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

Kjell Rubenson
University of British Columbia

Maren Elfert
University of British Columbia

November 2013
A TYPOLOGY OF ADULT LEARNING:

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL RESEARCH AND DEMONSTRATION CORPORATION OF CANADA’S MODEL

Kjell Rubenson and Maren Elfert

University of British Columbia
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.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall purpose of this report is to contribute to the development of evidence-informed policy making in the field of adult education and training by constructing a heuristic typology of adult learning.

Recent development of adult learning typologies stems from the policy community's interest in collecting information on learning activities in their populations. The goal is to better understand the impact of learning activities on skills distribution and the wider economic and social benefits that eventually result. Despite conceptual and empirical progress in measuring competencies, the development of crucial linkages is less evident; we refer here to ties between competencies, forms of adult learning and education, policy levers, and outcomes. Such analyses are essential in gauging how well education and training systems perform in generating required competencies, and in clarifying which policy levers would best enhance socio-economic returns. The development of a robust typology of adult education and learning is a key component of such efforts.

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation’s Adult Learning Typology is 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. These five types of learning were further described in terms of providers, funders, duration, learners’ motivations, and other design and delivery features.

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 addresses three broad questions concerning utility:

- How does the typology compare to emerging international adult learning classification schemes?
- To what extent is the typology useful in describing actual participation patterns as captured by ASETS?
- How well does the typology describe how adult learning activities are organized provincially, using B.C. as a case study?
Comparison of the typology with similar initiatives spearheaded by UNESCO, OECD and EUROSTAT reveals both similarities and fundamental differences. The typology is closely aligned with the definitions proposed in ISCED 2011 except that the latter does not cover informal or incidental-random learning. Another important difference is that ISCED stipulates that non-formal learning occurs in educational institutions, while we find it in many contexts – a position endorsed by EUROSTAT, whose work was foundational in our typology’s development. There are fundamental similarities between the two: both use learning activities as basic building blocks; both recognize the official triad of formal, non-formal and informal learning; and both exclude incidental learning and make institutionalization a fundamental criterion in the classification scheme. The most notable difference between them is that EUROSTAT classifies learning activities according to the formal, non-formal and informal learning triad while our scheme aims to identify the five key learning categories: foundational, higher education, workplace-related, labour market-related and social/personal-related. Our typology recognises the triad as an intermediate step in arriving at these five fundamental categories.

Further, with the exception of higher education (exclusively formal), the categories contain a mixture of formal, non-formal and informal learning. We use the form of delivery to separate the categories, while EUROSTAT uses institutionalization. Finally, we make the distinction between formal and informal based on whether or not the program leads to a recognized credential and not, as in the EUROSTAT case, whether it is included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which does not exist in Canada.

The empirical and conceptual analyses included in this report raise concerns about the extent to which the five core categories of adult learning are mutually exclusive. The expert reviewers reinforced this point. They also cautioned against relying on motivation as a criterion for classification and raised concerns about the way the triad had been deployed. These concerns were amplified by our analyses of how well the typology captures actual participation patterns, or portrays how adult learning activities are organized provincially. Problems arose about what should be classified as workplace-related learning. Contradicting the definition in the typology, our review showed that employers play a major role in what we classify as non-formal foundational learning, providing 44 per cent of all the learning events. Well over half of the participants were financed by their employers, who had required an astonishing 84 per cent of the male participants to take non-formal foundational learning. These data suggest that it is impossible to disentangle
workplace-related learning from non-formal foundational learning using the definitions provided in
the typology.

Analogous issues surround classification of what the typology calls ‘labour-market related’ learning. Contrary to assumptions, we found that a large group of participants were funded by their employers. Similarly, it was common for learners to report that they had engaged in a formal program of learning for labour market-related reasons, a circumstance not anticipated in the typology. The findings also indicate difficulties disentangling personal/social learning from higher education and foundational learning; most often a person has a mixture of motives for engaging in these activities.

Based on our findings we recommend that the typology be revised. The formal, non-formal, and informal triad offers a higher-order structure than does the original typology. Reducing the number of categories from five to three makes it easier to fulfill the criterion of exclusiveness. We would aim at more specificity by creating sub-classes within each of the three categories. The challenge lies in finding meaningful dimensions that would provide a social charter (Meyer, 1977) for each education/learning activity. This is most readily achieved in formal education. We recommend using the 2011 ISCED codes to constitute the sub-classes. We also suggest adopting the EUROSTAT criterion of at least one semester duration for an event to be classified as formal.

For the non-formal category, participation data and existing classification schemes identified the following sub-classes: courses that cannot be considered as formal; seminars and workshops; and guided on-the-job-training. Regarding purposeful informal learning, research suggests that life roles could provide a meaningful substrate. Potential sub-classes would include learning related to work, the community and civil society, the household, and for general interest. As in the original proposal the new framework’s three categories will be analyzed according to field of study, providers, funders, duration, learners’ motivations, and other design and delivery features. This approach will allow in-depth examination of educational and learning activities across the three core categories.

Our review also reveals some serious limitations in available survey data on participation in adult education and learning. The importance attached to adult learning in Canadian and supranational policy documents seems at odds with efforts made to secure data reliable enough to support evidence-based policies. The policy discourse promotes private and public investments in adult learning as central, elements of a skills strategy. When it comes to developing and monitoring this
strategy, however, adult learning tends to be noted rather than elaborated. There seems to be a
mismatch between the heavy investment in instruments to measure competencies and the lack of
focus on the role of different parts of the 'adult learning system' in generating and maintaining
these competencies.

Looking closer at surveys like ASETS and PIAAC, three features stand out. First, there is a strong
focus on formal education. This is understandable as national ambitions to increase the pool of
competencies are often expressed in terms of targeted minimum levels of educational attainment in
the population. The level of formal education is also central in discussions around how to assist
vulnerable groups to improve their economic and social opportunities. However, as was evident in
the IALS and ALL surveys, non-formal learning activities are also important for a country's pool of
competencies. Further, some forms of non-formal learning activities help individuals to respond to
the economic and social challenges they face. Countries with high participation in adult learning,
such as the Nordic states, are distinguished by a well-developed non-formal sector (Rubenson,
2006). Most likely the existence of a vibrant non-formal adult education sector partly explains why
the Nordic countries have a larger skill pool than could be expected by their formal level of
educational attainment. This suggests that the skills debate should pay closer attention to the
nature and importance of non-formal learning activities. Always remembering the restrictions of a
survey and the difficulties in collecting information, it would be helpful to know the nature, extent
and providers of non-formal learning activities. Without this information it will be difficult to gauge
the performance of adult learning and training systems in generating required competencies, which
of course makes it impossible to examine the efficiency of certain policy levers more closely.

Second, a noticeable job-related bias in ASETS, and to a certain extent in the PIAAC survey, prevents
certain learning activities from being followed up, making it impossible to identify learning that,
according to the typology, should be defined as social/personal. The rationale for this approach is
never discussed but the logic seems to suggest that only job-related learning activities are
important for the national skills pool. The problem with this argument is that it is difficult to justify
such a policy on existing evidence. People studying for job-related reasons do apply the acquired
skills or knowledge at work to a higher degree than those who participate for personal
development, as the literature shows. However, more interesting is the extent to which what is
learned in one context can be transferred to another. Thus, in the 1997 Adult Education Training
Survey, half of those taking courses for personal reasons reported that the acquired skills or
knowledge were also greatly or somewhat useful at work. The same finding, albeit to a lesser extent,
is true for courses taken for job-related reasons, which also benefit participants in their personal lives (see for example Statistics Canada, 2001). Thus, from a strictly economic perspective, it is important not to neglect studies undertaken for other than job-related reasons. Further, the literature does not support a simplistic division into job-related and non-job-related, as there are many simultaneous reasons for actively engaging in learning.

