific and may intimidate the first-time researcher who is expecting more guidance

in data collection for case study. "The method [case study] does not imply any particular form of

data collection – which can be qualitative or quantitative. The important aspect of case study data

collection is the use of multiple sources of evidence – converging on the same set of issues" (p.

32).

The research question

According to Stake (1995) "perhaps the most difficult task of the researcher is to design

good questions, research questions, that will direct the looking and the thinking enough and not

too much" (p. 15). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) suggest a more regimented view of the

research question and state "in contrast to the abstractness of statements of purpose, research

questions are phrased as concretely as possible in empirical or operational terms" (p. 37). It is the

commonly held view among the authors reviewed for this study that the more precise the

research questions, the better equipped the researcher will be in implementing their research

methodology. Gillham (2000) offers this advice: "good research questions are those which will

enable you to achieve your aims and which are capable of being answered in the research

setting" (p. 17). Here Gillham (2000) alludes to an important point to consider in any research

project, the idea of being realistic about one's goals. All research projects have limitations not

only to the scope of the study but to the importance or generalizability of the findings. With that

in mind, I wanted to conduct a research project that could have tangible benefits in the end-

product for both myself and the research participant(s).

Validity and case study

There are two means of addressing validity in a research study. It can either be *external* which is "concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam, 1988, p. 173) or *internal* which "deals with the question of how one's findings match reality" (p. 166). According to Yin (1993):

> You can achieve internal validity through the specification of the units of analysis, the development of a priori rival theories and the collection and analysis of data to test these rivals. Similarly you can achieve external validity through the specification of theoretical relationships from which generalizations can then be made (p. 40).

Essentially, internal validity asks the question of whether of not the findings capture what is really there while external validity questions how generalizable the results are of the research study. According to Merriam (1988) "what makes the case study work 'scientific' is the observer's critical presence in the context of occurrence of phenomena, observation, hypothesis-testing, triangulation...and so on" (p. 166). Although it is my contention that qualitative research methods, and case study in particular, should not be compared to quantitative methods with the intention of showing one is *better*, it is often the case in the literature where authors regress to language that justifies the qualitative case study as *scientific* and therefore legitimate. This is further developed when issues of reliability are addressed in case study research.

"Reliability refers to the extent to which one's findings can be replicated. In other words, if the study is repeated will it yield the same results?" (p. 170). This is traditionally a point raised in the area of quantitative research that justifies the *scientific* nature of the research methodology. According to Merriam (1988), Guba and Lincoln (1981) make a case for side stepping reliability

in favour of internal validity as they state "since it is impossible to have internal validity without reliability, a demonstration of internal validity amounts to a simultaneous demonstration of reliability" (p. 171). In fact, Merriam (1988) cites the preference of Guba and Lincoln (1985) to change the taxonomy of research design. They suggest "using the terms 'truth value' for internal validity, 'transferability' for external validity and 'consistency' for reliability" (p. 166). Regardless of the language used to describe how the process of reliability is achieved, it is still a necessary function of any case study analysis to present the data in a way consistent with rigorous research analysis. To that effect, the researcher may choose to concentrate on the area of achieving triangulation in their results. According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993) "triangulation prevents the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions; it enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the investigation" (p. 48). Further, Yin (1993) advises "an important clue is to ask the same question of different sources of evidence; if all sources point to the same answer, you have successfully triangulated your data" (p. 69). If triangulation is the goal, the researcher must set-out a clear design for the study and must identify accurate and worthwhile sources of data to collect.

Securing The Royal Military College (RMC) as a Research Site

The process of negotiating with the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) as a site to conduct my research began by speaking with personnel at the National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa in order to gain access. Once permission was granted, the initial understanding was that I would develop a survey and produce two hundred (200) packages which would include the following documentation: an introductory letter (Appendix B, p. 187), a letter of consent (Appendix C, p. 188), a survey questionnaire (Appendix D, p. 189), and a stamped envelope with

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my home address as recipient. Each package was then assembled in a large envelope with appropriate postage with both the sender and recipient addresses left blank. These two hundred packages were then couriered to my contact at RMC's Division of Continuing Studies (DCS) office where RMC's return address was affixed and a random sampling of their candidates and graduates were designated as recipients. This procedure allowed the safeguard of maintaining privacy and anonymity of RMC's Division of Continuing Studies student and alumni lists unless the individual participated in the study and returned the signed consent form. Once the packages were mailed a six-week period was designated by me for the return of the surveys. According to my contact at RMC, two hundred surveys were mailed, twenty-eight packages were returned to the Division of Continuing Studies office due to an incorrect address or not having a forwarding address available (this is a common issue in correspondence since most men and women in the Canadian Forces move every three or four years). There were a total of twenty-two completed surveys that I received which constitutes an eleven percent (11%) rate of return. There are many dissertations that will spend time discussing whether or not the rate of return of their surveys is significant – I feel that with consideration to the structural constraints imposed on the research process, this point is moot. The protocol of data collection established between myself and RMC meant I had no opportunity to pilot a survey or go back to candidates for feedback or further comments. Only one respondent indicated a return address (but no other contact information) and solicitation of phone numbers and/or email addresses was prohibited by the protocol of data collection. Only one survey participant offered to continue discussions by including an email address. However, based on a perceived positive rate of return by my contact at RMC and an increasingly amicable relationship, it was determined that I would have access to conduct interviews with both faculty and staff at RMC.

One of the rationales for allowing me such access is my agreement with RMC to share my results with them. The organization is seeking a benchmark or "snapshot" of their prior learning assessment and recognition process and how their model fits into the general prior learning assessment and recognition community within Canada. This brings me back to my initial point of seeking a research project that could have tangible benefits for all involved. I wish to take the lessons learned from this case study and implement prior learning assessment and recognition programming in a greater number of civilian educational institutions. For RMC's part, any potential conflict of interest which one might suggest that I am providing a service akin to a consultant is negated by the Royal Military College of Canada RMC's respect for and promotion of high academic standards including maintaining rigorous ethical procedures.

Conclusion

The design of the case study is the incorporation of all variables that have been previously discussed in this chapter. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) offer the metaphor of a funnel to best describe how the design of a case study should be represented. "The start of the study is the wide end. In time they [researchers] make specific decisions on what aspects of the setting, subject, or data source they will study. Their work develops a focus" (p. 62).

The methodology employed in a research project should not be dictated by the preference of the researcher. Rather, there should be an unbiased evaluation of the most appropriate methodology to use and a continual evaluation process of its appropriateness for the research problem. For this study, the appeal of case study methodology is the intimate picture which develops of a particular situation. As many of the authors reviewed for this study suggest, a case study is a snapshot of one phenomenon, one situation, one "instance in action" (Cohen, Manion

& Morrison, 2000, p. 181). My research problem is one such instance in action – the snapshot of a prior learning assessment and recognition program and the participant's acknowledgement of their motive for returning to school and awareness of their experiential knowledge. This chapter indicates that a case study is the most appropriate choice of methodology to employ for my research question.

This study now turns to the results and analysis of the case study at the Royal Military College of Canada. In the following chapter the results of the interviews and narratives are discussed within the framework established in chapter two, being the marginalization of the adult learner and the framework of critical perspectives of the relationship between the adult learner and the formal education system.

CHAPTER FIVE

Results and Analysis

The Purpose of This Chapter

This study has defined the terminology pertinent to the field of prior learning assessment and recognition and provided a context through a literature review of the current situation of prior learning assessment and recognition programming in Canada. This chapter highlights one such program. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings and analyze the data collected from the case study of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC). The structure of this chapter is divided into two: the first section is an introduction to RMC and the results of the mail survey. The second section is an overview of my RMC site visit and analysis of the interviews with faculty and staff.

The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC): A Context

The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) was established in 1876. The history of RMC is well documented in two books by Richard Arthur Preston (1969, 1991). The first book entitled *Canada's RMC: A History of the Royal Military College,* was published by the Royal Military College Club of Canada as a project to mark the centennial anniversary of Canada's Confederation – a fact not lost on RMC which is only nine years younger than Confederation. Then in 1991 as a follow-up to what amounted to be a first installment, Preston wrote *To Serve Canada: A History of the Royal Military College Since the Second World War*. Both works are dense in detail and provide illuminating anecdotes to serve as a comprehensive understanding of The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC). RMC is Canada's only military university and is

a fully bilingual institution located in Kingston, Ontario. According to the RMC website their mandate is:

> To educate and train future leaders of the Canadian Forces. We fulfill this role by providing cadets with an unparalleled combination of a superb university education, crucial leadership experience, intensive physical conditioning and complete second language instruction (accessed 23/01/2006 rmc.ca).

What I found most interesting in the history of RMC is the constant struggle to maintain a balance between producing an efficient military end-product (an officer) and an evolving curriculum of stringent academic standards to keep pace with society.

There are two options for mainstream candidates to enroll at RMC. The first is the Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) in the rank of Officer Cadet in the Canadian Forces. This program offers a subsidized plan with a monthly salary. Upon graduation, candidates have a degree from RMC and are granted a commission in the Canadian Forces to pursue a military career for a minimum of five years. However, if a candidate decides a military career in not for them, they are able to apply for release before the beginning of their second year. The other mainstream option is the Reserve Entry Training Plan (RETP) where a candidate can receive a military education without joining the Regular Canadian Forces. These candidates pay approximately $6,000 each year for tuition, accommodations and meals and upon graduation are granted a degree from RMC and serve in the Primary Reserve (www.rmc.ca./admission/index_e.html). The prior learning assessment and recognition process is offered through the Division of Continuing Studies (DSC).
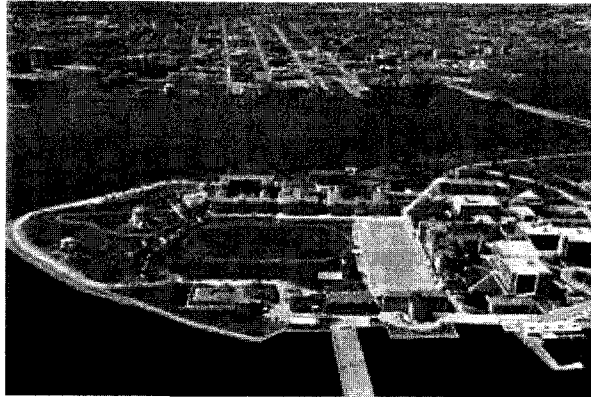
Overview of the Royal Military College (RMC) in Kingston, Ontario

The Royal Military College (RMC) crest.

The College opened in June 1876 as the Military College of Canada with its first class of

18 cadets (soon known as the "Old Eighteen"). The first Commandant, Lt-Col (later Lt-Gen)

E.O. Hewett of the Royal Engineers, served for eleven years, and it was he who chose the

College motto, "Truth, Duty, Valour" and selected the College badge. The title "Royal" was

granted by Queen Victoria in 1878 (http://www.rmc.ca/other/museum/history_e.htm#college).

The following is an example (and perhaps little known fact) of the profound influence the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) has had in the making of Canadian society.
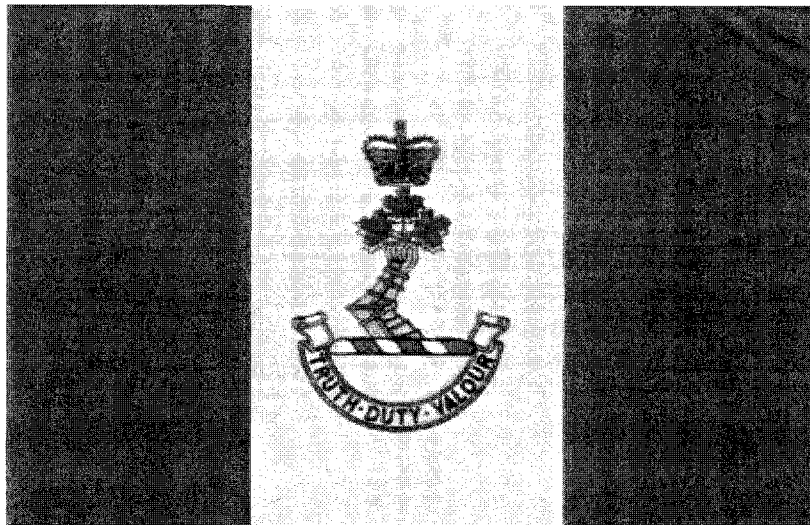
The design of the RMC flag proved to be instrumental to the final selection of the Canadian flag in 1965. In fact, the former RMC Dean of Arts, Deputy Director of the Army Historical Section and author of the book *The Story of Canada's Flag* (Ryerson, 1965), the late George F.G. Stanley, writes that during the great flag debate in 1965, he suggested that the design of the RMC flag be used as the new National flag, substituting the College crest for the styled red maple leaf. From his idea came the flag we know today (http://www.rmc.ca/geninfo/flag_e.html).

The Federal Government of Canada is governed through a parliamentary system where Ministers are responsible for differing portfolios. A listing of departments and agencies is available through the Federal Government's website. One such department is the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces – often referred to as DND (Department of National Defence). The Royal Military College is a university under the portfolio of the Department of National Defence. Table C is a diagram outlining this relationship.

Table C: RMC and the Federal Government of Canada

Canadian Government http://www.canada.gc.ca/
↓
Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/home_e.asp
↓
Royal Military College (RMC) http://www.rmc.ca
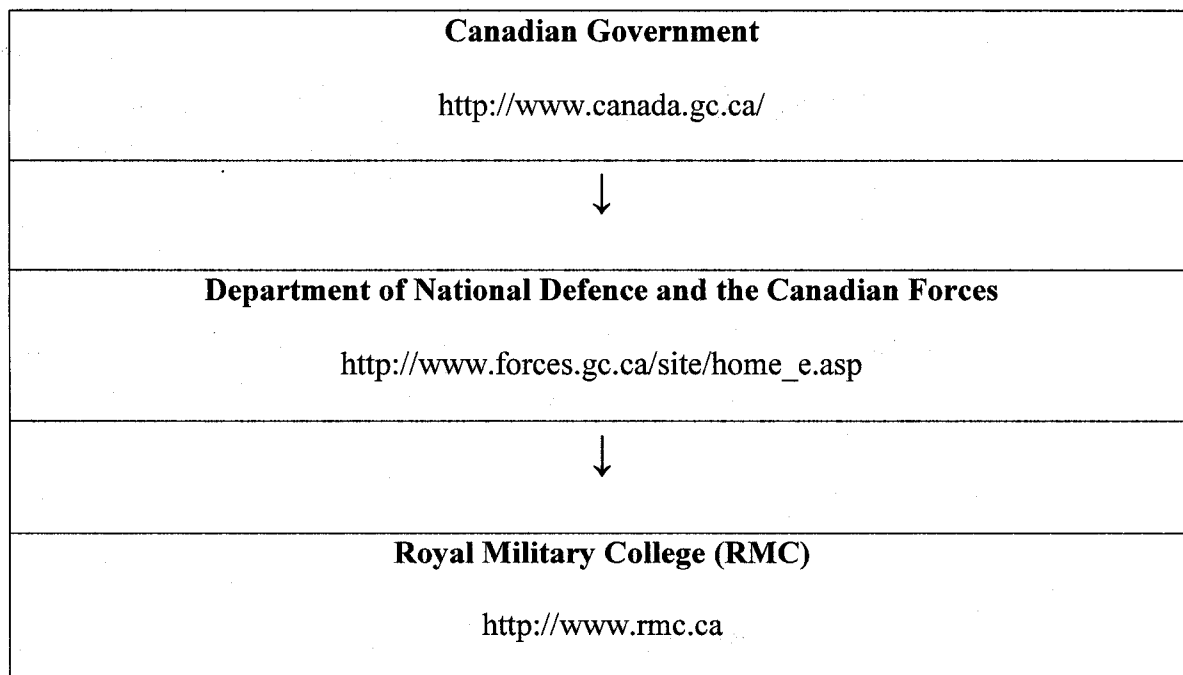
The Division of Continuing Studies and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

In the Division of Continuing Studies academic calendar in the section of admission and registration there is a subsection dedicated to "Prior Learning Assessments". There are three options for a candidate to have their prior knowledge accredited. The first method is a candidate can request advanced standing based on a transfer of credits from another post-secondary institution. The second is the assessment and recognition of professional courses. This method is most akin to the process involved in prior learning assessment and recognition programs in civilian institutions since it involves a consortium of faculty and advisors.

