

# **A Typology of Adult Learning: Review of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation of Canada's Model**

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*November 2013*

## **Abstract:**

Recent development of adult learning typologies stems from the policy community's interest in collecting information on learning activities of populations in order to understand the economic and social benefits of learning and to contribute to the development of evidence-informed policy making in the field of adult education and training. In this regard, the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation's (SRDC's) Adult Learning Typology (Myers, Conte & Rubenson, 2011) was constructed as a heuristic device capable of classifying all types of learning in a single framework. Through a primarily conceptual process the authors arrived at a typology consisting of five classes of learning: foundational; higher education; workplace-related; labour market-related; and personal/social. While initial feedback has been positive, the typology needed to be tested for utility in describing the actual participation patterns and practices of adult learning. This paper assesses the utility of the SRDC's adult learning typology by addressing three broad questions: 1) How does the typology compare to emerging international adult learning classification schemes (UNESCO, OECD-PIAAC and EUROSTAT)?; 2) To what extent is the typology useful in describing actual participation patterns as captured by the Access and Support to Education and Training Survey?; 3) How well does the typology describe how adult learning activities are organized provincially, using British Columbia as a case study? Based on the examination of the typology conducted in this report, the authors recommend to revise the SRDC's typology. They further recommend that future surveys collecting information on organized forms of adult learning and education should be designed to collect information on all forms of formal and non-formal learning activities, as well as on informal learning.

*JEL classification: I20; I21; and I29*

*Key words: adult learning; adult education; typology; foundational learning; higher education; workplace-related learning; labour-market related learning; personal/social learning.*