Based on these observations we recommend that:

- Future surveys of adult learning and education should be designed to collect information on all types of formal and non-formal learning activities.
- Questionnaires on participation in adult learning and education should be designed from a broad lifelong learning perspective, rather than a narrow job-related focus.
- Canada should initiate an international research program to address the challenge of eliciting survey information on informal learning.
## ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASETS</td>
<td>Access and Support to Education and Training Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCESS</td>
<td>Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE-IT</td>
<td>Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AES</td>
<td>Adult Education Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BQ</td>
<td>Background questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFINTEA VI</td>
<td>Conférence internationale sur l’éducation des adultes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELLI</td>
<td>European Lifelong Learning Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCED</td>
<td>The International Standard Classification of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMEDA</td>
<td>Labour Market Development Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD-INES</td>
<td>OECD – Indicators of Educational Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIAAC</td>
<td>Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (OECD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRDC</td>
<td>Social Research and Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO-UIS</td>
<td>UNESCO Institute for Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UOE</td>
<td>UNESCO Institute for Statistics–OECD–EUROSTAT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. BACKGROUND

The policy community's recent interest in typologies of adult learning and education emerges from the evidence-based reform movement (see EC, 2011) and the understanding that effective policies of skills promotion are vital for a country's economic and social wellbeing. As a first step towards developing national skills strategies, countries are beginning to improve their understanding of the economic and wider benefits of adult learning – what the OECD calls 'skills intelligence' (2012, p. 106) –by collecting and analyzing empirical data on what skills people actually acquire and possess. The resulting data inform policy development and research which, in the past, relied on proxy measures such as years of schooling. Often, these measures failed to capture actual skills as people holding similar qualifications rarely possess the same skill sets. Especially in a comparative perspective, years of education mean little if the qualification has become obsolete and skills have not been exercised over time.

The OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is the most ambitious attempt so far to measure actual skills at an international comparative level. More importantly, PIAAC foregrounds the link between skills and success, for both individuals and nations. The program also examines how well education and training systems foster relevant competencies and which policy levers prove most effective (OECD, 2012, p. 106).

Despite conceptual and empirical progress in measuring competencies, the development of crucial linkages is less evident; we refer here to ties between competencies, forms of adult learning and education, policy levers, and outcomes. Such analyses are essential in gauging how well education and training systems perform in generating required competencies, and in clarifying which policy levers would best enhance socio-economic returns. Development of a robust typology of adult education and learning is a key component of such efforts. While various typologies have been proposed in the past, they have rarely captured the complexities of adult learning-in-practice, in which individual experiences overlap; distinctions are blurred; and neat administrative guidelines become irrelevant. Only rarely do the goals of adult learners coincide with those of a funder or provider. And adult learning outcomes and applications are frequently unplanned and unanticipated. Further, while the discourse on lifelong learning has shifted the focus away from adult education to adult learning it is the first that is most easily observed and measured, in the form of inputs, expenditures, or participation in adult education. These indicators underpin most of the existing data sets. Another persistent problem in the development of a useful typology is that
informal learning is neither measured nor classified, even though it makes up an important part of the purposeful learning in which people engage.

To address the evident gap, Myers, Conte and Rubenson (2011) developed a typology during a program of research, funded by HRSDC, on the scope and measurement of adult learning activities and their associated socio-economic returns. While initial feedback has been positive, the typology needs to be tested for utility in describing the actual participation patterns and practices of adult learning. This paper addresses three broad questions concerning utility:

- How does the typology compare to emerging international adult learning classification schemes?
- To what extent is the typology useful in describing actual participation patterns as captured by ASETS?
- How well does the typology describe the ways adult learning activities are organized provincially (using British Columbia as a case study)?

The report starts with a short presentation of the typology followed by a comparison between the typology and emerging international classifications. In the next section we examine critiques of the fundamental assumptions underlying the international classification schemes and report on comments on the typology from external reviewers. An analysis follows of the typology’s utility in classifying actual participation patterns as captured by ASETS. The final part takes a provincial perspective in terms of how learning activities are organized in BC.

### 1.1 The Typology

The typology describes five broad types of adult learning based on how adult education and training is organised in practice (Table 1.1). The flow chart in Figure 1.1 presents a decision tree that can be used to determine into which category a particular learning activity fits.

Below we summarize the key distinguishing features of each type:

---

1 The description of the typology is directly taken from the report *Adult learning typology: Adult learning and returns to training project* (Myers, Conte and Rubenson, 2011, pp. 6-19).
1. **Foundational learning** – Targeted to adults with skills levels below Grade 12 level or IALS Level 3
2. **Higher education** – Leads to credential issued by a recognized post-secondary educational institution
3. **Workplace-related learning** – Related to one’s current firm and supported at least to some extent by one’s employer, but does not lead to a post-secondary credential and is not targeted to individuals with skills below the Grade 12 level or IALS level 3
4. **Labour market-related learning** – Learning to improve labour market prospects but not related to one’s current firm, not targeted to adults below Grade 12 level or IALS level 3, and not leading to a post-secondary credential
5. **Personal/social learning** – Provided primarily for the purpose of personal/family, social, cultural, civic, and/or spiritual growth or enrichment
### Table 1.1: Five broad types of adult learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundational</th>
<th>Higher Education</th>
<th>Workplace-related</th>
<th>Labour Market-related</th>
<th>Personal/Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction on the basic skills and</td>
<td>Education or training that is offered</td>
<td>Learning related to the firm in which the learner is employed that is</td>
<td>Learning intended to improve labour market prospects, but not</td>
<td>Learning directed to individuals in the context of their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning strategies required for</td>
<td>by a post-secondary education</td>
<td>supported at least to some extent by the employer, but that is not</td>
<td>related to the firm in which a learner is employed, and not</td>
<td>families and communities for the purpose of personal, social,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>further learning or employment,</td>
<td>institution and leads to a post-</td>
<td>foundational or Higher education.</td>
<td>foundational or higher education.</td>
<td>cultural, civic, or spiritual growth or enrichment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>typically below the Grade 12 level or</td>
<td>secondary credential.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IALS Level 3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes non-formal courses as well as</td>
<td>Includes formal learning only.</td>
<td>Includes non-formal courses, workshops, and seminars, and informal</td>
<td>Includes non-formal courses, workshops and seminars and</td>
<td>Includes non-formal courses, workshops and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal high school/equivalency</td>
<td></td>
<td>on-the-job training.</td>
<td>informal training.</td>
<td>informal learning experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples:**
- Literacy & essential skills
- Academic upgrading
- High School diploma
- GED preparation
- Employability
- Language training
- Vocational
- Apprenticeship training
- Diploma/Certificate
- Undergraduate degree
- Master's degree
- PhD.
- Residency program
- Programs that lead to professional designation from professional/regulatory body
- Orientation
- Technical/Operational
- Soft skills
- Supervisory/Manager
- Employee/Career development
- Occupational health & safety, Protection
- Workshops, courses, or seminars offered by professional institutes to help individuals change careers
- Continuing education courses not part of a credentialed program
- Courses offered by private or non-profit organizations that focus on specific skills such as project management, or computer software
- Short courses funded by Skills Development such as First Aid/CPR/AED²
- Health promotion
- Sports and recreation
- Arts and culture
- Community development and leadership
- Religious/spiritual

² Short courses such as training to obtain an AZ truck driving license that are typically offered at private career colleges could be classified as either Higher Education or Labour Market-related learning. Also note that there are innovative approaches to adult learning that combine more than one of these five major categories. For example, some jurisdictions offer foundational skills training in the context of a higher education certificate (see Appendix B for more examples of hybrid approaches).
1.2 Classifying adult learning

Figure 1.1 is a decision tree that can be used to categorize learning activities into one of the five learning types. Below we provide a set of examples describing how this can be done.