The Faculty Council of RMC, on the recommendation of a department, the Continuing Studies Committee and the Faculty Board of RMC, may also approve university credit based on:

- Military training and qualifications, whether obtained within Canada or abroad, recognized as learning at a university level;

- Some other professional training course or programme given by an organization other than a post-secondary institution;

- Special university-level courses designed to augment and "Top-up" military training and experience. (Division of Continuing Education Calendar 2005-2006, p. 9)

The third method of prior learning assessment involves a specific program – the Canadian Forces Military Studies Programme (Officer Professional Military Education). These assessments are conducted through the prior learning assessment and recognition section of RMC. It is through the Division of Continuing Studies that prior learning assessment and recognition was initiated, the policies and procedures drafted and presented for approval to the

University's Senate. The prior learning assessment and recognition personnel in the Division of Continuing Studies also act as a liaison between the faculty and administration for establishing equivalencies for requested credit for courses taken in the Canadian Forces.

Rationale for Studying The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC)

I met the Director of the prior learning assessment and recognition process in the Division of Continuing Studies at RMC at a Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) event. After our conversation it was clear that RMC would be an exciting institution to study and a good fit for my research objectives. There are three reasons for this – the first is that there exists a prior learning assessment and recognition program Director and a prior learning assessment and recognition process that is part of the institution's culture as reflected in the Division of Continuing Studies calendar and website. This may seem like an insufficient reason, however there are a limited number of Canadian prior learning assessment and recognition programs active with full-time staff who would be available for consultations and questions. Second, on the issue of the impact of globalization – RMC is an exceptional case study to exemplify how fundamentally educational policy is linked to the ebb and flow of societal issues. The candidates who participate in prior learning assessment and recognition process have most likely served in the Canadian Forces or are spouses of a serving member. These individuals have most likely had to travel and relocate multiple times in order to meet the requirements of their commissions. These individuals embody the intellectual capital or human capital that moves from one region of the country to another or from one country to another. Finally, RMC is of course a military institution under the portfolio and direction of the Department of National Defence Canada which is an interesting link to the origins of prior

learning assessment and recognition. Prior to securing RMC as a research site I was unfamiliar with the military and had only a marginal understanding and appreciation of the role the military and RMC has played in Canadian history.

Mail Survey

When it came time to send out the mail surveys, my contact at RMC cautioned me to expect almost half of the intended recipients would never receive the package. This statistic is inherent in the culture of the Canadian Forces where members move, on average, every three years in accepting new commissions either domestically or overseas. A random sample of candidates was selected starting in the year 1996 by the prior learning assessment and recognition office at RMC. Of the two hundred surveys sent out, twenty-eight were returned to the office of the Division of Continuing Studies as "return to sender" for either incorrect or incomplete addresses. I received twenty-two survey responses for a response rate of eleven percent (11%). The mail survey questionnaire was reviewed by both my supervisor and contact at RMC for both the validity and appropriateness of the questions (Appendix D, p. 189). The guidelines of the questionnaire are intended to encourage respondents to give anecdotal information. This was an attempt to extract a narrative voice of the participant who I was not permitted to meet with face-to-face. While securing RMC as my research site, the perimeters of my access to the prior learning assessment participants was set by the Department of National Defense Canada. The Director of the PLAR process at RMC acted on my behalf to communicate the intentions of my research to the Department of National Defense, and to flesh out the level of access I could have to RMC students and graduates. I was told the rationale to not permit direct contact with RMC's PLAR participants was due to privacy law. The advice I received was that if a participant of my mail survey responded and proactively included their coordinates, I was able

to follow that up directly. However, there was only one respondent who included only a return

mail address and so it was not statistically significant to pursue.

The guidelines to the narrative state: the purpose of this survey is to gain a better

understanding of the motivating factors for an individual to return to a formal education setting

using prior learning assessment and recognition. The ideal is to achieve anecdotal information

from you (the participant) – meaning, your story.

The following section is arranged as follows: the mail survey questions with the

corresponding answers are presented with little commentary. The analysis of the collected data is

found in the section entitled *Analysis of findings* in this chapter. As a synopsis of the results the

following common findings were identified:

- Both faculty and students are time conscious – these stakeholders do not want to

  waste time;

- The prime motivating factor for participation in the PLAR program is well

  understood by faculty (as correctly expressed in the mail surveys) – A university

  education is prestigious and is usually a necessity for career advancement;

- Military life, experience brings maturity and a sense of directed purpose.

Mail Survey Results

**Question 1: What did you think of the idea of Prior Learning Assessment and
Recognition (PLAR) when you first heard about it?**

I am always interested in the response people have when they are first introduced to the

concept of prior learning assessment and recognition. Question one is an attempt to gauge this

response of the active participants of the mail survey. Responses ranged from participants having

some contextual background about prior learning assessment and recognition to those still unsure if the concept is applicable to them.

Respondent: I am only vaguely aware of this (prior learning assessment and recognition) and unsure of how it applies to me.

Respondent: I was pleased and saw it as a means of spurring me to return to efforts at degree completion. I thought that the fundamental concept was not only sound, but was a logical departure from the academic community's fixation on institution-based learning versus "world-at-large" experience and learning.

The majority of respondents reported positive and appreciative comments that a prior learning assessment and recognition process exists for their benefit. These responses are consistent with the majority of people I speak with when introducing the concept of prior learning assessment and recognition, who then ask me "why haven't I heard of this before, is it new?"

Question 2:   Had you ever heard of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) before beginning your program at RMC? If yes, have you participated in a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program elsewhere?

Yes	No	No Answer (NA)
8	10	4

Programs identified: University of Manitoba, University of Ottawa, Téléuniversity in Quebec.

Question 3: How did you originally find (in terms of locating the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program to attend) the program at RMC?

How do people outside of the field hear about prior learning assessment and recognition? Respondents to the survey report overwhelmingly that their information came from either word-of-mouth through a friend connected with the program or through the website. More than half of the respondents had never heard of prior learning assessment and recognition prior to enrolling at RMC. Respondent comments reinforce the need to spread the word about prior learning assessment and recognition.

Respondent: I never found anything. The current Registrar at RMC was a teaching professor at the time. He is a friend of mine, and encouraged my participation. I made the initial call, and he helped facilitate my application.

Other responses indicate how prior learning assessment and recognition has become a valuable tool for RMC and their clientele.

Respondent: It was brought to my attention by my career manager in Ottawa. A degreed officer corps was one of the recommendations from the Somalia Inquiry. PLAR and telecommuting DL (Distance Learning) were a few of the programmes introduced or made more widely available to help foster a fully degreed CF [Canadian Forces] officer corps.

This response is an example of how prior learning assessment and recognition has become a part of RMC culture and recognized as a solution to facilitate their mandate.

Question 4:   What where your first impressions of the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program at RMC?

Very Good	Good	Not Good	Not Available (NA)
8	9	2	3

Although not intended to illicit a quantitative response, participants chose to provide a one-word answer and most followed-up with anecdotal responses to illustrate their point.

Respondent: Random courses and not too well administered but it got better.

One of the limitations of this mail survey is that respondents were never asked to provide information about how many courses or credits they were attempting to have recognized through the prior learning assessment and recognition option. Therefore a respondent who wished to have the maximum number of credits recognized or was one of the first candidates, may have dealt with issues of frustration in dealing with a program option in its inception. One of the "very good" responses demonstrates the importance of keeping a prior learning assessment and recognition process relevant to its potential participants.

Respondent: I found the program very good and well adapted to military experience. I did have

to deploy overseas several times and was called up for some other duties. On all

occasions, I found RMC very flexible in accommodating my military

requirements. The courses were interesting, and for the most part, the professors were dedicated and competent.

Another limitation to the data is the issue of not being able to pilot this survey or go back to these respondents and ask follow-up questions. It may have been difficult for some respondents to answer a question about their impressions of the prior learning assessment and recognition program if they were novices to the concept of prior learning assessment and recognition. One of the most interesting aspects of studying RMC's prior learning assessment and recognition option is the ability to chart their progress from the inception up to the present and speak to the people who made the plans and put it all in place. In this way, the implementation of this process is a benchmark for other institutions who would consider a prior learning assessment and recognition option. Of value to any institution or individual who is attempting to implement a prior learning assessment and recognition process is the initial response participants have – is the program user friendly? What are the first impressions?

Question 5: **Please describe the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program as it pertains or, in the case of being a graduate, as it pertained to you in the Department of Continuing Studies at the Royal Military College.**

Respondents took this as an opportunity to reiterate some of their first impressions and to begin to discuss their motivating factors for returning to formal education.

Respondent: Simply put the Bachelor of Military Arts and Sciences (BMASc) is a composite degree that relies heavily on military training for credits towards the degree. In my case I also benefited from a year of university courses prior to my enrollment

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in the CF [Canadian Forces] 16 years ago, as well as several RMC

correspondence courses before PLAR came into being. As such I needed a

relatively short period of time to complete the credits required to my degree.

Without PLAR I would have taken years to obtain a degree via distance learning

after work hours. It would have been prohibitive to the point where I would

probably not have pursued a degree unless I was given the opportunity to attend

university full time for two to three years.

This response leads directly to the heart of this research endeavour, which is to recognize

how prior learning assessment and recognition participants break down barriers to return to

formal education.

Question 6: **What has been the strongest motivating factor for you to pursue the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program at RMC?**

The majority of respondents cite "to obtain a degree" as their primary motivating factor.

Other motivating factors mentioned were: career advancement, credit without time spent in full-

time study and a personal goal. Since this research project is not a quantitative undertaking there

are no percentages or litmus scale results for which of these themes are of greatest importance to

the respondents. However, these responses are of great value to the administrator of a prior

learning assessment and recognition program in order to ensure they connect well with the

various motivating factors of their clientele.

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The Narratives

In your own words, please write a brief accounting of your academic/career experience prior to your involvement in the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program and what your expectations are for participating in the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program?

FOR GRADUATES: Have your expectations been met?

In lieu of having face-to-face interviews, I used the last question of the mail survey to elicit a narrative, a telling of the participant's story in their own words to see what words and sentiments were chosen to describe their experience with schooling and prior learning assessment and recognition. I was curious to see if prior learning assessment and recognition appealed to participants who mostly had a negative past-schooling experience or if this was not a motivating factor for participation. I was also interested in the language and meaning making the participants would assign to whether their expectations of participating in the prior learning assessment and recognition program have been met. There were three themes which emerged in the narratives which parallel responses in question six related to motivating factors for pursuing a prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC. The themes are: (not shown in order of importance to the respondents as this information was not asked for) employment retention, personal development and employment advancement.

Employment retention

Respondent: I attended one year of university before I realized I did not know what field of study to pursue. Rather than "waste" another year at university I decided to enroll in the Army and see how I enjoyed it. At the time you could enroll as an officer without a degree, based on high school marks. I spent the majority of my career

focusing on learning and mastering my profession with little time devoted to courses geared towards a formal degree. When the rules and regulations changed indicating the requirement for a "degreed" officer corps, I researched how best to accomplish this. In true military fashion, efficiency was a critical factor in determining the best course of action. The RMC program, followed closely by the University of Manitoba proved to be the best programs for myself. I chose RMC for its "portability" rather than for the degree itself. My expectation of the PLAR was to allow myself to obtain a degree in a relatively short time so that formal education did not occupy my life for an extended (years) time. While the degree itself may not carry much weight beyond the military my expectations have been met.

This participant's experience of needing a tool to facilitate a career transition, once rules and regulations had been changed, has been the same experience as daycare workers and adult facilitators in the Province of Quebec. In 2000 when I facilitated a course in portfolio development at a Montreal area CEGEP, the student base was entirely public daycare educators with extensive experiential learning but with no formal certification. A Provincial Government regulation requiring public daycare educators to be formally certified filled a classroom of prior learning assessment and recognition participants with a single motivating factor – job retention.

Personal development

The following narrative illustrates the burden many adult learners feel when a past academic experience is negative. This "inferiority" complex can lead to barriers in establishing a

culture of lifelong learning – where adults are trapped in the notion that adult education is for remedial purposes or that their experiential knowledge is not worth formal validation.

Respondent: I failed out of RMC in 1978/79. I carried an inferiority complex for nearly twenty years on account of not having a degree. When the CF mandated that all officers must have a degree it truly added to my feelings of being a "second class" officer. This despite several years of consecutive "outstanding" performance reports. To date I disagree with the assertion that degrees prove an officer's worth. I think this policy is causing the CF to overlook many good candidates for officer training that might bring practical skills and perspectives to military service. In the end, I needed to prove to myself, more than the system, that I could earn a degree. Having made this decision to proceed, it was an incentive for me to finish before my oldest son attended RMC. I did so. Having earned the degree has to some extent eliminated the inferiority complex, but I still disagree with the assumptions that have produced the "degreed officer corps".

It might be expected that participants in a mail survey, by nature of their willingness to participate, display traits of a self-motivated learner. In both the previous narrative dealing with a personally motivated goal of breaking an inferiority complex to the following narrative, the character of a self-motivated individual for personal development is evident.

Respondent: I had a CEGEP Diploma, which I felt for the reasons mentioned in previous questions, was not sufficient to achieve higher ranks. My decision to undertake

undergraduate studies was quick however, I did understand the requirements associated with the commitment. I had set my goal, and as any of my other decisions, I was determined to achieve it. The benefits outweighed by far the inconveniences, and so far, the mere fact that I followed this path, did allow me to get promoted. When my degree is completed in May '06, this should also give me more Merit points to reach higher ranks. So, yes I [have] already been successful even though I do not have a completed degree.

Employment advancement

The third theme to emerge from the narratives was job betterment, a common theme for many adult learners.

Respondent: I had no university experience prior to joining the CF. As it is mandated that all officers are to have a degree, this program has helped kick-start my studies. If my previous experience were not recognized, I am doubtful as to whether I would even have started, at this time in my career, to progress towards a university degree. My PLAR has motivated me by shortening the time required to achieve a degree.

This narrative offers insight into the applicability of prior learning assessment and recognition programming to furthering a culture of lifelong learning by removing barriers to adult learners. As we are now in what is considered a knowledge-based society, education

policymakers need tools to work with the adult and older adult population to explore ways in which they can acquire current and pertinent knowledge and remain productive members of society and have their prior knowledge acknowledged and validated.

Respondent: I graduated high school (grade 13) in Ottawa during 1975. After working for a year, I attended Algonquin College in Ottawa, graduating from the cartographic technician program in 1979. I worked two years as a cartographer, at starvation wages, then quit out of sheer boredom. I investigated the Canadian Forces on the advice of an older co-worker. I could have joined the CDN Forces as a "skilled entry" map reproduction technician, but chose air navigator instead, as flying sounded a lot more exciting (the skilled entry selection process is itself a type of PLAR, where previous academic/work experience is matched/assessed against military requirements). Air navigator training followed basic military training in 1981. It consisted of an 11 month air navigation course, followed by another 6 month course on the specific aircraft type that I could be flying on. Over the years numerous other courses have been taken to broaden my operational and staff abilities. These courses range from 1 week to 6 months in length. In 1998, at the suggestion of a friend, I signed up for my first RMC history course. I was somewhat apprehensive, since I had been out of school for so long. However, I enjoyed the course and did well on it, so I decided to work towards a degree. This was the point that the PLAR took place. I received some credit for my military training, but none for my college diploma, as it was too ancient, I guess. I continued to plug away at it, one course at a time, and graduated in May 2005

with a Bachelor of Military Arts and Science degree from RMC. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks? I think that the PLAR and the subsequent credits that were granted were a big incentive to keep going. With the pressures of family and career, I often thought of quitting due to a lack of time. Knowing that I was already part-way there with my PLAR credits provided an incentive to continue.

Site Visit

The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) is Canada's only military university. RMC looks and *feels* like a civilian university campus with its groupings of dormitories, playing fields, and buildings clearly marked for disciplines of academic study. The exception to this picture becomes obvious as one does a quick tour of the main grounds and is confronted with aircraft and gunnery which is on display. RMC's grounds are steeped in history and tradition as is evident from the parade grounds. Not that one is left with the impression that RMC is an institution lacking or deficient in facilities, but when one is acclimatized to the history of the institution, it comes as no surprise to see that they have made the most of what they've got. For example, renovating the former married residence row-houses (earmarked as historically significant) to keep the façade but add a modern facility as an extension which houses the Division of Continuing Studies. Of all the striking impressions that my site visit made upon me it was the punctuality of each and every interview. It seemed to me that the entire campus was running, coherently, on the same stopwatch – a very different experience than in most civilian universities where time is not necessarily of paramount importance.

Interviews With Faculty

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with various Deans and faculty of the Royal

Military College and staff from the prior learning assessment and recognition administrative

team which is run through the Division of Continuing Studies. In similar fashion to the mail-

survey questionnaire, the interview questions (Appendix E, p. 193) were sent to both my

supervisor and contact at RMC for approval. Prior to the interview the questions were distributed

to the interview candidates for their consideration. Of the interview candidates, three of the eight

participants will be discussed in this work. The rationale is that the interviewees were reiterating

many common points.

Question 1: What did you think of the idea of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) TC/CG when you first heard about it?

Both faculty members did not answer the question directly however, they did cite

examples from their memories of their first encounter with the concept of prior learning

assessment and recognition and how this could facilitate a learner's entry into a formal education

institution and prevent the duplication of work in an academic setting.

Participant A: It was a work-driven, if you will, or an institutionally driven attempt to find ways

and means of not duplicating, wastefully duplicating effort, which is the

underlying principle of PLAR.

Question 2: What were your first impressions of the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) plans related to CG and the BMASc degree at RMC?

Participant B: Well, I mean, because I have the respect for the military as a profession, I believe

that some of the things that they learn there are academically – as academically

rigorous as you could do in a classroom. The problem always is how it's

evaluated and can you fail. You know, there is always a tendency in the military

to adopt a Woody Allen approach, which is 90% of life is just showing up. And,

on the other hand, the military are in a very tight position with regard to time,

these officers are pre-selected, they don't have lots of time. So, I think it's – it

was a good concept, and as I say, I'm always caught between academic arrogance

and military efficiency.

Participant A: Personally, I like the idea. PLAR, I think at most universities it's regarded as

something like last week's cabbage and you know, as a bad odor and is not very

palatable.

The responses of both faculty lead into a discussion of Question 6 which was then used as

a follow-up question to Question 2.

**Question 6:   How would you describe the reaction by academic faculty (staff) (or your
reaction – dependent on participant) to the introduction of non-traditional
PLAR (CG) credits into RMC programs?**

Question 2 and question 6 are essentially asking the same thing of the interview

participant but in a different way. In question 2, I was hoping to elicit a personal response to the

introduction of the concept of prior learning assessment and recognition whereas in question 6

the attempt was to get a feel for the reaction they had as professionals within a department of

study.

Participant B: I found that if I could look for ways to facilitate it, then I would while maintaining

a – maintaining academic integrity.

Participant A's comments should be read with an understanding of the context of our discussion – which was the history of implementing and developing prior learning assessment and recognition at RMC.

Participant A: We'd taken some pains to be conservative about it and to insist it to be – full

academic involvement and that we would always follow due process and it would

be transparent. So, any PLAR that was done, any – any assessment that was done

was always done by an academic department and any decisions that were made –

the committee structure was this, we had a Continuing Studies Committee, which

had a representative from each department and it made recommendations to

Faculty Board, and then which made which - whose decisions would be ratified

by Faculty Council and seldom goes beyond that…our principles were embedded

firmly in recognized academic process, involving academic departments in a – in

a – in a serious way, and make it transparent. And I think that – promises success

frankly.

Participant C: They [Faculty] wanted to make sure that there was merit in the credit that was

being given so even though the process was unquestionably correct, the followed

the right process – it hadn't involved as many faculty as we might have liked, so

we still had a number of faculty members that were uncomfortable with the PLAR

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process. So over the past couple of years, what we've been doing is, we've been involving faculty in the PLAR process every step of the way. Credits of all types are reviewed by faculty members, via Deans, so the Deans see every single review that is completed, not just the credit granted, but all the transfer credits, credit granted, both, um, denied and recommended credit, and they sign off on that.

Question 3: **What do you feel attracts students to RMC programs that recognize non-traditional forms of Prior Learning (CG) ?**

This question is asked of faculty and administration to assess if they are in-sync with the motivation factors of the participants in the prior learning assessment and recognition process as expressed in the mail surveys.

Participant A: Well, we are spending a lot of time, I think, these days acquiring – our people are spending a lot of time acquiring credentials. There is a perhaps surprising, perhaps not, demand for recognizable civilian credentials. I talked – I started to talk about the four reasons, right. One is the national affinity with military profession, the prestige that goes with it. Another is the opportunity for promotion. I forgot the fourth in which preparation for a second career. A lot of people leave the military early and have something that's recognizable on city streets; it's a real bonus when you are looking forward. So for second career purposes or other purposes, and of course, we have a few folks I think who just like to collect, as it's relatively easy in the Forces. Look at me, I have got three Master's you think, you

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know this is something that you want as the professional student. In fact we always oblige our folks to be professional students.

Participant B: We send a message that we're interested in – what in them – in their background. We do respect what they've done before they got here. And although we, you know, we consider – we've higher academic standards, it's – were not necessarily an ivory tower. I don't – we are connected to the rest of the world here. But you have to understand the culture here is, we're here to serve – to provide educational services to the Canadian Armed Forces, the Department of National Defense, high quality educational services. In the civilian university, I don't think faculty have the sense that they are there to serve the people of the province or the government, even though when it comes down to dollars and cents that's where they get their money.

Question 4: **RMC has an exciting history of academic development – for example gaining degree-granting rights. How do you think the development of the Division of Continuing Studies (DCS) fits into the culture at RMC?**

Question 5: **How do you think the introduction of PLAR for non- traditional courses (CG) fits into the culture at RMC?**

Questions 4 and 5 were addressed as one by interview respondents – this was only obvious when reading the transcripts of the interview. Perhaps this was due to proximity of the questions and that the questions were distributed prior to the interviews. The rationale for this speculation is based on the answers received.

Participant B: Well, the culture of RMC was always predisposed in this way – where because

we had been – we have an addition to the cadet, which are as you know, are 18 to

22 year olds, whom I have been teaching and been involved in enlisted personnel

and members who had come back for degree and a commission who used to be 30

to 35 year old people who've never been to the college, they joined the armed

forces when they were 17. So that – the attitude here is actually having taught at

civilian university, is we're here to actually help these people succeed and also,

the culture here is very one-on-one. I mean, we discuss students' individual cases

a lot more than I think they do at a civilian university.

**Question 10:   What changes, if any, would you suggest be made to the PLAR processes at
RMC?**

Participant A: …we're not recruiting from the - from the immigrant communities and the recent

immigrant communities and I think, being able to write equivalencies earn these

recognition I don't – I don't see us probably recruiting heavily from people who

have - who have just been in the county a year or two. But they are nonetheless

people who have become citizens after three or four years who have probably

driven taxis for three years but have other skills that we could use recognizing

that.

Participant B: I'd like to see it move more – more – not automatically, but more in a pattern. On

the other hand, we have so many different students here and they are all different

that if you try and cut corners it's somebody who is not getting a degree and that –

that could be have promotion decisions, you know, as well as, I think, again with a senior officer, mid rank officer it's – where they're used to success.

Participant C: One of the things we would like to do, but it's a question of resources and so on, is that we right now are very student driven in what we do. When we're looking at what courses in DND [Department of National Defence], for example, would actually earn university level credit, we choose which ones to forward through faculty for review by a student making a request, but we sometimes have the – the CS schools asking us to look at a course, and right now we're not in a position to review those.

..the other that's sort of related to that is portfolio PLAR – this is a form of portfolio PLAR, because of course when we're looking at all the courses that a person has taken at DND, we're looking at their portfolio that they might hand into another institution in a portfolio course...But, at some point, and I don't think yet, but at some point, this institution might be prepared to look at the part of the portfolio which is the student's narrative of what they have done in combination of courses where, let us say we look at 20 courses and three of them happen to earn credits, but the other 17 don't, but in combination that 17 might be worth four additional credits.

Common Findings

There were three common themes that emerged from the data collected between the surveys of prior learning assessment and recognition participants and the interviews with the faculty and staff of RMC. The themes are: Both faculty and students are time conscious – these stakeholders do not want to waste time; second, the prime motivating factor for participation in the prior learning assessment and recognition program is well understood by faculty (as correctly expressed in the mail surveys) – A university education is prestigious and is usually a necessity for career advancement; and lastly, military life, experience bring maturity and a sense of directed purpose.

Analysis of Findings

Brookfield (2005) states, "evaluation is an exercise of the power by some to judge the efforts of others" (p. 32). This resonates with the central research question of this study – does a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program recognize the value of their experiential knowledge? In a prior learning assessment and recognition program it is the demonstration of experiential knowledge or competency to the "expert" or "content specialist" where evaluation takes place – there is a form of judgment. This is a process and, as Brookfield suggests, it is a political landscape to be negotiated.

In the case of RMC, it is not the learner who is responsible for justifying their experiential learning in the form of demonstrations or a narrative-based portfolio. Here the learner makes a request to the prior learning assessment and recognition office through the Division of Continuing Studies to validate credit they have received elsewhere. The process then removes the learner from the equation by concentrating on the course curriculum under

investigation – does the request meet academic standards at RMC and is there the potential for an equivalency. At a Canadian Association for Prior Learning and Assessment (CAPLA) conference in October 2006, I presented the initial findings of this case study. In the audience was Alan Thomas (prolific writer and researcher in the field of prior learning assessment and recognition) who challenged the notion that the process at the Royal Military College (RMC) is not actually a prior learning assessment and recognition program since they only conduct credit transfers. My answer to this challenge is that the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC does one aspect of many options available to demonstrate experiential knowledge and competencies. Credit transfer is, at this point, the most feasible and appropriate tool to use for candidates wishing to enter a degree program at RMC. According to the interview with the Director of prior learning assessment and recognition process at the Division of Continuing Studies at RMC, the ideal next step would be to include portfolio prior learning assessment and recognition in the options of demonstrating experiential knowledge and competencies. This would involve more training of staff and faculty, new policies and procedures and more resources directed to the prior learning assessment and recognition office.

Since most operating prior learning assessment and recognition programs in Canada are relatively new, it is not unusual to speak with the person or people whose job it was to initiate the program. When I am able to speak to these individuals, I am always curious to know how they got the word out about the offering, and how the news of recognizing learning that takes place outside of the classroom is received. In the development of the mail survey, I tried to ask these same questions to the prior learning assessment and recognition participants in order to understand their perspective.

Question 3 to the PLAR participants asks, "how did you originally find (in terms of locating the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program to attend) the program at RMC?" What is not indicated in the question or in the responses, is when the respondents first entered the prior learning assessment and recognition process relative to the establishment of the process itself. Was the website up and running with prior learning assessment and recognition policies and procedures when these respondents were looking for a program? Was the information accessible? Was the prior learning assessment and recognition process being promoted either on campus, through alumni or the general public? Did individuals involved in guidance services to learners know about the process? In an interview, this question could have potentially been followed-up with a question about whether the prior learning assessment and recognition participant felt pressure, in some way to pursue a degree since, as one respondent states: "a degreed officer corps was one of the recommendations from the Somalia inquiry". What impact does the recommendations from the Somalia inquiry have on the motivation of individuals in the Canadian Forces to find a program, such as prior learning assessment and recognition, that might facilitate the return to formal study in order to earn a degree? The connection between the recommendation for a degreed officer corps, and the utility of the prior learning assessment process as an incentive to earn a degree, only came to light from the analysis of the data, and therefore, was not possible to follow-up with further inquiry.

Question 4, which asks about the prior learning assessment and recognition participants' first impressions of the process at RMC, is a very open-ended question. In retrospect, the question is too broad and should have had sub-questions such as (1) How would you describe your impression of the organization of the PLAR process and PLAR office at RMC? (2) Describe your level of satisfaction with the amount of information made available to you about

the PLAR process at RMC; and (3) Did you participate in any orientation session to the PLAR process at RMC? There are two respondents to this question who answered "not good" as their first impression of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC. Only one chose to expand on their answer by providing the following statement, "random courses and not too well administered but it got better". A follow-up interview with this participant would have been able to clarify, if in fact, the respondent understood the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC and where the gaps might be in communication between the prior learning assessment and recognition administration office and the participant.

The purpose of asking the mail survey participants to write their narrative, is to capture the language that is used to describe their respective experiences with prior learning assessment and recognition. Here, I am interested in the meaning making associated with the words the respondent would use to describe their experience. According to Rossiter (2002), "a beginning point for a discussion of narrative and story in adult education is an understanding of narrative as a broad orientation grounded in the premise that narrative is a fundamental structure of human meaning making" (p. 1). Since there is little research in the area of the qualitative experience of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant, the use of a narrative can contribute to the development of a more personalized portrait of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant. This would be an improvement from relying on the often generalized portrait of an adult learner when referring to a candidate in a prior learning assessment and recognition program.

It is the particularity of the story – the specific situation, the small details, the vivid images of human experience – that evokes a fuller response than does a single statement

of fact. This detail provides the raw material for both cognitive appreciation and affective response to the experience of another person (Ibid, p. 3).

Prior to the writing of my dissertation, I had only one experience with the field of narratology, which was in the form of an attempt to write my own narrative for course work undertaken during my masters degree. When I was developing the mail survey for this case study, I knew, under the guidelines given to me by the Department of National Defence, that I would not have the opportunity to follow-up my questions with an interview or second survey. I chose to include the request to write a narrative in order to capture a holistic picture of the participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program. I was then faced with the following conundrum: if I request a narrative in order to analyze the meaning making of the participant, does it matter if the participant is not able to aptly express their experience on paper? But isn't that what the research is supposed to be about – the natural choice of words the respondent would use to describe their own experience? The following quote by Clough (2002) stayed with me as I awaited the responses from the mail survey. Would the mail survey participants be able to communicate "a deeper view of life"?