**Using the decision tree as a tool to classify types of learning – four examples**

a) Learner is taking an academic upgrading course designed to give individuals without a high school diploma the skills they need to succeed at a college level

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential
- Does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so proceed to whether it is a course or workshop
- Activity is a course with structured format so it is considered **non-formal** learning
- It is preparing individuals without a secondary diploma for college so it is probably specifically targeting individuals below grade 12
- So it is classified as **foundational learning**

b) Learner is enrolled in a personal support worker program provided by a college

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity leads to a recognized credential offered by the education system
- The course leads to a college certificate as a personal support worker, so it is classified as **formal** learning
- Course does not lead to a secondary diploma or its equivalent so proceed to whether it is offered by a post-secondary institution
- Course is part of a program offered by a post-secondary institution
- So it is classified as **higher education**

c) Learner is taking a project management certificate program offer by a college and paid for by her employer

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity leads to a recognized credential offered by the education system
- The course is part of a series of courses leading to a college certificate in project management, so it is classified as **formal** learning
- Course does not lead to a secondary diploma or its equivalent so proceed to whether it is offered by a post-secondary institution
- Course is part of a program offered by a post-secondary institution
- So it is classified as **higher education**
- Note that we do not classify the program as workplace-related because our primary filter is the type of adult learning activity as organized in practice rather than who pays for the training.
d) Learner is taking a five day course on project management offered by a private company. The learner is paying for it himself in order to help him make a career change

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether course leads to a recognized credential offered by the education system
- The course does not result in a recognized credential offered by the education system so it is classified as non-formal learning
- It is not targeted to learners below Grade 12 or IALS Level 3, nor is it related to the firm in which the learner is currently employed
- Course is taken with purpose of advancing the learner’s labour market prospects
- So it is classified as labour market-related learning
Figure 1.1: Decision tool for classifying adult learning
1.3 Dimensions of adult learning

Types of adult learning can be further described in terms of who provides the program or course, who pays for it, the learner's purpose in taking it, the program duration, and other design and delivery features. This section provides a brief definition for each of these dimensions. Ideally we would embed these dimensions into the learning typology, but in practice this is simply not feasible. As we illustrate in our more detailed profiles within each major category of learning there are multiple providers, payers, and purposes.

Table 1.2: Key dimensions of adult learning activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Form</strong></th>
<th>Formal, non-formal, informal, incidental.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provider</strong></td>
<td>The institution in which the adult learning activity occurs, or by whom the activity is directed. Examples of adult learning providers include secondary schools, colleges, universities, employers, unions, and community centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>The reasons and objectives for participation, including job or career reasons, educational reasons, or personal interest. Note that this definition of purpose is from the perspective of the individual learner and not that of the program designers or providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>Refers broadly to time-related factors, such as length (e.g. the number of months or years that the program/course spans), volume (e.g. the actual number of hours, days, or weeks spent participating in the activity) and intensity (e.g. hours per week/month, weeks per year) of the learning activity required for completion and/or actually taken before participation ends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design</strong></td>
<td>Includes components such as learning goals, content, instructional materials, work experience (where relevant). This area requires further research to identify the elements most salient to effective design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery</strong></td>
<td>Refers to the methods of instruction, and includes traditional in-class approaches as well as use of multimedia, correspondence, and teacher-directed or self-paced learning. Many programs blend delivery methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructor quality</strong></td>
<td>The education, training and experience of the instructor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credential</strong></td>
<td>The type of credential earned, and its value in the labour market.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. THE TYPOLOGY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Development of surveys and classifications of adult learning activities has been spearheaded by UNESCO, OECD and EUROSTAT. Increasingly, these agencies are cooperating to enhance international coherence of educational statistics, including those relating to adult learning. So, for example, the joint UNESCO-UIS/OECD/EUROSTAT (UOE, 2011) collection of education statistics is to provide internationally comparable data on key aspects of education systems, specifically on participation and completion of education programs, as well as the cost and type of resources dedicated to education.

This section examines recent initiatives.

2.1 UNESCO

Two developments within UNESCO are of special interest, the typology of world systems of adult learning, developed in connection with the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), and especially UNESCO-UIS’s revamped International Standard Classification of Education (UNESCO, 2011). In this section we will also present one interesting European attempt to classify lifelong learning that is not produced by UNESCO but builds on one of its key reports.

2.1.1 The CONFINTEA VI system of adult learning

The CONFINTEA VI Global report on adult learning and education (GRALE) (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2009)3 presents an international framework for understanding adult education in UNESCO member states, under which countries are first classified according to their adult education provision. This classification, based on purpose and focus, is grouped into categories such as: basic/general competencies; vocational/technical and income generating/on-the-job training; life skills; post-literacy; health issues; knowledge generation and innovation; liberal/personal education; continuing education; teacher training; and secondary education. This classification is heavily influenced by what is going on in the developing countries.

3 The second GRALE has just been published (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013).
Second, the countries are grouped around six types of provisions (basic education/general competencies/literacy; vocational; life skills/health/post-literacy; knowledge generation/innovation; human rights education/civic education; liberal/personal education) and according to levels and types of involvement by stakeholder groups. The latter would include non-state actors such as community groups, non-governmental organizations, labour unions, indigenous groups, and charitable organizations. Collectively, such groups are defined as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Finally, the UNESCO report suggests an international typology organized around the *Education for All Development Index* and key issues such as the major direction of adult education; major providers; private-public balance, and the extent of lifelong learning perspectives. Figure 2-1 provides an overview. Although this typology offers a rough way to classify the main directions of adult learning in specific countries, it is not refined enough for more precise analysis of adult education provision.
### Figure 2.1: CONFINTEA VI TYPOLOGY OF ADULT EDUCATION PROVISION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Category 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Groupings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Adult literacy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Human resources development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab states Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td><strong>Lifelong learning framework</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia South and West</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Key issues in adult education
- Sustainable literacy, sustainable livelihoods; poverty reduction, HIV prevention; women’s education, education for indigenous groups; empowerment for social participation
- Community development, human resources development, continuing vocational education and training, social and economic integration
- Human resources development, personal and social development, social and vocational integration of new migrants, re-training for older and low-qualified workers, early childhood education