> Narrative is useful only to the extent that it opens up (to its audiences) a deeper view of life in familiar contexts: it can make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar. As a means of educational report, stories can provide a means by which those truths, which cannot be otherwise told, are uncovered (p. 8).

From the literature in the field of narratology (Riessman, 1993, Rossiter, 2002; Clough, 2002; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), it is apparent that the researcher must put all expectations of what to hope for aside, and instead, concentrate on how to put into context the interpretation of the meaning making that emerges from the narrative.

Narratives are interpretive and, in turn, require interpretation. They do not speak for themselves, or provide direct access to other times, places or cultures. Our analytic interpretations are partial, alternative truths that aim for believability, not certitude, for enlargement of understanding rather than control (Riessman, 1993, p. 22-23).

In order to ground my analysis of the data received, I turned to the literature that defines narratives and narrative analysis. According to Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998), narrative research refers to:

...Any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials. The data can be collected as a story (a life story provided in an interview or a literary work) or in a different manner (field notes of an anthropologist who writes up his or her observations as a narrative or in personal letters). It can be the object of the research or a means for the study of another question (p. 2).

In their work entitled *Narrative inquiry: experience and story in qualitative research*, authors Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provide a personal rationale for the use of narratives as a means of representing experiences. "For us, narrative is the best way of representing and

understanding experience. Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it" (p. 18).

Most respondents to the narrative chose to write in a chronological order how they came to the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC. The majority of the narratives indicate the participant has completed or is near completion of their degree. Nearly all the narrative respondents used the word "incentive" in some form or other to summarize their acceptance and support of the prior learning assessment concept and process. The "incentive" to be given advanced standing seems to have tremendous importance to the respondents of the mail survey. For some it was the incentive to begin the process, for others, it acted as a reminder of why the completion of the degree was an attainable goal. As well, the incentive to complete a degree in less time, is mentioned in almost all the narratives. The issue of time is a common variable understood by both prior learning assessment participants and faculty to be a key motivating factor to the acceptance and support of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC.

From the total number of surveys received (22 returned mail surveys), 3 of the surveys had minimal contributions in the section of the narrative compared to the others. For example, one respondent drew an arrow to the line "FOR GRADUATES: Have your expectations been met?" and wrote, "Yes, the level and quality of education provided by RMC was excellent and I thank them for that. Well done". Although an endorsement for RMC, this does not qualify as a narrative. Why did this happen? Why was the narrative not written? Was the idea of completing the survey disregarded by some because they were not willing to write or share their story? Robert Fulford (1999), in his work entitled *"The triumph of the narrative: storytelling in the age*

of mass culture," makes the argument that the contemporary individual may feel overwhelmed by the effects of "mass storytelling". He asks the poignant question: "how does this affect those who feel they do not possess stories? Is it possible that being continuously surrounded by compelling stories makes us uncomfortable with our own less impressive tales of success and failure" (Ibid, p. 16). Is the respondent who answered honestly that his motivation to return to formal study, after failing out of RMC in 1978/79, an exceptional case? Would that same individual have submitted a narrative if he had not completed his degree successfully? Fulford (1999) makes the connection between the value of our own story and a feeling of self-worth. This theme is congruent with the question of whether a candidate in a prior learning assessment and recognition program, recognizes the value of their own knowledge. "There's poignancy in the idea of an individual thwarted by the lack of a good story. We have no terms for it: we might call it narrative deprivation, or we might say the person is story-poor. A good story, perhaps, is essential to a sense of self-worth" (Ibid, p. 20).

The narratives for this case study, tell personal stories that are all within the same relational context: the individual and formal education. Previously, the discussion of the adult learner and his or her relationship to formal education has been explained as a context that is politically charged and potentially difficult to navigate. In chapter two of this work, the section entitled "the marginalization of the adult learner," is a brief discussion of the contributions of critical theorists and critical pedagogues that better inform the reader of the challenges faced by the adult learner population. In the following section, the three themes identified by the mail survey respondents as being significant motivating factors to return to formal study, are discussed within the framework established in chapter two. The three themes are:

- Employment retention

- Personal development

- Employment advancement

I have twice been a facilitator for courses where it was not the decision of the learner to sign up and participate – this decision was made for them by someone else. In both instances, a change in government regulation required a new certification as a prerequisite for working in their particular field. In both cases, my adult learner group initially felt coerced to be back in the classroom. Their sole motivation in completing my course was employment retention. Not only was the program of study taxing on the learners' personal time, and seen as an interference with other commitments, for some it was viewed as remedial, demeaning and oppressive. According to Quinnan (1997), there still exists the misconceptions associated with adults returning to school. "The inference here being that, to be back in school, adult students must have failed to pass muster in a competitive job market" (p. 54). Is this the case for prior learning assessment and recognition participants at RMC? There was not one respondent, to the mail survey, who expressed a direct link between employment retention and their participation in the prior learning assessment and recognition program. However, one respondent certainly makes the inference that employment retention is a motivating factor for a return to formal study. The respondent states: "I had no university experience prior to joining the Canadian Forces. As it is mandated that all officers are to have a degree, this program has helped kick-start my studies". The inference is that if this individual wishes to remain an officer in the Canadian Forces, they need to pursue and complete a university degree. Hence, a return to formal study in order to retain their employment.

As I stated previously, prior to this work, I had very little exposure to the military and therefore was not aware of the amount of training that is provided to the members of the

Canadian Forces. While conducting my interviews on-site, one faculty member stated the

Canadian Forces "has some of the best over trained individuals around," and that the culture of

the military demands "a lifelong learner". Having studied Arthur Preston's (1969, 1991) work,

related to the history of RMC, this comment did not surprise me. The Royal Military College

was founded on principles of rigorous training of its cadets both in an academic and military

setting. According to George Papadopoulos (2002), in his chapter entitled "lifelong learning and

the changing policy environment," he suggests that educational policy making is cyclical in

nature and we are currently in a situation where the concept of lifelong learning is in the

"dominant position" (p. 40). Further, he states:

> In contrast to previous paradigms driven by cultural and social objectives, the driving
>
> forces behind the current advocacy of lifelong learning are economic-cum technological
>
> imperatives and the needs of increasing knowledge and information-based economies,
>
> operating in globalized markets" (p. 41).

The drive to move Canadian society away from a resourced-based economy to a

knowledge-based society is having an impact on Canadian education policy making. If the

recommendations of the Somalia inquiry did influence the Canadian Forces to change their

policy to require all officers to hold a university degree, that would directly affect the current and

alumni population of RMC. As one mail survey respondent states: "When the Canadian Forces

mandated that all officers must have a degree it truly added to my feelings of being a second

class officer". The prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC facilitated the

return to formal study for the mail survey respondents who were able to achieve a sought after

goal, and ultimately, gain a sense of personal development. To continue with the same

respondent from the previous quote, he says: "having earned the degree has to some extent eliminated the inferiority complex, but I still disagree with the assumptions that have produced the degreed officer corps".

In his essay, "Technology and science as 'ideology'", Habermas (1970), discusses Marcuse's interpretation of domination as technology over man, where man becomes repressed in the mode of production.

In Marcuse's judgment, the objectively superfluous repression can be recognized in the intensified subjection of individuals to the enormous apparatus of production and distribution, in the deprivatization of free time, in the almost indistinguishable fusion of constructive and destructive social labor (p. 83).

In laymen's terms, it's easy to get caught up in the rat race and lose yourself to it. As Brookfield (2005) states, one of the primary goals of the Frankfurt School was to develop tools to change this type of situation.

"Critical thinking is really the ability of individuals to disengage themselves from the tacit assumptions of discursive practices and power relations in order to exert more conscious control over their everyday lives" (p. 12). For most people, a primary preoccupation in their everyday lives is the state of their employment. From the data received from the narrative respondents at RMC, this is evident. Moving up the ranks and hierarchy is mentioned in most narratives as a motivating factor to the return to formal study. What is not clear is whether the mail survey respondents see themselves as individuals in a state of being "repressed by the mode of

production". A follow-up interview may have been able to shed more light on the preoccupations of everyday life of the mail survey respondents.

When speaking directly about the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC, the language used by faculty and the PLAR administrators, is also laden with meaning making. The commonality for this group is the use of the term (or synonym to the word) "conservative". This refers to the manner in which the prior learning assessment and recognition process was established and is run. The antonym for "conservative", in this context, would be "aggressive". The conservative nature of the development and implementation of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC acknowledges the hesitancy of critics of the concept of PLAR. To illustrate, Participant A in the on-site interview states: "I think at most universities it's regarded as something like last week's cabbage and you know, as a bad odor and is not very palatable". From the administrators' perspective, there was a need to implement the prior learning assessment and recognition process using the most stringent academic processes. This was accomplished by going through the hierarchy of RMC's councils until the prior learning assessment and recognition process was ratified by the Senate. In terms of the faculty, there seems to be acceptance of the prior learning assessment and recognition process, however, it is tempered with recommendations for streamlining the process further. Changes to the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC were discussed in question 10.

In question 10, there was no commonality in language between the faculty and prior learning assessment and recognition staff. The question asks: "what changes, if any, would you suggest be made to the PLAR processes at RMC?" Respondents discussed issues of recruitment, streamlining and the introduction of portfolio-based prior learning assessment and recognition. Since the anonymity of the interview respondents must be kept, it is not possible to label who

said what. However, I am able to say that the answers provided, do reflect the priorities of each respondent as it relates to their role at RMC. In this respect, the individuals are considering their vested interests in seeing the process through to the next stage of its development.

From the current state of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC it seems evident from the interview transcripts that both faculty and the administrative prior learning assessment and recognition team are conscious to maintain the interests of the learner at the forefront. As Participant B mentioned in the on-site interview, the results of whether or not a credit is granted or not may have repercussions on an individual's career advancement. Putting the interests of a learner first is sound andragogical practice, it is also politically progressive.

How do we understand the role of education in responding to and helping to form collective and progressive political action? What is the place of politics in this? Is it possible to alter these politics? To cope with these and similar questions, we need critical theoretical, empirical, and historical tools; and we need examples of how these tools might be used productively (Apple, 2003, p. 3).

Here the tool of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC is defining the role of education as one that is inclusive of experiential knowledge and validates an individual's efforts to return to formal education. It also demonstrates that both faculty and students are conscious of the barriers associated with the return to formal education. From the narratives and interviews, it seems that the issue of residency (time constraints) was the paramount barrier for most.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000) "we need to continually ask questions about the way narrative inquiry illuminates the social and theoretical contexts in which we position our inquiries" (p. 124). The central research problem or inquiry of this study is whether a prior learning assessment and recognition participant values his or her own experiential knowledge. The use of narrative inquiry allowed for the voice of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant to be heard – an experience not often investigated. Since every individual experiences life in their own way – narrative inquiry is a necessary methodology to employ in order to capture the true picture of what is under investigation. As an analogy, I see narrative inquiry as casting a fishing net out into the ocean and then slowly reeling it in to discover the treasure trove of what has been caught in the net. From the mail survey, respondents voiced their motivations and experience through their narratives. Distinct themes emerged and were captured in the following sub-headings: personal development, job retention and career advancement. These are common issues that preoccupy the business section of most North American newspapers. What makes this group of individuals unique is that they have transcended their initial situation and have now created a new paradigm in which they see themselves and their experiential knowledge. In so doing, (perhaps without the in-depth theoretical analysis of a critical pedagogue) they have questioned the basic ideological framework of their existence. As an adult learner, they acknowledged the demands of a knowledge-based society and asked the difficult question of "how can I be apart of this?" The irony is that the knowledge-based society is full of institutions both educational and governmental that espouse policies on lifelong learning and cultivating a Canadian culture of lifelong learners. These individuals initially either did not have the means in terms of time or resources or the confidence to be part of this equation.

This is the equation that is the prelude to the need for educational tools and solutions such as prior learning assessment and recognition.

The narratives and interviews demonstrate a shared understanding by faculty and students that a primary motivating factor for participating in the prior learning assessment and recognition process and returning to formal education is the prestige of a university education and the dividends it offers of career advancement. The participants in the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC have been influenced by the trends toward a knowledge-based society to pursue their formal education and the prior learnig assessment and recognition process has acted as a gate-opener to this endeavor.

In chapter two of this study entitled *the marginalization of the adult learner,* the structural conflict faced by many of the prior learning assessment and recognition participants *prior* to their undertaking work with RMC was established. When that individual started to ask "why does my situation have to be this way, or stay this way" they engaged in what Brookfield (2005) refers to as "ideological critique". The prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC provides these adult learners with a tool to engage the formal education system on terms that better meet their respective needs. In a very real sense the participants in the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC have found true andragogy in practice. The common finding that military life (and specifically military experience) brings maturity and a sense of directed purpose is reflected in the philosophy of the Division of Continuing Studies' policy on prior learning assessment and recognition and acts as another gate-opener to these individuals. This is also reflective of the sentiment in the post-WW II era of returning veterans – a sentiment that continues to be respected today (Cartwright, 1944). The prior learning assessment and recognition participants know their voice is being heard by the formal education system and,

through the policies and procedures established, are able to ascertain (in short order) if the credit they wish to have validated will be granted. Once credit is granted, the narratives indicate this is a motivating factor to continue their formalized education and finish their degree.

The narratives and interviews provide this study with a voice of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant to the literature dealing with the marginalization of adult learners as well as valuable insight into the shared priorities of the learners and faculty who participate in the prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC. It would seem the participants at RMC do value experiential knowledge as worthy of validation and are working in a learner-centered environment to forward this agenda.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the case study of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC). From the analysis of the mail surveys, three distinct themes emerged as motivating factors for candidates to return to formalized education (employment retention, personal development and employment advancement). From the analysis of the mail surveys and narratives from prior learning assessment and recognition participants and the analysis of the interviews with faculty and staff, common findings were identified in three areas (residency in a program of study, a university degree is prestigious and offers dividends in the labour market and a military life brings with a sense of maturity and directed purpose). These issues were discussed within a framework of understanding established in chapter two of the relationships of power within the field of adult education. That is, based on the work of such authors as Freire (1970) and Habermas (1981), the issue of the marginalization of the adult learner became apparent and the means by which the

learner could change their situation was discussed. Studies by the work of Freire (1970) and Habermas (1981), Brookfield (2005) suggest that once the adult learner begins to ask how they can change their situation, the learner is engaging in ideological critique. The issue of change is of paramount importance to these authors cited in this section. Change is admittedly difficult, but a necessary concept to embrace if the adult learner is to be an active agent in their own learning and acknowledge their own knowledge as valuable. The ultimate goal espoused by those in the field of critical perspectives of education is that the learner change the perception of themselves as an empty vessel awaiting an authority figure to deposit knowledge to a self-sufficient learner, capable of ownership of knowledge. The research results from the narratives indicate that this change is possible. Without perhaps, the in-depth knowledge of Freire's (1970) work or of the school of critical theory, several narrative respondents exemplify the change in perception espoused by critical pedagogues.

The following chapter is a continuation of the discussion of the relationship of power in the form of convergences of education and globalization and of the convergence between prior learning assessment and recognition and the impact of globalization on the Canadian stakeholders.

CHAPTER SIX

Convergences and Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the connection between Canadian education policy to prior learning assessment and recognition programs and the impact of globalization as well as identify the stakeholders in this relationship. This is why the chapter is titled "convergences and conclusions". It is to highlight the meeting point or junction between concepts that are independent of each other in definition (there is no mention of globalization in the theoretical framework of prior learning assessment and vice versa) and yet, these two concepts have become intertwined in a mutually beneficial relationship in Canadian educational policymaking.

This study has defined the concept of prior learning assessment and recognition and provided a contextual history of its inception. The origins of prior learning assessment and recognition are significant to keep in mind when looking at the contemporary literature on the marginalization of the adult learner in the system of formal educational institutions. Beginning with an overview of best practices of prior learning assessment and recognition across Canada, this study then discussed two parallel relationships of power, that of the adult learner in the system of formal educational institutions and the impact of globalization on the validation of an individual's knowledge. A case study of the prior learning assessment and recognition process at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) was conducted to provide a voice to the literature discussing the question of how knowledge is valued in a prior learning assessment and recognition program. The narratives also provide to the prior learning assessment and

recognition community of Canada an aspect that is rarely discussed: the perspective of the prior learning assessment and recognition participant.

This chapter is divided into three parts: the first section examines the convergence between education and the phenomenon of globalization. In this section, educational policy making is described as a political act that needs to be decoded. The disequilibria of knowledge and power, which influences Canadian education policy, are discussed. The second section describes the convergence between prior learning assessment and recognition, the impact of globalization and the Canadian stakeholders in this relationship. Who are the Canadian stakeholders? And what is at stake in this relationship? Finally, the third section offers concluding remarks to this study and an area of suggested further investigation.

Convergence One: Education and Globalization

According to Michael Apple (2003), education is political in nature and he asks the question "what is the place of politics in this [relationship with education]"(p. 3)? In their work *Education Policy: Globalization, Citizenship & Democracy*, Olssen, Codd and O'Neil (2004) state "today, educational policies are the focus of considerable controversy and overt public contestation"(p. 2). Their work is based on the notion that educational policymaking is highly politicized and needs to be decoded which is interesting when considering the premise of their book - that educational policy is the key to global security. In both works, these authors make a link between education as being a political act and suggest this relationship has macro-societal consequences.

In their article entitled *"What Does Globalization Mean for Educational Change? A Comparative Approach"*, Carnoy and Rhoten (2002) argue that globalization impacts education in five ways:

1. In financial terms – governments are under pressure to reduce public spending on education and find other sources of funding;

2. In labor market terms – governments are under pressure to attract foreign capital but this requires a supply of skilled labor – which translates into investment in higher education, secondary schools and access to education for women, all of which conflict with reforms that attempt to reduce public spending on education;

3. In educational terms – the quality of educational systems are increasingly compared internationally – this translates to an emphasis on math, science, testing and, accountability;

4. Information technology is gradually being introduced into educational systems – distance education and the use of the Internet to link students in the smallest town of every country with the rest of the world cannot be underestimated;

5. Globalized information networks mean a transformation of world culture and the marginalization by many groups by this new culture (p. 4).

The statements above can be illustrated with both micro-level examples (such as the debate about lifting the tuition freeze in universities in the Province of Quebec) to macro-level examples (such as international campaigns to eradicate illiteracy). Common to all is the idea that

educational policies work within the confines of a nation-state and are therefore subject to politically motivated agendas.

According to Olssen, Codd and O'Neil (2004) it is "policies of neo-liberal govermentality, rather than globalization as such, that is the key force affecting (and undermining) nation-states today" (p. 13). This view is shared by most academic global theorists including Held and McGrew (2000) in their role as editors of *The Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate*, they offer the following concurrent view:

> Instead of providing insight into the forces shaping the contemporary world order, the concept of globalization, argue many skeptics, performs a rather different function. In essence the discourse of globalization is understood as a primarily ideological construction; a convenient myth which, in part, helps justify and legitimize the neoliberal global project, that is, the creation of a global free market and the consolidation of Anglo-American capitalism within the worlds' major economies (p. 5).

Then why all the fuss over this supposed new paradigm called globalization if in fact we are witness to a neo-liberal political agenda? This convergence between education and globalization is driven by nation-states, individuals and multinationals, each hoping to partner with each other for mutually beneficially means. But to do this, all stakeholders need to find some common ground or understanding. What are the skills required for this relationship to work? There are authors who think they have an answer (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). Suárez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) in their work entitled *Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium* identify the need to restructure our

educational system to help develop critical thinkers. "An education for globalization should therefore nurture the higher-order cognitive and interpersonal skills required for problem finding, problem solving, articulating arguments, and developing veritable facts or artifacts to substantiate claims" (p. 6). These skills would also benefit the student who bridges their education into adulthood, and embodies the concept of lifelong learning, or a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program. The successful prior learning assessment and recognition candidate is able to articulate arguments and deploy facts or artifacts to substantiate their experiential learning and knowledge.

This study has maintained that globalization and the promotion of a knowledge-based society does mean one thing – the world is getting smaller in terms of the movement of resources and human capital. According to Bouchard (2006), the main idea of the concept of *human capital* is "that although humans possess tangible financial capital such as bank accounts and stocks, they are also the repository of knowledge, skills, and qualities that can also be considered capital" (p. 165). That is not to say this movement is an equitable one or that it is inherently good. Bouchard (2006) makes the connection between the promotion of a knowledge-based society, politics and education policy.

> Throughout the world, including Canada, social and economic policy is being shaped with the explicit goal of promoting what is now called *human capital* and the *knowledge economy*. In other words, the acquisition of new knowledge – through education and learning – is now seen as the key to the meal ticket of the nation: its economy (p. 165).

The intersection between education and politics is not novel. However, this relationship warrants the close attention of adult educators and policymakers who are also subject to international influences from an exchange of priorities that are set on a global scale. At times, these exchanges can be beneficial – for example, investigative study missions that return with concrete ideas to consider for implementation in Canada (Gouvernement du Québec, MELS, 2003). However, Bouchard (2006) appears wary of the legitimated ideology of acceptance that the knowledge-based economy is the way to go and warns that the promotion of such a priority should be considered closely by its stakeholders.

> [A] direct consequence of promoting knowledge-based economics is that by creating a policy system that values how people apply their knowledge, we are overlooking their other contributions that, in absence of such policy, would receive more adequate support. Recognizing that value of human competence is far from a novelty in economic science, except that in its new incarnation, human labor - work – is becoming de-politicized, and is *removed from the social-political sphere.* By using human knowledge (associated with *ownership*) rather than work (associated with *production*) as the new criterion for attributing value, we are in effect saying that the economy is legitimately owned by "those in the know" and that economic policy should therefore be guided to meet their ends (p. 168).

Education is now understood as a politically laden portfolio. The priorities of what is taught, who is teaching and who is admitted are now issues of discussion in contemporary education policy literature. "We know that adult education has a role in the distribution not only

of knowledge but also of social, cultural, and economic power" (Cervero, Wilson and Associates, 2001, p. 2). How do Canadian education policymakers decode the impact of globalization on their day-to-day priorities? How quickly can a priority that is in the international sphere become a Canadian issue? To illustrate this point, I turn to an example outside of the realm of formalized education.

In the summer of 2003, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) hit the city of Toronto and panic ensued. What was this? Where did it come from? How were we to get rid of it? As the story developed, the Canadian public became quickly acquainted with the World Health Organization (WHO) and their daily web-updates. The Canadian public also became aware of how small the world had become – by the effects of one individual traveling on an airplane and potentially bringing an infectious disease from one corner of the globe to another. The reality was frightening – the consequences were detrimental and formed a ripple effect that long outlasted the outbreak of the virus. SARS was first recognized on February 26, 2003 in Hanoi, Viet Nam (http:///www.who/inst/csr/don/2003_03_16/en/index.html). The first notice of SARS in Toronto was posted on the WHO website on May 23, 2003. Three months and the virus had crossed the globe.

With due respect to those who were infected and died in the outbreak, the repercussions of SARS had detrimental effects on the city of Toronto and Canada as a whole. Many business events such as conferences, meetings, conventions, as well as social events such as weddings, family holidays and the like were cancelled out of fear of contracting this "new" and not well understood virus. The outbreak and subsequent travel advisory meant lost revenue for the city of Toronto and all those associated with the hotel and hospitality industry. When the outbreak had finally been put into check and the travel advisory lifted, the World Health Organization was

under pressure from Toronto city hall to sing its praises in order to restore some sense of safety and reacceptance into the world community of business and leisure travelers. "This is a great achievement for public health in what we hope is the final phase of the global emergency," said David Heymann, the WHO Executive Director for communicable diseases. "Toronto faced an especially challenging outbreak. As we have learned, SARS is a difficult disease that produces many surprises and setbacks." (http:///www.who/inst/csr/don/2003_07_02/en/index.html).

The SARS outbreak in Toronto is a good illustration of how something so *foreign* can become a Canadian issue so quickly. But what if we are not talking about an infectious disease but of something positive, with huge benefits to Canadian society? With increased global competition in all sectors of the marketplace, Canadian society will have to embrace a culture of lifelong learning which inherently requires the recognition of experiential knowledge as valuable. Prior learning assessment and recognition is a process that can be implemented to provide that extra first step into formal education for the otherwise marginalized adult learner. Instead of an infectious disease traveling the globe within months and reeking havoc – imagine the flow of intellectual capital and the recognition that individuals and formal institutions provide for that knowledge and the potential of partnering for such things as the exchange of research information, better cultural understanding and acceptance of others and sustainable development. As adult educators and prior learning assessment and recognition facilitators we must help promote this exchange and shield the learner from being considered a commodity (a vessel with competencies). One way of accomplishing this is to ensure access to learning opportunities and the validation of experiential knowledge. This is accomplished through a prior learning assessment and recognition program through which, most learners gain a better

appreciation of their experiential learning and are on their way to embracing a society of lifelong learning.

Convergence Two: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition and the Impact of Globalization on the Canadian Stakeholders

Who are the Canadian stakeholders in this relationship? It depends on who is asking the question. In the academic field it starts with the adult learner and includes prior learning assessment and recognition facilitators, consultants, identified experts in the field who act as evaluators or content specialists and the administration of various schools where there is a prior learning assessment and recognition program. In the corporate sectors the equation involves the underemployed, unemployed, workers in transition and skilled immigrant community who are not working in their chosen field, unions, professional orders, trainers and government officials. What this equation boils down to is something that is "in theory" quite simple – how is knowledge, skills and competencies of individuals assessed in a rigorous, fair and standardized manner so that these individuals can do what they want to do.

In their article *Coming to Terms with Prior Learning Assessment*, Peruniak and Powell (2006) discuss their experience with implementing prior learning assessment and recognition at the university level. Their study examines the general acceptance of prior learning assessment and some issues around the slow acceptance of the concept. Here, the authors discuss their research conclusions based on statistics they analyzed from the Conference Board of Canada in 1995.

The impetus toward accepting PLA as "legitimate" did not stem from the university community but from underlying demographic, economic, and political forces. The demographic impetus was the aging of the labour force. With low birth rates, the labour force could not renew itself from traditional students; because of rapid technical change, increased occupational mobility, and restructured workplace organization, the existing labour force must be retrofitted for the "knowledge economy" and the "global economy" (p. 316).

Here again is the intersection between education policy, politics and the priorities set on the global stage – the impact of globalization. In concurrence with Bouchard (2006), Peruniak and Powell (2006) state "many economists see the credentialing of knowledge as evidence of building human capital" (p. 317). The validation and credentialing of human knowledge and competencies becomes a tool in developing the economic policy of a nation-state. This translates into education policymaking and political priorities overlapping. At issue are demographics – with the aging of the baby boomers, the Canadian economy will need to find a way to keep pace in the global market. It is no longer simply an issue of "the brain drain" and losing our highly educated professionals to a more profitable lifestyle in the United States.

According to government –sponsored agencies, Canadian universities will face two pressures in the near future: a demographic decline in their traditional (under 25 years of age) candidate populations and an increased demand by employers, employees, and governments to address the needs of adult part-time students (Peruniak & Powell, 2006, p. 318).

These pressures will have to be reconciled and solutions found – this study suggests the viable option of prior learning assessment and recognition programs. A prior learning assessment and recognition program would open formalized education and skills upgrade to a sector of the Canadian population that may face too many barriers to otherwise return to school. These barriers include time constraints, financial issues or a previously negative experience in school. A prior learning assessment and recognition program lessens residency in a program, does not cost the equivalent of full tuition and is inherently andragogical in practice.

In terms of the issues identified by Peruniak and Powell (2006) as reasons for the hesitancy in adopting prior learning assessment and recognition programs at the university level – they state simply "basically, universities are not set up for PLA" (p. 320). Issues related to transcripts, compensation of assessors, new policies, office space, time constraints, and training must all be considered.

> There are also concerns about the validity of PLA-assisted credit in terms of external validity. Irresponsibly accredited PLA can do serious harm to a university's reputation and credentialing authority. The notion of becoming a "degree mill" haunts the university community – and rightly so (Peruniak & Powell, 2006, p. 320).

This objection goes to the root of using prior learning assessment and recognition programs to assist in the integration of skilled immigrants into the Canadian education and employment sectors. How can the Canadian public be assured that a degree from a reputable university is not simply "given away" but is legitimate. The answer from the prior learning assessment and recognition community in Canada is that proper training for assessors is an

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absolute necessity. However there is another key element to this equation, and that is the prior learning assessment and recognition participant. The prior learning assessment and recognition participant must be a good candidate for the process – they must possess the experiential knowledge and competencies they wish to have validated. "The evidence to date suggests that PLA can work and work well for a selected group of adult students. However, PLA's efficacy seems to be related to its role as both a selection device and a motivator" (p. 324). This evidence correlates to the findings of the case study in this dissertation that prior learning assessment and recognition is a strong motivating factor for adult learners to return to formalized education (where the individual was granted credit and advanced standing therefore reducing their residency in a program). I suggest the administration of a prior learning assessment and recognition program needs to maintain a balance between the rigorous assessment of a candidate and the acknowledgement of the value of the experiential learning. Further, the call for a culture of lifelong learning, imbedded in a knowledge-based society, must balance the proliferation of adult learning opportunities with the sense of fairness in offering learning opportunities that do not only promote the priorities of global economic trends.

According to George Papadopoulos (2002) in his article *Lifelong Learning and the Changing Policy Environment,* "consensus on the value of lifelong learning has been one of the most remarkable features of the education policy discourse, nationally and internationally, of the past decade" (p. 39). Why is this? Education policymaking has paralleled the themes of globalization (political, economic, technological, cultural and environmental issues) and adapted accordingly. The Canadian stakeholders in this relationship are the education policymakers who take their lead from such international organizations as the OECD, and work with industry leaders and government officials to forecast where the Canadian marketplace will have job

growth and job creation possibilities. It has been our contemporary language for some time – and since no language is value neutral, it should not come as a surprise that both industry and the formal education sector are pushing the public to accept the reality of the knowledge-based economy. According to Rubenson (2001) "skills and educational qualifications are powerful factors in determining access to the wealth created by the knowledge economy" (p. 84). The Canadian public and the adult learner population are then persuaded to equate more education with better access to the knowledge economy. Where does this message originate from? Lawrence Angus (2004) writes in his article *Globalization and Educational Change: Bringing about the Reshaping and Renorming of Practice*, "I am concerned that some education writers make educational and cultural change seem the mysterious work of networks and 'clubs' (which seems remote and magical and irreversible) rather than the hard graft of power and politics in which we are all implicated" (p. 25). Although the individual adult learner is still marginalized within the context of the formal education system – especially in terms of the recognition and validation of their experiential knowledge – the field of adult education and lifelong learning has recently captured international attention.