#### Adult education defined in terms of:
- **Major providers**
  - From international donors through to local NGOs and public adult learning and education organizations, community centres, and higher education
  - Private and public continuing vocational education and training organizations, community learning centres and via local associations
  - Higher education institutions, further, adult and community colleges and centres, public and private continuing vocational education and training organizations, commercial training companies, civil society and social partners
- **Private-public balance**
  - Public and international donors
  - Emerging private market
  - Public and private, with (quasi-) marketization
- **Adult education and lifelong learning**
  - Adult education lacking a lifelong learning perspective
  - Adult education towards lifelong learning
  - Adult education with clear lifelong learning perspective

Source: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2009, p. 54
2.1.2 ISCED 2011

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) by UNESCO-UIS, was first presented in the mid-1970s and most recently revised in 2011. ISCED permits the reporting of a wide range of education statistics that conform to common, internationally endorsed, definitions; it forms the basis of most supranational attempts to classify adult learning. From the outset ISCED has focused mainly on formal educational programs for youth populations. However, as the triad of formal, non-formal, and informal learning takes root in the policy discourse, supranational organizations are giving increased attention to learning throughout the life course. Note, though, that informal or incidental-random learning remains neglected.

ISCED 2011 (UNESCO, 2011) defines formal education as institutionalized, intentional, and planned through public organizations and private bodies recognized by the relevant national educational authorities. By definition, qualifications derived from formal education are accepted by these authorities and thus fall within the scope of ISCED.

Formal education arises from structured arrangements for education and learning, designed specifically for full time programs in educational institutions, as part of a continuous educational pathway. It includes education for all age groups in programs where content and qualifications are equivalent to those for initial education. Formal education also includes programs based partly in the workplace if they lead to qualifications accepted by national educational or equivalent authorities.

Non-formal education is defined in ISCED 2011 to include programs that are institutionalized, intentional, and planned by education providers to be complementary to formal education. Non-formal education does not require continuous structural pathways. Typically, it is provided in the form of short duration and/or low intensity courses, workshops or seminars. Qualifications earned through non-formal education are not usually recognized as equivalent to formal qualifications. ISCED 2011, makes a clear distinction between the two for statistical purposes and recommends using the criterion of equivalency (of content and/or of resulting qualifications) for the classification of non-formal educational programs.
The recognition of (prior) non-formal or informal learning has become more common in many countries over the last decade. Thus, ISCED 2011 provides specifically for the classification of qualifications earned through non-formal or informal means, where the skills, knowledge and competencies acquired are comparable to those of a formal educational program. ISCED 2011 also allows for modular programs: A combination of modules is recognised as an educational program if it meets ISCED’s definition of such. Hence, participants in any component modules are counted as enrolled in the entire program even if they take only a few of the modules which, on their own, may be shorter than the typical duration of the given ISCED level.

The typology elaborated in this document is closely aligned with ISCED 2011 definitions with the exception of the above-noted modular programs. In our typology, unless a participant in a course has the intention to complete the entire program, we regard them as participants in non-formal education. In the case of British Columbia, for example, substantial numbers of students are enrolled in Adult Basic Education programs; they take only one or two courses and have no intention of completing the full program. Our typology classifies these students as participants in non-formal education. Another difference between ISCED 2011 and our typology is that ISCED stipulates that non-formal education should be provided by an educational institution, whereas our typology recognizes multiple contexts.

2.1.3 UNESCO-inspired system of indicators of lifelong learning

The UNESCO landmark report Learning: The treasure within (Delors et al., 1996) has had a profound influence on a particular direction in the development of lifelong learning indicators. The initial framework developed by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL, 2010), was followed up in Germany by the European Lifelong Learning Indicators (ELLI) developed by the Bertelsmann Foundation (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010). ELLI builds on the four pillars/dimensions of learning (Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to be, and Learning to live together), laid out in the UNESCO report, to construct a typology. The official triad (formal, non-formal and informal learning) does not directly inform the typology. The ELLI uses a wide variety of learning indicators to capture these four dimensions.
There are two fundamental differences between the ELLI approach and other key typologies, including ours. First, it does not systematically separate formal, non-formal and informal learning but treats them as interchangeable and/or complementary recognizing that different aspects of the learning ‘system’ are at play across the four dimensions of learning. Learning to know is directly linked to the formal education system while learning to do is seen as dependent on formal vocational education, non-formal vocational education and training, and informal learning in the work environment. Learning to live together and learning to be are seen as outcomes of engagement in the activities of daily life and can be perceived as a combination of informal and accidental learning. The latter points to the second fundamental difference between this typology and others, namely the ELLI’s extensive understanding of informal and accidental learning as core element. This embrace causes the ELLI and CCL typologies to resonate with the lifelong learning rhetoric of supranational organizations.

While ELLI has several appealing features, from a public policy perspective – which strongly underpins the OECD and EU approaches noted below – there are some major problems and limitations connected with its use. Overall, ELLI is so broad that it becomes difficult to discern what contributions the various parts of the “learning system” can make.

2.2 OECD-PIAAC

OECD’s recently launched Programme on the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is the most comprehensive international survey of adult skills ever undertaken. It provides a crucial understanding of the role that the performance of education and training systems plays in supporting skills development over the lifecycle. The document introducing PIAAC’s conceptual framework (OECD, 2009) does not attempt to address the classification of adult learning but briefly touches on the issue (p. 5):

Access to lifelong learning by different groups remains a crucial issue for governments of the OECD member countries. Formal education, formal training, and informal training all contribute to the stock of human capital, and countries will display different profiles in how the human capital stock is built up. PIAAC will provide a snapshot of human capital investments by the incidence and intensity of training during the previous 12 month period. From a policy viewpoint it is important to not only obtain an indication of the volume of investments, but in the case of adult education and training to have information on how much of this training is taking place for work-related reasons, and on who is financing such investments. Since most
training received by individuals at work also benefits other employers, there is some concern that this will result in underinvestment. The BQ contains some indicators of these aspects.

OECD’s Indicators of Education Systems (INES) Network has shown some interest in the classification of adult learning but focuses mostly on studying the impact of the educational system. PIAAC, in contrast to EUROSTAT, never developed a specific classification system for adult learning but it is possible to gauge a general understanding of their approach to adult learning from the survey instrument and the classification options afforded by the data.

A review of the survey instrument (OECD, 2010a) highlights four issues. First, as in ISCED 2011, only formal and non-formal education are covered directly. Learning events are divided into two broad categories: formal learning and other organized learning (i.e. non-formal). Informal learning is not mentioned. Second, the classification of formal learning follows the ISCED 1997 definition and states “By program we mean a series of courses taken towards a diploma, certificate, degree, or license” (B.Q4A). If a respondent is unsure, they are told that a “program of studies, when completed, result[s] in formal qualifications at [a] primary, secondary, university or post-secondary level”. Second, the duration criterion in PIAAC is set to three months rather than the six month full time equivalency found in the EU Adult Education Surveys (AES). Third, there is a strong job-related focus in the PIAAC questionnaire. The initial question on motivation asks: “Were the main reasons for choosing to study for this qualification job related?” (OECD, 2010b, p. 21). Fourth, the questionnaire has a bias towards formal learning. Non-formal learning is covered by three questions on participation in: 1) courses conducted through open or distance education; 2) organized sessions for on-the-job training or training by supervisors or co-workers; and 3) courses or private lessons not already reported. No attempt is made to inquire into the nature of these non-formal learning activities. The only aspects covered are whether the activities were taken for job-related reasons and the total time spent in non-formal learning. In view of the importance given to non-formal learning and informal learning in PIAAC’s conceptual framework, it is puzzling why greater attention is not paid to broader exploration of adult learning. This reluctance may well undermine PIAAC’s policy relevance, especially in terms of the relative efficiency of different policy levers applied to lifelong learning.