> ...as a result of dramatic changes in the economic sphere, adult learning is taking center stage in public policy discussions, and interest in the topic has never been higher. National policy documents refer to lifelong learning and the need to develop a learning culture, as do reports from such intergovernmental organizations as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Union and UNESCO (Rubenson, 2001, p. 83).

It is incumbent upon Canadian education policymakers and practitioners in the prior learning assessment and recognition community to be aware of the interplay between this shift to a knowledge-based society that is bolstered by the movement of intellectual capital (often in the form of human capital) between nation-states for the betterment of the economy.

Conclusion

The research problem of this study is to ask if a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition program acknowledges their own knowledge as valuable and how this may be linked to the motivating factors which cause the participant to return to formal study. The basis for this research problem was justified in the first chapter, where the major themes of this study are defined. Having defined the central concept of this study, prior learning assessment and recognition, the reader has a better understanding of the context for the research problem that is established in the literature review in chapter two. From the literature review the theme of the marginalization of the adult learner is highlighted and discussed through the theoretical frameworks of critical theory and critical pedagogy. The major findings of the literature review substantiate the understanding of the relationship between the adult learner and the need for the learner to recognize their own knowledge as valuable in a prior learning assessment and recognition program. In order to trace the root causes of the marginalization of the adult learner, I looked to critical theory, in particular the work of Jürgen Habermas and his assertion that through communicative action, a relationship based on shared meaning is possible. This shared meaning making and dialogue is an essential element in a prior learning assessment and recognition program between the candidate and content specialist. As well, in the field of critical

pedagogy, the work of Paulo Freire inspired the discussion of how the perception of the marginalized adult learner must change.

Disengaged adults must change the perception of themselves and with it, their situation in the dynamic of formal education. Meaning, adult learners must be cognizant of the politically laden environment of formal education and work to engage themselves fully as active participants. In doing so, the adult learner would move away from the banking system where "the more the students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (Freire, 1970, p. 54). A prior learning assessment and recognition program requires the full engagement of the candidate and the self-awareness of the value of their own experiential knowledge. Here the link between critical pedagogy and critical theory with prior learning assessment and recognition is explicit – a candidate will not be successful if they do not embody the core tenets of these theoretical concepts.

The results from the case study conducted at The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) supports the research problem of this study. From the mail survey interviews, narratives and staff interviews, it is apparent that the learner is aware of the value of their experiential knowledge when they engage in a prior learning assessment and recognition program and that this awareness has been a motivating factor in returning to formal study. It is also apparent that the staff of RMC (both in the prior learning assessment and recognition office and faculty) are aware that the primary motivating factor for the adult learner to return to study is related to the candidate's employment status. The dynamic at RMC between the prior learning assessment and recognition candidate, faculty and staff reflects the utopian ideals of critical theory and critical pedagogy where the figure in authority (RMC) is cognizant and respectful of the goals of the

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learner. The prior learning assessment and recognition process at RMC facilitates the need for change by the adult learner who enjoys the full support of its faculty. In the case of the prior learning assessment and recognition office, the issues of the marginalization of the adult learner are negated by the recognition and implementation of the principles of andragogy. The case study of RMC is significant to this study to raise awareness of the experience of the candidate in a prior learning assessment and recognition process in Canada. The case study and context of RMC is also a segue to another major aspect of this study – the context of globalization and its impact on prior learning assessment and recognition.

Monkman and Baird (2006) suggest a weakness in the literature reviewed on globalization is that the concept is often misapplied and used as a context for events happening without showing the implicit link. According to the authors "a useful mapping of the relationships of the local within the global world would result in a focus on the nature of national and local involvement or interaction within global processes" (p. 2). This study has made the explicit link between prior learning assessment and recognition and the local (RMC), national (provincial and federal prior learning assessment and recognition initiatives) and international (organizations that influence Canadian education policymakers). In so doing, it is apparent that the influences of globalization in terms of the movement of people and their knowledge have shaped the priorities of what knowledge is valued by the current Canadian education system. This study has also suggested that a prior learning assessment and recognition program can facilitate this movement of the adult learner who may face barriers to the recognition of their experiential knowledge. According to Green (1997), the world of education is becoming a small place.

Policy transfer and diffusion represents one manifestation of internationalizing forces in education. But in reality it is only a part of a broader process of international cross-fertilization in education brought on by global interpretation. Policymakers in the advanced nations (as in others) face similar economic and social problem; they seek educational solutions to these which inevitably draw their education systems closer together. In fact there is significant evidence of a general process of convergence in education systems across the world, at least as regards the broad structures and aims of education (p. 174).

An example of what Green (1997) is suggesting is in the previously mentioned study mission to Europe by a delegation from Quebec. This group of community leaders and academics returned with general findings that were detailed in a report submitted to the provincial government. Another example is from Rizvi and Lingard's chapter entitled *Globalization and the changing nature of the OECD's educational work.*

The Bologna Process, supported by the European Union (EU), has compelled national policymakers to restructure their systems of higher education to ensure a fairer and more efficient system of credit transfer, enabling students to become more mobile across national systems, something which is considered highly desirably for the global economy (p. 247).

The example above incorporates all the major themes of this study – the need to facilitate access to higher education to adult learners in order to fulfill their educational needs to meet the

demands of the global economy. Without stating the concept explicitly, the European Union has essentially adopted a prior learning assessment and recognition program through the Bologna Process. Finally, there is the example of the multitude of acronyms that are now being used for the concept of prior learning assessment and recognition. These different interpretations suggest that the world's education communities are attempting to implement a concept that works.

Areas for Further Investigation

The contemporary prior learning assessment and recognition community is experiencing interesting times. Never before has there been such a concerted effort both locally, provincially, nationally and internationally to implement this concept in its varying degrees. Herein lies the biggest challenge: standardization. The concept of prior learning assessment and recognition is intended to be adaptable to the environment in which it is implemented. This should be obvious from the varying acronyms that now act as a banner for the concept's principles. At issue is the need for standardization or the consistent application of standard principles so that differing programs are not in a situation of having to justify their validity to each other (for example, a Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) program in Europe and the Reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences (RAC) program in Quebec). Do these programs recognize each other as equivalent? If there were a set of standard principles, the answer would be in the affirmative.

According to Peruniak (1993), "a number of factors have contributed to the increasing interest in prior learning assessment including more interest in the adult education market and increasing pressure on educational establishments to recognize certain kinds of industrial training for credit purposes" (pp. 11-12). This trend is not a local issue to the Canadian market as was discussed in the section on human capital and the influences of globalization. In order for prior

learning assessment and recognition to become an accepted form of entry into formal education, efforts must be made at the level of the Federal Government to bridge a standardized policy of prior learning assessment and recognition programming across Canada that is recognized as being up-to-date. With an accepted set of policies, our Canadian prior learning assessment and recognition program could then be open to comparison and equivalency with international programs. Only then can there truly be fluid movement of prior learning assessment and recognition -accredited intellectual property across the globe.

Critics of prior learning assessment and recognition point to the lack of standardization as a major weakness of the concept and this fuels the hesitancy of post-secondary institutions to make prior learning assessment and recognition part of their mainstream offering. The lack of standardization is only part of the argument for the apprehensive acceptance of prior learning assessment and recognition. According to Snider (1981) there are four reasons why granting credit is not readily accepted by the formal education system: granting credit for life experience is complex, it is sensitive, it is threatening and it is ambitious (p. 153). This paper has identified some of the issues surrounding the threatening nature of an institution being perceived as a "degree mill" (Peruniak & Powell, 2006). Hamilton (1997) delves further and begins to address the philosophical issue of what is involved in a post-secondary degree.

Some critics of prior learning assessment believe that accepting credits from these assessments dilutes the value of a college degree and lessens the holistic nature of the collegiate experience. They argue correctly that college is more than the sum of several dozen courses, that instead it is a comprehensive learning experience that nurtures the growth of critical thinking and problem solving, self-esteem, and self-confidence, and

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provides an environment that enables young adults to broaden their experience and mature with increasing responsibilities (p. 38).

Hamilton (1997) is quick to point out that this argument "needs some revision when discussing adult collegians" (p. 38). To expand on Hamilton's point, this dissertation has also discussed the need for the prior learning assessment and recognition participant to be an appropriate candidate for the process. In other words, there is no sense in assessing experiential knowledge that does not exist. Above all, this requires an acknowledgement that learning and the acquisition of knowledge takes place outside the formal classroom setting. Critics such as McGee (1981) argue "no matter what terminology is used by institutions to classify life experiences being evaluated, in the final analysis it boils down to awarding individual credit for living" (p. 162). The prior learning assessment and recognition community of Canada continues its efforts to better inform potential prior learning assessment and recognition practitioners that this is not the case – credit is not awarded for life experience, but for experiential knowledge. With that in mind, there are areas that require a form of standardization in order to reassure administrators, practitioners and participants that the prior learning assessment and recognition process is both rigorous and sound.

An example of one issue is the standardization of transcript reports. How does a credit earned through a prior learning assessment and recognition process appear on a transcript and will it be accepted by an institution that does not offer prior learning assessment and recognition programs. Another example is the maximum number of credits that can be awarded through a prior learning assessment and recognition program. Should there be a twenty-five percent

residency requirement in a program or can an individual earn all their credit and their degree through prior learning assessment and recognition?

The concept of prior learning assessment and recognition is enjoying a renewed sense of interest by many in both the education and industrial sectors. With more individuals pursuing prior learning assessment and recognition there will be more data to ascertain how standardization of programming across Canada can best be accomplished.

As previously noted, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is widely considered the national voice of prior learning assessment and experiential learning in the United States, a much larger reflection of the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA). At the recent CAEL international conference, held in November 2007, the workshop offerings are indicative of the trend identified in this section on standardization. Session titles included: *Workers in transition: the results of a national PLAR study for employment transition*, *Statewide policy campaigns to promote adult learning* and *Designing State policy for adult learners: perspectives from State legislatures* (www.cael.org/cael_conference.htm). The prior learning assessment and recognition community is moving away from sessions dealing mostly with introducing the concept to a more concerted effort to streamline the program offerings from one location to another. There is significant pressure to share materials – therefore avoiding duplication and in some cases, promoting a consistent offering to clientele. Of purely anecdotal interest, a colleague and seasoned participant at CAEL events, made a point to show me the significant number of Canadian presenters at the 2007 CAEL conference – this was a first. It is also an indication of the move toward incorporating as many likeminded practitioners in the same discussion in order to begin the daunting task of recognizing each other's recognition of prior learning and assessment programs. A move toward bridging the differences in prior

learning assessment and recognition program requirements in Canada would be a significant

accomplishment. With standardization there might be a sense of legitimacy and perhaps an

acceptance by the mainstream education system.

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Directory of PLAR Services in Canada at the Post-Secondary Level

British Columbia
Post-Secondary Institutions

Thompson Rivers University Open Learning Division Student Services PO Box 82080 Burnaby, BC V5C 6J8 Tel: 604-431-3300 or 1-800-663-9711 Fax: 604-431-3333 http://www.openlearning.tru.ca	**Kwantlen University College** 12666 72nd Avenue Surrey, B.C. V3W 2M8 Tel: 604 599-2100 Fax: 604 599-2068 http://www.kwantlen.bc.ca
Malaspina University-College 900–5th Street Nanaimo, B.C. V9R 5S5 Tel: 250 753-3245 Fax: 250 755-8725 http://www.mala.bc.ca	**University College of the Fraser Valley** 33844 King Road Abbotsford, B.C. V2S 7M8 Tel: 604 504-7441 Fax: 604 855-7558 http://www.ucfv.ca
Capilano College 2055 Purcell Way North Vancouver, B.C. V7J 3H5 Tel: 604 986-1911 Fax: 604 984-4985 http://www.capcollege.bc.ca	**Camosun College** 3100 Foul Bay Road Victoria, B.C. V8P 5J2 Tel: 250 370-3000 Fax: 250 370-3660 http://www.camosun.bc.ca
College of New Caledonia 3330 - 22nd Avenue Prince George, B.C. V2N 1P8 Tel: 250 562-2131 Toll-free.: 1 800 371-8111 http://www.cnc.bc.ca	**College of the Rockies** 2700 College Way Box 8500 Cranbrook, B.C. V1C 5L7 Tel: 250 489-2751 Fax: 250 489-8253 Toll-free: 1 877 489-2687 http://www.cotr.bc.ca contact:Ron McRae 205-489-2751 ext.221
Douglas College Box 2503 New Westminster, B.C. V3L 5B2 Tel: 604 527-5400 Fax: 604 527-5095 http://www.douglas.bc.ca contact: Wilma McCrossan	**Langara College** 100 West 49th Avenue Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 2Z6 Tel: 604 323-5511 Fax: 604 323-5555 http://www.langara.bc.ca contact:Ann Calla

British Columbia

Post-Secondary Institutions

Northern Lights College 11401– 8th Street Dawson Creek, B.C. V1G 4G2 Tel: 250 782-5251 Fax: 250 782-6069 http://www.nlc.bc.ca	Northwest Community College 5331 McConnell Avenue Terrace, B.C. V8G 4X2 Tel: 250 635.6511 Fax: 250 638.5432 http://www.nwcc.bc.ca
Selkirk College Box 1200 301 Frank Beinder Way Castlegar, B.C. V1N 3J1 Tel: 250 365.7292 Fax: 250 365.6568 http://www.selkirk.bc.ca	Vancouver Community College Box 24620, Station F 1155 East Broadway Vancouver, B.C. V5N 5T9 Tel: 604 871-7000 Fax: 604 871-7100 http://www.vcc.ca
British Columbia Institute of Technology 3700 Willingdon Avenue Burnaby, B.C. V5G 3H2 Tel: 604 434-5734 Fax: 604 434-6243 Toll-free within B.C.: 1 800 667-0676 (1–4 p.m.) http://www.bcit.ca	Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design 1399 Johnston Street, Granville Island Vancouver, B.C. V6H 3R9 Tel: 604 844-3800 Fax: 604 844-3801 http://www.eciad.bc.ca contact:Sheila Hall
The Institute of Indigenous Government 4355 Mathissi Place Burnaby, B.C. V5G 4S8 Tel: 604 602-9555 Fax: 604 602-3400 http://www.indigenous.bc.ca	Justice Institute of British Columbia 715 McBride Boulevard New Westminster, B.C. V3L 5T4 Tel: 604 525-5422 Fax: 604 528-5518 http://www.jibc.bc.ca
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology 4155 Belshaw Street Merritt, B.C. V1K 1R1 Tel: 250 378-3300 Fax: 250 378-3332 http://www.nvit.bc.ca	Royal Roads University 2005 Sooke Road Victoria, B.C., Canada V9B 5Y2 Tel: 1-800-788-8028 Fax: (250) 391-2500 http://www.royalroads.ca contact:Sherman Waddell