With regard to our typology, PIAAC’s embrace of ISCED 1997 makes possible to identify formal educational activities as either foundational or higher education. An advantage of
using the ISCED system is that the formal learning activities can be grouped into categories, which are of interest when exploring the impact on skill structures and other outcomes. Unfortunately the information collected in PIAAC on the nature of non-formal learning activities is rarely detailed enough to classify the activities according to our typology’s five key categories of learning. In some instances (e.g. B_Q12 c: “During the last 12 months have you attended any organised sessions for on the job training or training by supervisors or co-workers?”), it is straightforward to classify the activity (in this case, as workplace learning). However, the other four direct questions on non-formal activities are more problematic to classify according to the typology.

2.3 EUROSTAT

The European Commission/EUROSTAT has conducted the most elaborate work to date on a classification system of adult learning. This work is not only sophisticated but was also specifically developed to support a coherent European survey on participation in adult education and training (EC, 2005). Consequently the EUROSTAT classification scheme came to be used as a foundation for our typology. Below, we first recapitulate the fundamental structures of the original EUROSTAT typology; subsequently we briefly discuss our experiences with it in connection with the 2007 AES and then examine changes in the classification made in the 2011 instrument.

The EUROSTAT classification system is organized around learning activities, defined as “any activities of an individual organised with the intention to improve his/her knowledge, skills and competence” (EC, 2005, p. 20). The typology uses single learning activities as basic building blocks of a classification system that can capture and describe all learning activities. The framework creates a flow chart able to classify activities as formal, non-formal and informal learning respectively, using three key criteria (see Figure 2.2).

The first criterion is “intention to learn”. If there is no intention to learn the activity is not a learning activity. Consequently this framework excludes all incidental learning. Learning activities deemed to be intentional then meet the second filter: institutionalization. Learning activities are considered institutionalized when there is an organization providing structured arrangements including a student-teacher relationship especially designed for education and learning. Institutionalised learning activities happen when there is a providing
agency/body responsible for: determining the teaching/learning method, scheduling of the learning, admission requirements, and location of the learning/teaching facility. Informal learning activities are not institutionalised (p. 23).

Hence, according to the framework, intentional learning activities that are deemed not to be institutionalized are classified as informal learning activities.

The institutionalized learning activities are then filtered through a third criterion: whether or not they are included in the National Qualifications Framework (NFQ). The NFQ could take the form of a regulatory document, which stipulates the qualifications and their relative positions in a hierarchy of learning achievements as well as the awarding bodies that provide or deliver these qualifications. An institutionalized learning activity (i.e. education in the broader sense) is formal when its completion leads to a learning achievement that is possible to position within the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) (p. 23). Activities that fulfill this third criterion are classified as formal learning activities while those not included in the NFQ are categorized as non-formal learning.

Figure 2.2: AES allocation of education and learning activities

Source: EC, 2005, p. 23

While our typology in some ways resembles the one developed by EUROSTAT, there are some fundamental differences. Both typologies rely on learning activities as the basic building blocks. Both recognize the official triad of formal, non-formal and informal learning,
Adult learning typology

thereby excluding incidental learning; and both make institutionalization a fundamental criterion in the classification scheme. The most notable difference is that the EUROSTAT typology classifies the learning activity according to the official triad while our typology aims to identify five key learning categories: foundational, higher education, workplace-related, labour market-related and social/personal. Our typology recognizes the triad but only as an intermediate step in arriving at the five fundamental categories of learning. Further, with the exception of higher education (which includes only formal learning) our categories allow for a blend of formal, non-formal and informal activities. Our typology uses form of delivery as a way to separate non-formal and informal, while EUROSTAT uses institutionalization as the separation criterion. Finally, as Canada does not recognize a National Qualifications Framework, the distinction between formal and informal learning is based on whether or not the program leads to a recognized credential rather than whether it is included in the NFQ. The classification criteria used in our typology are more complex than those of EUROSTAT, involving no less than six dimensions: intention; pathway to a recognized credential; relationship to work; motives; provider; and educational level. Using the triad as a point of departure, the AES collects information on several aspects of the three forms of learning (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Information collected for AES learning activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Formal education</th>
<th>Non-formal education</th>
<th>Informal learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content (D1)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Type</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Level (according to ISCED)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Subject/Field (based on ISCED)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D2 Recognition of learning outcomes</strong></td>
<td>C*</td>
<td></td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D3 Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Taught hours (during the ref. period)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Taught hours that are</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the review of the 2007 pilot (EUROSTAT, 2012b), AES revealed a need to improve definitions of core concepts as the originals were unclear, jeopardizing the collection of coherent statistics on participation in adult education and training. Countries had problems interpreting the terminology of formal and non-formal education and training, e.g. how to classify non-formal training offered by formal institutions and formal training provided by trade unions and employers. The overall conclusion was that without a better understanding of distinctions between the various categories of learning, it would be impossible to collect comparable measures across countries - or even reliable measures at the national level. The urgent need for clarification is endorsed by UIS-UNESCO and the OECD who, together with EUROSTAT, are developing consistent guidelines for the classification of formal, non-formal and informal learning. One important step in this work, discussed earlier, is the 2011 revision of ISCED.

While the basic structure of the EUROSTAT typology remains unchanged in the revision of the AES (EUROSTAT, 2012b), important revisions and clarifications appear in the definitions of the three key types of learning. While these changes relate partly to correspondence with ISCED 2011, EUROSTAT has also introduced additional criteria and clarifications to the definition of formal education (EUROSTAT, 2012a, p. 139):
The “hierarchy-level” criterion: formal learning activity can be seen as a complex “ladder” of education that requires the successful completion of one level-grade before proceeding to the next one.

Admission requirements: a formal learning activity is subject to admission requirements that have to be fulfilled in order to gain access to training e. g. prior education attainment.

Registration requirements: a formal education is typically subject to registration, i. e. the requirement or set of requirements that need to be filled to record formally the enrolment to learning.

Duration requirements (new for 2012): formal educational programs should be at least one semester of theoretical duration (or equivalent).

Recognition requirements (new for 2012): formal educational programs have to be recognized by relevant national authorities. While formal education typically takes place in educational institutions, programs that take place partly or fully at the workplace may also be considered formal education if they lead to a certification that is recognized by national authorities.

The EUROSTAT classification of formal education shares many of the definitions of ISCED but differs in its stipulation of admission and registration requirements. EUROSTAT argues that the admission and registration criteria are useful to define formal education. A minimum duration of six months or one semester equivalent of full time studies is included in both the UOE and the AES 2012. This criterion is not a requirement of our typology which allows programs shorter than six months of full time studies to be classified as formal education. To define modular programs as formal education, the interviewer must establish that the respondent is in fact aiming to acquire a formal qualification. Where a person is attending the same module without intending to complete the whole program, their studies are classified as non-formal. Following this logic, students enrolled in an individual course within a foundational program will be deemed to have participated in a non-formal learning activity.