British Columbia

Post-Secondary Institutions

University of British Columbia 2329 West Mall Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z4 Tel: 604.822.2211 Fax: 604-822-9858 contact:Margaret Landstrom	**University of Northern British Columbia** 3333 University Way Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9 Tel: (250) 960-5555 Fax: (250) 960-6330 contact:Shannon Whissell
University of Victoria PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Tel: 205-721-7211 Fax: 205-721-7212 contact:Roy Ferguson	**Kwantlen University College** 12666 - 72nd Avenue Surrey, B.C. V3W 2M8 Tel: 604.599.2100 contact:Katherine Zmetana
Malaspina University College 900 Fifth Street Nanaimo, BC V9R 5S5 Tel: (250) 753-3245 http://www.mala.ca contact:Maria Gomes and Carol Joerin	**University College of the Fraser Valley** Abbotsford, BC Tel: 604.864.4614 contact: Wendy Watson

Alberta
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government

Athabasca University 10030 107th St. Seventh St. Plaza Edmonton, Albterat T5J 3E4 Tel: 780-497-3406 Fax: 780-497-3416 Contact: Jane Arscott	**Southern Alberta Institute of Technology Polytechnic (SAIT)** Heart Building, Room MC 221 1301 – 16th Avenue NW Calgary, Alberta T2M 0L4 Tel: 403-284-7025 Fax: 403-284-7345 contact:Amanda Roberts
Alberta Government Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers 11th Floor Commerce Place 1055-102 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5 http:www.learning.gov.ab.ca	**University of Calgary** www.uclagary.ca
Medicine Hat College 299 College Drive SE Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 3Y6 Tel: 403-529-3811 Fax: 403-504-3517 www.mhc.ab.ca	

Saskatchewan
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government

Saskatchewan Government	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST)
Saskatchewan Learning Room 910, 122 3rd Avenue North Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 2H6 Tel: 306-933-5324 Fax: 306-933-7456 http://www.gov.sk.ca/newsrel/releases/2005/02/07-071.html contact: Nancy Tam	1100 15th St. E Prince Albert, SK S6V 6G1 Tel: 902-491-6727 Fax: 902-491-4830 Contact: Maria Desjardins
University of Saskatchewan 28 Campus Drive Saskatoon, SK www.usask.ca	**Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board** 202-2222 13th Avenue Regina. AK S4P 3M7 Tel: 306-352-5999 Fax: 306-757-7880 www.slfb@slfb.com

Manitoba
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government

Advanced Education and Training Employment and Training Services Branch c/o 201a, 391 York Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C Tel: 204-945-4275 Fax: 204-948-2956 http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/ets2/about.html contact:Rudi W. Peters	**Assiniboine Community College** 1430 Victoria Avenue E. Brandon , Manitoba R7A 2A9 Tel: 204-725-8700 – 800-862-6307 Fax: 204-725-8740 http://public.assiniboine.net/ contact:Anne Bridge, Student Advisor
Keewatin Community College 436-7th Street East - Box 3000 The Pas, Manitoba R9A 1M7 Tel: (204) 627-8500 Toll Free: 1-800-238-8508 Fax: (204) 627-8514 http://www.gov.mb.ca/educate/options/ colleges/keewatin/keewatin.html	**Winnipeg Technical College** 130 Henlow Bay Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3Y 1G4 Tel: 204-989-6575 http://www.wtc.mc.ca/
Brandon University 270 18th Street Brandon, Manitoba R7A 6A9 Tel: 204-728-9520 Fax: 204-726-4573 http://www.brandonu.ca/ contact:Elaine Tyler, PLAR Coordinator	**Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface** 200, avenue de la Cathédrale Saint-Boniface, Manitoba R2H 0H7 Te: 204-233-0210 – 1-888-233-5112 http://www.ustboniface.mb.ca
University of Manitoba 97 Dafoe Road Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3T 2N2 Tel: 204-474-7988 Fax: 204-474-7661 http://www.umanitoba.ca/ contact:Sherry Sullivan, PLA Advisor	**University of Winnipeg** 515 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1J6 Tel: 204-786-9767 Fax: 204-786-8656 Contact: Barbara L. Read PLAR Coordinator
University College of the North 504 Princeton Drive Thompson, Manitoba R8N 0A5 Tel: 204-677-6396 Fax: 204-677-6439 contact:Faith Dalgleish	**Centre for Education and Work** 515 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2E9 Tel: 204-786-9395 contact:Robin Millar We are a not-for profit organization dedicated to linking the workplace to learning.

Red River College	Manitoba Advanced Education and Training
2055 Notre Dame Ave. Winnipeg, Manitoba R3H 0J9 http://www.rrc.mb.ca contact: Deb Blower, PLAR Facilitator C519-2055 Notre Dame Avenue Email: dblower@rrc.mb.ca Telephone: (204) 632-2065 Fax: (204) 632-4859	260-800 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 0N4 Tel: 204- 945-1682 Fax: 204-945-0356 http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/busemp/plar/html contact:Settlement and Labour Market Services 945-5978 The Settlement and Labour Market Services Branch of the Department of Labour and Immigration has responsibility for developing and supporting initiatives which increase accessibility to recognition of foreign qualifications of immigrants to Manitoba
Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Manitoba Government of Manitoba http://www.plarinmanitoba.ca	**Reframed Learning Concepts** Ann Pedersen Consultant Box 35 Springstein, MB R0G 2N0 Tel: 204-735-2347 Fax: 204-735-3165 Email: annp@mts.net

Canadore College 100 College Drive North Bay, Ontario P1B 8K9 Tel: 705-474-7600 x5647 Fax: 705-742-6189 Contact: Karyn Brearley	**Fanshawe College** 1460 Oxford Street E London. ON N5V 1W2 Tel: 519-452-4445 Fax: 519-452-4420 http://www.fanshawec.ca/registrar/pla.asp contact:Cheryl Morris
Humber North Campus 205 Humber College Blvd. Toronto, Ontario M9W 5Lz Tel: 416-675-5000 http://plar.humber.ca	**Confederation College** Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 4W1 Tel: 807-475-6112 Fax: 807-623-3956 www.confederatopmc.con.ca contact:Trish McGowan, PLAR Facilitator
WISDOM on Course Brantford, Ontario Tel: 519-770-0148 Email: questers@rogers.com contact:Judith McLean, MSW Training Consultant & Public Speaker Judith is an independent consultant serving colleges, industry – coaching human resources and faculty on assessment, managers on administration. As well, Judith conducts assessments for adult learners and served as a consultant to CAPLA's OnLineCommunity of Practitioners group.	**Ontario Ministry of Education** 8056Correspondence and Public Inquiries Unit 14th Floor, Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street Toronto , Ontario M7A 1L2 Tel: 1-800-387-5514, or (416) 325-2929 in Toronto or outside Ontario .Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD/TTY) - 1-800-263-2892 Fax: (416) 325-6348 www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/
Centennial College School of Applied Arts and Health Science P.O. Box 631, Station A Toronto, Ontario M1K 5E9 Tel: 416-289-5000 ext.8056 Fax: 416-289-5169 www.centennialcollege.ca contact:Trish Dryden, M.ED, RMT	**Carole Cotton Consulting, Inc.** Tel: 905-575-4338 Email: carole@mountaincable.net contact:Carole Cotton, B.A., M.Ed. Career Portfolio Specialist, Online Educator, eCareer Coach I am an independent emoderator/instructional designer working with adults in post-diploma Career Practitioner Development Program (Conestoga College, Kitchener, ON which is delivered online via WebCT. As well I facililtate professional development workshops online for career/employment professionals with ONIP (Ontario Network for Internationally Trained Professionals).

Ontario
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government/Consultants

Council of Ontario University Programs in Nursing An affiliate of the Council of Ontario Universities Email: sdouc@np-education.ca contact:Suzanne Doucette	Algonquin College Woodroffe Campus 1385 Woodroffe Avenue Ottawa, Ontario K2G 1V8 Tel: 613-727-4723 www.algonquincollege.com contact:Carmen Hurst
St. Charles Adult Learning Centres 45 Young Street Hamilton, Ontario L8N 1V8 Tel: 905-577-0555 Fax: 905-577-4728 www.stcharles.ca/ contact:Robert J. Baldin Vice Principal Adult and Continuing Education We operate as an adult learning center. One of our programs is the adult high school credit program. The PLAR services that we provide deal with an academic assessment vs a skills assessment used in industry.	First Nation Technical Institute (FNTI) 3 Old York Road Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory Ontario, Canada K0K 1X0 Tel: 613-396-2122 www.fnti.net contact:Paul Zakos
Royal Military College PO Box 17000 Stn Forces Kingston, Ontario K7K 7B4 Tel: 613-541-6000 www.rmc.ca contact: Lyne Lachance	Arnold J. Campbell Assessment Strategies Inc. 1400 Blair Place Ottawa, Ontario K1J 9B8 Tel: 613-237-0241 x 220 Fax: 613-237-6684 Email: acampbell@asinc.ca
Joy Van Kleef Consultant, Adult Learning 251 Queen's Quay West, Suite 701 Toronto, ON M5J 2N6 Tel: 416-205-9494 Email: vankleef@sympatico.ca	

Ontario
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government/Consultants

Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (linked to the Government of Ontario: Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration website – colleges that offer PLA:)	Cambrian College Tel: 705-566-8101
La Cité collégiale Tel: 613-742-2493 x2879 Email: admissions@lacitec.on.ca	Collège Boréal Tel: 705-560-6673 x2208 Email: Chantal@academe.borealc.on.ca
Le Collège des Grands Lacs Tel: 705-549-6031 Email: cdesgl@bconnex.net	Conestoga College Tel: 519-748-5220 x421
Durnham College Tel: 905-721-3111 x2553	George Brown College Tel: 416-415-2290
Georgian College Tel: 705-728-1968	Lambton College Tel: 519-542-7751 x313
Mohawk College Tel: 905-575-1212 x2395	Niagara College Tel: 905-735-2211 x7491
Northern College Tel: 705-235-3211 x214	Sault College Tel: 705-759-6774 x46
Seneca College Tel: 416-491-5050 x2506	Sheridan College Tel: 905-845-9430 x2393
Sir Sanford Fleming College Tel: 705-749-5530 x1321	St. Clair College Tel: 519-972-2727 x4510
St. Lawrence College Tel: 613-544-5400 x1508	

Quebec
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government/Consultants

Heritage College 325, boul. Cité des Jeunes Gatineau, Québec J8Y 6T3 Tel: 819-778-2270 Fax: 819-778-7364 www.cegep-geritage.qc.ca contact:Ginette Mercier Education Advisor / Conseillère Pédagogique	**Collège Ahuntsic** 9155, rue Saint-Hubert Montréal, Quebec H2M 1Y8 Tel: 514-389-5921
Ministère l'Éducation, Loisir et Sport 1035 rue De La Chevrotière Québec, Québec G1R 5A5 www.mels.gouv.qc.ca contact:Marc Leduc (see links to School Boards offering RAC)	**Université de Sherbrooke** 2500 boul Université Sherbrooke, QC J1K 2R1 Tel: 819-821-7290 Fax: 819-821-8211 Contact: Norman Poulin
CEGEP @ Distance Reconnaissance des acquis 7100, rue Jean Talon Est, 7ème étage Montreal, QC H1M 3S3	**CEGEP de Rivière du Loup** Lise Chouinard 514-862-6903 poste 2405
Commission scolaire Monts-et-Marées Jérome Landry 418-562-1193	**Commission scolaire de la Jonquière** Yvon Gagnon 418-690-8906
Commission scolaire de la Capitale Roger Arsenault 418-686-4040 poste 2308	**Commission scolaire des Navigateurs** Angèle Lebel 418-838-8468
CarrefourFormation Mauricie, Shawinigan Martine Lafond 819-539-2265 poste 3247	**Commission scolaire des Chênes** Myriam Blanchette 819-478-6700 poste 6918
Emploi Québec Estrie Lyne Boisvert 819-569-9761 poste 2571	**Service d'évaluation et de reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences (SERACIM)** Jocelyne Lavoie 514-350-8052 poste 8047
Regroupement des collèges du Montréal métropolitain Anne-Marie Pomminville 514-271-5508	**Leah Moss** Coordinator English School Boards of Quebec 514-941-5233
Commission scolaire des Draveurs Josette Boudreault 819-568-7936	**Commission scolaire de l'Or-et-des-Bois** Fernand Roy 819-874-2106
CFP de la Jamésie Louise Saucier 418-748-7621 poste 3336	**Direction régionale de la Côte-Nord** Hélène Thériault 418-964-1515

Quebec
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government/Consultants

CEGEP régional de Lanaudière Diane Pépin 450-470-0911 poste 7104	**Commission scolaire de Sainte-Hyacinthe** René St-Germain 450-773-8401 poste 6360
Central Quebec School Board Martine Roberge 418-654-0537 robergem@cqsb.qc.ca	**Riverside School Board** Linda Martin 450-676-1843 ext. 6264 lmartin@rsb.qc.ca
Eastern Shores School Board Debra Adams 418-368-3376 ext. 222 Debbie.adams@essb.qc.ca	**Eastern Townships School Board** Deborah Valdez 450-263-3775 valdez@etsb.qc.ca Heather Wynne 819-563-5627 wynneh@etsb.qc.ca
English Montreal School Board Harriett Cohen 514-483-7200 ext. 7377 hcohen@emsb.qc.ca Mary Gouskos 514-483-7200 ext. 7333 mgouskos@emsb.qc.ca	**Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board** Elizabeth Gervais 450-688-2933 ext. 3120 egervais@swlauriersb.qc.ca
Lester B. Peasrson School Board Isabelle Renaud 514-363-6213 ext.7752 irenaud@lbpsb.qc.ca Diana Frank 514-620-0707 ext. 7576 dfrank@lbpsb.qc.ca	**Western Quebec School Board** Nicole Gravelle 819-684-1770 ext. 44 ngravelle@wqsb.qc.ca
New Frontiers School Board Carol Mayr 450-691-1440 ext.406 cmayr@csnewfrontiers.qc.ca Gail Elliott 450-289-2396 gelliott@csnewfrontiers.qc.ca	

Nova Scotia
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government/Consultants
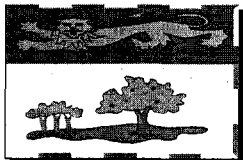
PLA Centre 7001 Mumford Road Halifax Shopping Centre, Tower 1, Suite 101 Halifax, Nova Scotia B3L 4N9 Tel: 902-454-2809 Fax: 902-454-3606 www.placentre.ns.ca contact:Douglas Myers Offers the following services: PLA Advising Services, PLA Transferable Skills Workshops, PLA Skills and Learning Portfolio Development Programs, PLAR Practitioners Certificate Programs, The PLAR Practitioners Network — Building the Field of Practice, Consulting and Advising Services, Research and Policy Development.	**Dalhousie University** Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 4R2 Tel: 902-494-2211 www.dal.ca contact:Naomi Mensink
Nova Scotia Community College 5685 Leeds St. Po Box 1153 Halifax, NS B3J 2X1 Tel: 902-491-3575 Fax: 902-491-4830 Contact: Dave White Director, Portfolio Learning	**Mount Saint Vincent University** Bedford Highway Halifax, Nova Scotia B3M 2J6 Tel: 902-457-6117 http://www.msvu.ca

New Brunswick
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government/Consultants

Department of Education	**University of New Brunswick**
Post-Secondary Affairs P.O. Box 6000 - Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1 Tel: 506-453-2644 Fax: 506-444-5523 www.gnb.ca/0000/plar-era/	College of Extended Learning P.O. Box 4400 Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3 Tel: 506-453-4646 or Toll Free 1-866-599-4646 Fax: 506-453-3572 www.extend.unb.ca/deg_cred/gen_info_prior_learning.phd
New Brunswick Society of Certified Engineering **Technicians and Technologists** 2-385 Wilsey Road Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 5N6 Tel: 506-454-6124 or Toll Free 1-800-665-TECH Fax: 506-452-7076 www.nbscett.nc.ca contact:Edward F. Leslie, CAE, CET Executive Director	

PEI
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government/Consultants

Workplace Education PEI 109 Water Street Summerside, PEI C1N 1A8 Tel: 902-888-8022 Fax: 902-432-2659 Contact: Gaelyne MacAulay PLA Services Coordinator	**Department of Education** http://www.gov.pe.ca/educ/index
Path to Success Centre 40 Enman Crescent Charlottetown, PEI C1E 1E6 Tel: 902-620.3618 Fax: 902-620.3624 Contact: Gaelyne MacAulay PLA Services Coordinator	

Newfoundland and Labrador
Post-Secondary Institutions/Government/Consultants
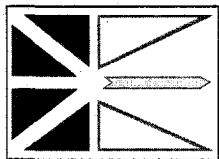
Association for New Canadians	College of the North Atlantic
PO Box 2031 St. John's NL, A1C 5R6 Tel: 709-722-9680 Fax: 709-754-4407 www.anc-nf.cc Contact: Eileen Kelly-Freake	

Appendix B

Letter of Introduction

Leah Moss
442 Lansdowne Avenue
Westmount, Quebec H3Y 2V2

October 20, 2005

Dear Potential Participant:

My name is Leah Moss and I am a candidate in the AdHoc PhD program in the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill University, Montreal.