Turning to non-formal learning, EUROSTAT (2012b), notes that the following activities should be considered as such provided they cannot be classified as formal:
1. **Private lessons or courses** (classroom instruction, lecture or a theoretical and practical course): A course is defined as "a planned series of single learning activities in a particular range of subject-matters offered by a provider" (p. 6). Courses are typically subject-oriented and are taught by one or more persons specialized in the field(s) of education and training. They may take place in one or more settings/environments:

- **Via classroom instruction (including lectures):** includes learning organized in a classroom for a group of people and is built around the transmission of knowledge by a teacher/tutor/instructor with the intention to instruct and educate. It may or may not include discussion on a given subject.

- **Combined theoretical-practical courses (including workshops):** covers all courses combining classroom instruction (theoretical) with practice in real or simulated situations.

- **Courses conducted through open and distance education.**

- **Private tuition (private lessons):** a planned series of (supplementary) learning experiences offered by experts selected to deepen knowledge or skills and earn more intensively; usually undertaken by only one or very few learners. Typically the tutor is also the “provider.”

2. **Courses conducted through open and distance education:** courses are similar to those provided face-to-face, i.e. they may have elements like curriculum, registration, tutoring, and tests but postal or electronic media link instructors/teachers/tutors with students rather than a common classroom. Instructors and students interact but with a delay rather than simultaneously.

3. **Seminars or workshops:** Sessions combine theoretical instruction with “hands-on” training provided during a conference or congress.

4. **Guided on-the-job training:** the 2007 pilot follow-up noted difficulties with the definition of guided on-the-job training and the difference between such training and informal learning in the workplace. In an attempt to clarify, the follow-up noted that five main criteria must be satisfied for an activity to be classified as *guided on-the-job training* (EUROSTAT, 2012b, p. 7):
- **work-based**, localized in either the immediate place of work or in the work situation and using normal tools of work
- **planned periods of training**, instruction, or practical experience
- **a tutor or instructor** is required to guide participants
- **organized or initiated by the employer** to facilitate adaptation of staff to the company's organization and operating procedures, etc. as well as specific job related-instructions
- **a practical activity** undertaken by individuals

ISCED 2011 states that to be recognized as such, non-formal education should be offered by an educational provider while AES only mentions institutionalized, intentional, and planned activities. This is an important difference as reference to educational providers excludes activities organized by enterprises; these account for a large share of learning activities. While this schema may further distinguish between firm-specific and general training, or classroom-based and on-the-job training, none of these distinctions refers to types of training actually delivered in practice. Employers may sponsor a wide range of training, from a short occupational health and safety course, to a week-long leadership program, or a project management certificate obtained at a local community college. Similarly governments may sponsor a range of programs from short employability training focused on basic life skills, to advanced diplomas widely respected and in high demand in the local labour market. Thus, existing approaches have led to considerable conceptual confusion and have not helped advance our understanding of which types of education and training work best for different types of learners.

From the perspective of adult learning, the 2012 AES questionnaire has several advantages over those used in connection with PIAAC or ASETS. First, it suffers less from what we call “job-related” bias. Second, it contains a module on informal purposeful learning in addition to the classification of formal and non-formal learning activities. Third, information on duration is being collected for two of the non-formal learning activities. In terms of our typology, the richer data collected will be more useful in classifying types of learning than the data collected in PIAAC or ASETS. Hence, the EUROSTAT approach is more in line with the recent broadening of the policy discourse. It promotes lifelong learning as a means for
meeting employment and work related demands. Also, it makes ‘important contributions to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development’ (EU, 2011, p. 1.).
3. CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS AND EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE TYPOLOGY

Development of a typology forces critical decisions on how to define central concepts, which will have significant impact on the reporting of participation. This in turn will frame our understanding of the linkages between engagement in adult learning activities, distribution of competencies, and the effectiveness of various policy levers. In this section we first examine the typology in the context of conceptual understandings underlying the supranational policy discourse and critiques in the scholarly literature. Subsequently, we report briefly on an informal survey with a group of experts asked to review the typology.

3.1 The supranational discourse and its critics

The supranational discourse on participation in lifelong learning is informed by a longstanding triadic distinction between formal, non-formal and informal adult learning (see e.g. OECD, 1996 and EC, 2000; EU, 2011). The scholarly literature raises grave concerns about the soundness and utility of this distinction. Hefler (2012) notes that the triad seems to have been accepted by supranational organizations and national policy makers without serious reflection on its deeper meaning and implications. We will scrutinize the potential consequences of accepting the triad as a foundation for our typology. The discussion starts with a brief review of how the triad emerged as the accepted conceptual framework.

A somewhat different version of the triad appeared in the educational policy and planning literature of the late 1960s (see Coombs, 1968; Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). At the time interest was driven by the need to address education for rural development in the Third World, and growing scepticism about the ability of formal education to promote broad economic, political, and social development. Discussion focused primarily on whether and how non-formal education could be a solution to such problems. The core concept then was education rather than learning. Further, despite the triadic classification, informal education was seldom addressed.

Today's discourse links not to these prior discussions of education and development, but rather to the promotion of lifelong learning as a response to challenges of the so-called knowledge-based economy and society. By the late 1990s, supranational organizations had embraced the argument that learning is not necessarily intentional and structured, nor
always delivered in institutional settings (EC, 2000; OECD, 1996). Longstanding research in the field of adult education, focused on self-directed learning, had reached similar conclusions but did not inform the debate. Rather, the supranational’s enthusiasm for informal learning grew primarily from studies of production processes. Micro-level economic theory had concluded that “education must be viewed not only as an investment but also as a factor of production” (Welch, 1970, p. 41). Drawing on this line of research, OECD noted that, “education’ is becoming less clearly distinct from that which is the economy” (OECD, 1989, p. 19). As Tuijnman and Boström (2002) astutely observe:

The emphasis on “learning” rather than “education” is highly significant because it reduces the traditional preoccupation with structures and institutions and instead focuses on the individual. ...the realisation of lifelong learning depends to a large degree on the capacity and motivation of individuals to take care of their own learning (p. 103).

Thinking about lifelong learning in this broad, all-encompassing way would have far-reaching consequences for education and training policies, as well as the monitoring of participation and outcomes. The German scholar Dohmen (1996) claimed that the informal or “everyday” learning, whether positive or negative, that occurs in daily life forms the very core of lifelong learning. The issue here is the nature and structure of everyday experiences and their consequences on a person's learning processes, ways of thinking, and competencies. What challenges do people face? What possibilities for learning do these challenges create? Is it possible to fruitfully approach policy on lifelong learning from such a broad understanding of the concept (Griffin, 1999)? While acknowledging the broad view espoused by Dohmen, supranational organizations tend to focus on what they call intentional informal learning, which is also the position underlying our typology.