I am conducting a research survey to be used as data in my dissertation which is entitled: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) programs in Canada and the Role of Globalization. All information will be protected for confidentiality by the use of anonymous surveys.

I hope I can count on your participation – you are one of a select group of Canadians who have participated or are currently participating in a PLAR program in an academic setting. Your feedback and stories will help me in my future goal to bring the PLAR process to more Canadian universities.

Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

Leah Moss

Appendix C

Letter of Consent

This is to state that I agree to participate in the research project entitled: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) programs in Canada and the role of globalization, conducted by Leah Moss, a candidate in the Ad Hoc PhD program in the Department of Education at McGill University, Montreal.

The purpose of this research project is to gain a better understanding of the motivating factors of a participant in a prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) program for returning to a formal academic setting.

The research project will be conducted as a case study. Through the use of surveys, the researcher will compile and analyze narratives of PLAR participants. *Narratives* should be understood to be the telling in the participant's own words, their motivation for pursuing a prior learning assessment and recognition program and how the program has or has not met their expectations or needs. All information will be protected for confidentiality by the use of anonymous surveys.

In terms of participation, it would be expected that the participant complete the accompanying survey and return it in the assigned pre-stamped envelop.

- I understand the purpose of this study and know about the risks, benefits and inconveniences that this research project entails.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at anytime from the study without any penalty or prejudice by contacting the researcher at ¡   ˍ.   ι
- I understand that this research will not affect my grades or evaluation of my work.
- I understand how confidentiality will be maintained during this research project.
- I understand the anticipated uses of data, especially with respect to publication, communication and dissemination of results.

   I have read the above and I understand all of the above conditions. I freely consent

   and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____   Date _____

Appendix D

Survey Questionnaire (mail survey)

Guidelines: The purpose of this survey is to gain a better understanding of the motivating factors for an individual to return to a formal education setting using Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). The ideal is to achieve anecdotal information from you (the participant) – meaning, your story. Please PRINT or type short paragraphs for each answer.

Please return this survey in the enclosed return envelope
By DECEMBER 15, 2005.
Thank you again for your participation.

1. What did you think of the idea of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) when you first heard about it?

2. Had you ever heard of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) before beginning your program at RMC? If yes, have you participated in a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program elsewhere?

3. How did you originally find (in terms of locating the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program to attend) the program at RMC?

4. What were your first impressions of the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program at RMC?

5. Please describe the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program as it pertains or, in the case of being a graduate, as it pertained to you in the Department of Continuing Studies at the Royal Military College.

6. What has been the strongest motivating factor for you to pursue the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program at RMC?

Narrative

(reminder definition) A narrative should be understood to be the telling in the participant's own words, of their personal story. Please feel free to use more than this paper.

7. Narrative: In your own words, please write a brief accounting of your academic/career experience prior to your involvement in the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program and what your expectations are for participating in the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program?

FOR GRADUATES : Have your expectations been met?

Appendix E

Interview Questionnaire (faculty and staff)

Questions

For the record: Please state your name and role in relation to the PLAR process at RMC:

1. What did you think of the idea of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) TC/CG when you first heard about it?

2. What were your first impressions of the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) plans related to CG and the BMASc degree at RMC?

3. What do you feel attracts students to RMC programs that recognize non-traditional forms of Prior Learning (CG) ?

4. RMC has an exciting history of academic development – for example gaining degree-granting rights. How do you think the development of the Division of Continuing Studies (DCS) fits into the culture at RMC?

5. How do you think the introduction of PLAR for non- traditional courses (CG) fits into the culture at RMC?

6. How would you describe the reaction by academic faculty (staff) (or your reaction – dependent on participant) to the introduction of non-traditional PLAR (CG) credits into RMC programs?

7. How would you describe the reaction of the military (commanders) staff to the introduction of non-traditional PLAR (CG) credits into RMC programs?

8. What is the reaction you encounter when you are at academic or professional development seminars when other participants hear you are working with PLAR at RMC?

9. RMC is one of a few university level institutions that offers a degree, BMASc, that recognizes university level learning taken through non traditional means, especially DND courses.– Do you think this puts RMC at a recruiting/enrollment advantage to other similar institutions?

10. What changes, if any, would you suggest be made to the PLAR processes at RMC?

Appendix G

Glossary of Terms

Assessment
A process of evaluation prior learning.*

Assessor
A subject matter expert who assess prior learning to award college credit.*

Challenge
A written examination, test, project or assignment prepared by faculty, often supervised by an investigator.*

Credit
A unit of study leady to a post-secondary diploma or certificate.*

Demonstration
A performance of skills completed by an individual learner and witnessed by an assessor. It includes but is not limited to structured interviews, product assessment, role-play, simulations, presentations, oral examinations and workplace demonstrations.*

Facilitator
A person designated by the institution to co-ordinate all PLAR activities including research, training, orientation, advising, marketing and possibly assessing.*

Learning
Acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes that result in a change in perspective or behaviour.*

Learning outcome
A statement describing what a learner should know and be able to do in order to be granted academic credit.*

PLAR advisor
A faculty or support staff person responsible for providing advice to PLAR candidates.*

PLAR learner
An individual who has attempted to obtain college credit through PLAR.

Portfolio
An organized collection of materials developed by a learner, which records and verifies learning achievements and relates them to educational requirements.*

Portfolio assessment

The evaluation of documented learning in a portfolio against the required learning of college/CEGEP courses.*

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) - Canada

A process of identifying and measuring learning acquired outside known public educational institutions for recognition through academic credit.*

This process is referred to by a variety of acronyms depending upon the country, province, language or focus of the program. The following is a partial list:

RPL

Recognition of prior learning

RAC – Québec (French)

Reconnaissance des acquis et des competences

RPLC – Quebec (English)

Recognition of prior learning and competencies

*Glossary terms from: Aarts et al. (2003) Feedback from learners: A second cross-Canada study of prior learning assessment and recognition.

Appendix H

The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) Policy on PLAR

Introduction

Royal Military College of Canada recognises that significant university level learning can take place outside of post secondary institutions and as such respects all forms of learning no matter how it is attained. The aim of RMC Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition is to acknowledge the importance of this learning by providing an accessible, fair and academically rigorous process for assessing this learning to determine whether it meets the standards of university level learning. The RMC PLAR process involves individual assessment of prior learning by faculty and the awarding of credit when this learning is of the expected range and depth for the particular academic credential requested by the individual. The purpose of the PLAR process is to recognize all university level learning by ensuring that RMC policies are in line with other Canadian universities. The goal is to enrich the learning experience of the student and help the student meet his/her academic potential while at the same time maintaining the academic integrity of the Royal Military College of Canada.

Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR)

Students applying for admission into a programme of study who have completed programmes or courses at other universities, community colleges, or CEGEP or professional training courses taken either within the CF or through some other organization (whether in Canada or abroad), may seek to have their prior learning at a university level recognized by RMC. For sponsored students, in order to ensure that prior learning is assessed in time to apply results to first year scheduling, a copy of student transcripts, course descriptions, and outlines for courses for which recognition is being requested must be forwarded to the RMC PLAR section immediately upon acceptance to RMC. Requests, therefore, should be forwarded before leaving for the Basic Officer Training Course.

Transfer Credits

University Transfer Credits

Credit for University courses taken at a recognized Canadian university may be granted one for one as unallocated credits in any RMC degree, however, in order for credit to be applied to a specific concentration or minor, or to replace specific courses listed as part of a programme, departmental approval is required.

College Transfer Credits

Up to a maximum of 10 transfer credits may be granted for College courses (unless otherwise approved for a specific diploma or programme) based on provincial college to university transfer guides and course reviews completed by faculty and approved by Deans. In order for any college course to be used to meet the requirements of a specific RMC course (equivalency) or to be applied as part of a minor or concentration, approval of the applicable department is required.

CEGEP Transfer Credits

Up to a maximum of 10 transfer credits may be granted for CEGEP courses based on the following PLAR policy: Students who have completed a 2-year CEGEP DEC will earn a total of 10 credits. These will consist of Science credits as approved on the RMC Table of CEGEP Science Equivalences; Arts course equivalencies as recommended by faculty and approved by the Dean of Arts; and unallocated Arts credits.

Students who have not completed a 2-year CEGEP DEC but have earned at least 12 CEGEP credits (excluding physical education credits) may earn a total of 10 credits. These will consist of unallocated Arts credit based on evidence that the given CEGEP course(s) earns credit at any Canadian University and Science credits as approved on the RMC Table of CEGEP Science Equivalences.

Students who have not completed a 2-year CEGEP DEC, nor a minimum of 12 CEGEP credits, may earn up to a total of 10 credits consisting of Science credits as approved on the RMC Table of CEGEP Science Equivalences and Arts course equivalencies as recommended by faculty and approved by the Dean of Arts.

Students who have completed at least four CEGEP literature courses in English or French literature with a grade of C or higher in three of the four courses and a C- in the fourth course will earn one unallocated Arts credit. If they have earned a C or higher in all four courses, they will earn 2 unallocated Arts credits. These credits may be used to meet the literature requirements of the BMASc Honours, BMASc, and General three-year degrees. Students in any other Honours degree meeting these criteria may request to write a challenge exam to meet their first year literature requirement.

In order for any CEGEP course to be used to meet the requirements of a specific RMC course (equivalency) or to be applied as part of a minor or concentration, approval of the applicable department is required. A list of approved CEGEP Science course equivalences is found on the RMC Table of CEGEP Science Equivalences.

Credit Granted Credits

Credit Granted

The Faculty Council of RMC, on the recommendation of a department, the Continuing Studies Committee and the Faculty Board of RMC, may approve university credits based on university level prior learning obtained via any of the following:

- Military training and qualifications training, whether obtained within Canada or abroad, recognized as learning at a university level;
- Professional training courses or programmes given by an organization other than a post-secondary institution recognized as learning at the university level;
- The combination of Military training and RMC courses designated as "top-up" courses to be completed to augment specific military training and experience to the university-level.

A list of approved courses is found on the RMC Table of Credit Granted .

Second Language Credits

Second Language Credits:

Credits granted based on students achieving the bilingual standard (BBB) and higher on official language tests. Students completing Honours degrees achieving the bilingual standard (BBB) on official language tests will be awarded an unallocated junior credit with a mark of 90 percent. For comprehension, writing, and speaking, students will be

awarded an additional credit with a mark of 90% for each score indicating fluency or better (C or E). A maximum of four such credits will be awarded for a student's second official language. A further two credits may be awarded on the same basis for other languages, subject to formal testing, for a maximum of 6 second language credits. All BBB and above credits will normally be allocated to the third year in a four year *full-time* program. Credits achieved in forth year will be applied to that year. Students completing General degrees achieving the bilingual standard (BBB) on official language tests will be awarded an unallocated junior credit on their initial assessment. For comprehension, writing, and speaking, students will be awarded an additional credit for each score indicating fluency or better (C or E). A maximum of four such credits will be awarded for a student's second official language. A further two credits may be awarded on the same basis for other languages, subject to formal testing, for a maximum of 6 second language credits. Credits granted on this basis are annotated on the transcript with the code "SL".

Documentation Required for Transfer Credit Review

In order to complete a PLAR review for transfer credits the following documentation is required immediately upon acceptance to RMC for sponsored on site students and as part of the Admissions application for distance learning students:
Official Transcripts from the post-secondary institutions, whether universities, colleges or CEGEP, at which programmes or courses have been completed;
Course Outlines for **CEGEP and College** courses as requested;
Course Descriptions for **University** courses to be reviewed.

Request for Advanced Standing (Transfer Credits) Application Form

For PLAR review applicants who are not sponsored students please complete the Request for Transfer Credits section of the Request for Advanced Standing Form, including payment information, and FAX to the Admissions FAX number provided on the form. For sponsored students, in order to ensure that prior learning is assessed in time to apply results to first year scheduling, a copy of student transcripts, course descriptions, and outlines for courses for which recognition is being requested must be forwarded to the RMC PLAR section immediately upon acceptance to RMC. Requests, therefore, should be forwarded before leaving for the Basic Officer Training Course.

Documentation Required for Credit Granted Review

In order to complete a PLAR review for credit granted the following documentation is required immediately upon acceptance to RMC for sponsored on site students and as part of the Admissions application for distance learning students:
A Military personnel Record Resume (MPRR) for Regular Force Members;
A Record of Service for Reserve Force Members;
Course Training Reports for courses listed on the RMC Table of Credit Granted;
Course Training Plan and Course Material for DND courses not on the RMC Table of Credit Granted;
Certificate of Completion for Professional level courses;
Course Manual and Course Material for non-DND Professional level courses not on the RMC Table of Credit Granted.

Request for Advanced Standing (Credit Granted) Application Form

For PLAR review applicants who are not sponsored students please complete the Request for Credit Granted section of the Request for Advanced Standing form, including payment information, and FAX to the Admissions FAX number provided on the form. For sponsored students, in order to ensure that prior learning is assessed in time to apply results to first year scheduling, a copy of student transcripts, course descriptions, and outlines for courses for which recognition is being requested must be forwarded to the RMC PLAR section immediately upon acceptance to RMC. Requests, therefore, should be forwarded before leaving for the Basic Officer Training Course.

Source: http://www.rmc.ca/academic/registrar/prgramme/p003_daccred_.html

Appendix I

The Quebec Government's Model of Delivery (RAC)

Reception: On line or in person

↓

File preparation: self-evaluation of competencies

↓

File analysis

↓

Validation interview

| Determination of competencies to be evaluated and conditions for recognition | Determination of the training to be acquired to obtain a degree or to meet another goal |

↓

Evaluation of learning   ⟶   **Partial training required**

↓

Competency recognized
- **Partially**
- **Fully**

↓

Certification and Results   **Plan for acquiring missing competencies**