The triad, as presented by supranational bodies, is really about the context in which learning takes place; it says little about learning as such. Within the European Employment Strategy, for example, member states define lifelong learning as “all purposeful learning activity undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence” (EC, 2000, p. 12). The main concern is how learning occurring in informal and non-formal settings can be assessed, in terms of formal learning, through procedures of prior learning assessment. So far, then, the critical debate on the triad taking place in the scholarly literature has raised little interest in the policy community.
3.2 The triad in the scholarly literature

While some scholars refute the fundamental assumptions on which the triad rests, others point to aspects that need to be addressed if the goal is to use the triad as a basis for studying learning outcomes. Among those who refute the triad, a common thread in recent empirical and theoretical work questions the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning and argues that distinctions are artificial (Callanan, Cervantes & Loomis, 2011; Hodkinson, 2011). One review of formal vs. informal learning found that different studies used different criteria, with little overlap, to classify learning activities (Colley, Hodkinson & Malcolm, 2003). In fact, according to Colley and colleagues, a set of universal criteria used by all writers did not seem to exist. As a result learning activities classified as formal by some scholars would be identified as informal by others. According to the authors, the main conclusion of their review was that both types of learning activities contain elements of formality and informality related mainly to location, purposes, processes, and content. Rather than a clear distinction, then, this duality characterized the situation in practice.

According to Hodkinson (2011) confusion around distinguishing formal and informal learning stems from profound disagreements about the nature of learning itself. Building on Sfard (1998), Hodkinson argues that scholars who adopt a cognitive psychological perspective ascribe to an acquisition metaphor for learning. Here the focus is on learning as a cognitive mental process and on the nature of learning, either in relation to early childhood or within educational institutions. Educational psychologists in this tradition study how various aspects related to teaching can improve students’ learning. It is not surprising, then, as Hodkinson notes, that cognitive-based researchers tend to neglect many informal attributes of learning. In contrast he points to situated learning traditions where the metaphor is participation rather than acquisition. The underlying assumption here is that learning should not be regarded as a separate process since it occurs through participation in various activities like at school, work, family and community. For scholars in the situated tradition, learning is embodied; it involves the practical and affective realms as well as the cognitive, and learning is often tacit. Hodkinson’s position is very close to Dohmen’s expansive understanding of ‘learning as life;’ it puts a focus on informal and incidental learning.
Billett (2002), embracing the situated learning paradigm, makes the interesting argument that all learning contains some aspects of formality. As an example he points to the workplace where the practices and consequent learning are themselves partly formalized, institutionalized through structures such as work hierarchies, rules, and procedures. From this perspective, what most typologies, including ours, classify as purposeful informal learning could actually be labeled as formal. Similarly, in her discussion of museum learning, Rogoff (mentioned in Callanan, Cervantes & Loomis, 2011, p. 646) argues that museums are to be considered formal organizations with goals, formal structures and technologies. She notes that while museums differ structurally from schools, they organize learning activities in predictable ways reflecting institutionalized social values about science learning.

Another major criticism comes from scholars who accept, in principal, that learning can be classified according to a triad but are sceptical about how it is being done and what is not taken into account. The main concern is that insufficient attention is being paid to the link between learning outcomes and the institutional context in which learning activities occur. (see e.g. Hefler, 2012). Hefler's critique can be traced back to debates in the 1970s about non-formal education and development in which critics argued that while students in the non-formal system might acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies, they might still not gain the wider benefits that the institutionalized education system delivers for its graduates; in other words, non-formal education is not the solution to inequalities. Bock (1976, p. 349 cited in Hefler, 2012, p. 42) states:

If schools are seen as serving an important mobility management function, strictly controlling access to elite status through the application of certification rules, then non-formal education is viewed as potentially even more inhibiting of the mobility prospects of lower status groups. For, by not providing either the accepted and socially valued certification or the non-cognitive attributes necessary for ‘promobility’, non-formal education locks workers into the lower segment of the occupational structure.

Bock is talking about what Pierre Bourdieu calls “symbolic capital” and John Meyer (1977) describes as the “social charter” of an institution. These terms speak to the potential outcomes associated not only with acquired human capital but also the symbolic capital derived from association with a specific institution. In practical terms, we may ask to what extent successful participation in a certain learning activity defines eligibility for promotion, employment or progress to higher levels of education. For Hefler (2012), the existence or absence of a particular social charter is the most vital aspect to note when developing a
Typology. Ideally, to understand, for example, the economic outcome of a particular type of education, it would be necessary to know its institutional status (its social charter or symbolic capital), not only whether it is formal, non-formal or informal. This information is not readily accessible in surveys of individuals but would most likely demand access registration data. With regard to the typology, this problem indicates the danger of adopting broad categories, such as ‘foundational and (especially) ‘higher education’, which require further definition; this limitation was noted by the experts who reviewed the typology.

3.3 External review of the typology

In order to receive input on the typology we undertook a small informal survey of seven experts in the field. The following were contacted:

- Dr. Per Andersson, Sweden, an expert on classification in connection with prior learning assessment.
- Dr. Richard Desjardins, OECD-PIAAC.
- Dr. Gunther Hefler, Austria, who recently completed a dissertation on the very topic of typologies in adult learning.
- Dr. Boateng Sadiq Kwesi, who was responsible for the EUROSTAT Adult Education Survey.
- Professor Ides Nicaise, Belgium, who worked on classification systems in the EC Framework 6 program Lifelong Learning in Europe 2010.
- Professor Ellu Saar, Estonia, who worked on classification systems in the EC Framework 6 program Lifelong Learning in Europe 2010.
- Professor Bjarne Wahlgren, Denmark, who has addressed the issue of classification within the framework of national evaluation of adult learning.

Although not a formal evaluation, the expert review is of interest as it raises some important issues. The responses vary from a one-page e-mail to a detailed eight-page report. Overall, all seven expressed an appreciation for the work done; the response from Dr. Hefler is representative:

The typology is up-to-date and resonates well with recent methodologies for classifying adult learners (1) and activities in adult education (2) within household surveys on individual participation in educational/learning activities. In particular, recent developments for cross-country comparative surveys within the European Union (Labour Force Survey, Ad hoc Module on
Lifelong Learning in 2003, Adult Education Survey I (2005-2007), AES II (2010-onwards)) and the methodologies for statistics of adult education in North America (in particular with regard to higher education) are well observed. It addresses several key weaknesses of given methodologies, in particular that existing typologies, using simple bifurcations (as employer-sponsored versus privately sponsored training; formal versus non-formal; job related versus non-job related and so forth) ending up with highly disparate groups of educational activities, which could not be used reasonably for further analysis, as, for example, estimates for the economic and social returns of investments in learning activities.

However, the reviewers also note that the proposed typology suffers from various drawbacks and challenges and some raise the concern that it may group together educational activities that are too disparate, especially if used in comparative analyses. The key challenges identified are briefly addressed. First, reviewers raise issues about the use of the triad as a basis for the typology. Some argue that when so-called formal and non-formal learning is addressed, then 'education' is the proper term to use, in order to make differences between types of instruction (formal, non-formal, informal) more distinct. Three reviewers suggest that adult learning, taken as part of adult development, is a broader concept that includes unconscious (non-intended) learning. Reinforcing theoretical frameworks in the scholarly literature, they note that incidental learning in the workplace is by far the most important source for learning.

Second, reviewers urge caution about using motivation as a classification criterion in the typology. They argue that an individual’s perceptions of their motives for participation in learning activities (whether job-related or private) are often highly arbitrary. Hence, such perceptions do not provide a sound basis for classification and allow heterogeneous activities to become subsumed under one heading. They recommend, where possible, to collect and use detailed information on the participation event (provider, setting, duration, workload, etc.).

Third, reviewers question the possibility of making clear distinctions between the five categories of learning laid out in the typology. They note, for example, that both foundational learning and higher education learning can relate to the workplace, the labour market, or personal goals. Dr. Desjardins states: "It seems there is a higher order structure and that it remains difficult to argue that these types are mutually exclusive". Another complicating factor is the increase in hybrid programs that include both foundational and higher education learning activities. To better distinguish between formal and non-formal
programs, reviewers suggest a focus on the institutions and the issued credentials, rather than the educational processes involved. While formal and non-formal programs may differ little in terms of instructional approaches or learning outcomes, there may be marked differences in the value of the awarded credentials.

Similarly, some reviewers highlight the need to pay closer attention to classification of learning levels. One reviewer, for example, recommends using subtypes for the category of foundational learning, such as second chance education versus basic skills education, since they follow different institutional logics and are associated with radically different economic and social outcomes. Following the same principle, they argue that higher education may be too broad a category. Finally, two reviewers hint at difficulty with using ‘employer’s support’ as the criterion that distinguishes workplace-related and labour market-related learning activities. While it may seem straightforward, they note that in some countries collective bargaining may offer an employee access to employer-sponsored learning activities that might be perceived to fall under the category of labour market-related learning.
4. AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TYPOLOGY USING ASETS

Recent development of adult learning typologies stems from the policy community’s interest in collecting information on learning activities in their populations. The goal is to better understand the impact of learning activities on skills distribution and the wider economic and social benefits that eventually result. The value of any typology will depend on: a) the extent to which it can be useful in the development and/or analysis of surveys on adult learning; and: b) the extent to which it allows meaningful analyses of outcomes. In this section we address if and how well our typology can assist in classifying data collected in the 2008 Access and Support to Education and Training Survey (ASETS), but we comment on point b as well. This analysis also discusses the usefulness of ASETS as a data collection instrument for adult learning. The empirical analysis allows a closer examination of some of the reviewers’ concerns. Our interest here is to test the typology rather than to provide a picture of Canadians’ participation in adult learning. We begin with a word on how the sample was defined.

4.1 Defining adult learners

In the analyses presented in this paper adults were defined as follows:

**INCLUDE:**
1. All adults aged 25 to 54; repeat again for adults age 25-65
2. Adults age 20 to 24 who are pursuing foundational learning
   a. Include high school/equivalent program (MR_Q02=01) and basic skills courses (CN_Q01=11 or 13)
3. Adults age 20 to 24 who are in ‘adult social roles’ such as taking care of a family or working full-time as primary activity
   a. Taking care of family as main activity: EM_Q02=05
   b. Working as main activity: EM_Q02=01

**EXCLUDE:**
1. Adults pursuing an advanced degree
   a. Exclude EC_Q12=03 and EC_Q13=04, 05, 06, 07, and 08

---

4 The analyses of the ASETS data, on which this chapter is based, have been conducted by Douwere Grekou at The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation.
5 The definitions of the sample derive from the document “Describing adult learners and learning with ASETS data - updated July 2011” by Taylor Shek-wai Hui.
6 The code refers to question identification number in the ASETS survey.
2. Adults who participated in learning activity primarily for non-labour market reasons
   
a. Exclude MR_Q03=02 and 04

Notice that MR_Q02 and MR_Q03 are asked for up to 10 programs, so there are two possible sample definitions to be used: those who have done ___ in the most recent program (MR1_Q02 and MR1_Q03) or those who have done ___ in any of the programs (MR1_Q02 to MR10_Q02 and MR1_Q03 to MR10_Q03). This difference is interacted with the age range to form four possible samples. After comparing the estimates for the two samples and finding negligible differences, it was decided to primarily present the results based on analyses of the most recent program.

Also notice that the inclusion of those 20 to 24 yrs. of age and CN_Q01=11 or 13 does not cover all who took basic skills courses, since CN_Q01 was asked selectively on only one randomly selected job-related course. Given that half of those who participated in non-formal learning took more than one course, the definition omits roughly the same number of people who took basic skills courses. It affects less than one per cent of the male population, but it could be a problem for the female population.

In the tables, shaded areas refer to cells with less than five observations and, following a Statistics Canada rule, they are masked. All statistics were estimated with corresponding sampling weight.

Before discussing the five core types of learning, we briefly look at the ASETS data and the typology with regard to the learning triad: formal, non-formal and informal.

4.2 The triad

The ASETS survey covers formal and non-formal learning but provides no information on informal learning. In this respect it differs from the 2011 European Adult Education Survey (AES) that includes a module on purposeful informal learning. The criteria for formal and non-formal learning presented in the typology allow for clear classification of the learning activities reported in the ASETS. Participation in a course that forms a module in a formal program, but where the person only intended to take the special course, is classified as a non-formal learning activity. The distribution of participation in formal and non-formal learning in Canada is presented in Table 4.1.
Table 4.1: Participation in formal and non-formal learning, percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Learning</th>
<th>Non-Formal Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</td>
<td>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the randomly select course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</td>
<td>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the randomly select course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just less than a third of the respondents reported having participated in a non-formal learning event and about ten per cent had been enrolled in a formal program. It should be noted that the definition for formal program, as stated in the typology, does not stipulate a minimum length of a program as does the AES (six months). If we add this criterion, the overall participation rate in the older sample would drop to around eight per cent. The overall conclusion is that the typology, as well as the ASETS, are well suited for classifying learning activities into the broad categories, formal and non-formal learning, as these categories are understood in the supranational discourse.

### 4.3 Foundational learning

Because the ASETS questionnaire is differently set up for programs and courses we had to conduct a separate analysis for non-formal foundational courses/workshops/seminars and formal foundational programs (i.e. high school or equivalency programs).

**Foundational – Non-formal courses**

For non-formal courses, detailed questions are asked only about one randomly selected course that a learner took for job-related reasons. This limitation in the ASETS creates problems using the typology for correctly classifying and estimating the rate of non-formal foundational learning activities. There is no information on what kind of activities those who took a course for non job-related reasons were engaged in. However, using the initial question on participation in non-formal learning activities, we can estimate that 18 per cent of women and 12 per cent of men in the 25-65 sample had been involved in at least one non-formal learning activity that was not job-related. It is possible that a large proportion
were involved in foundational activities but they could also be of a different nature. It is apparent that the limitations put on what course to follow up in the ASETS restricts the usefulness of the typology. A second issue stems from the fact that many of the respondents reported having been engaged in more than one non-formal job-related learning activity. Given that more than half of our sample (56 per cent) that reported participating in a non-formal course took more than one job-related course, our analysis may be excluding about half of all job-related basic skills programs in which our sample participated. Therefore the participation rates for basic skills and developmental courses, see Table 4.2, should be considered with caution.

Table 4.2: Participation in non-formal foundational learning activities, percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the randomly select course</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in randomly select course</th>
<th>Per cent of those that engaged in least one non-formal job-related activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 reflects clear gender differences with women participating in non-formal learning activities of a foundational nature more often than men.

In the typology the five key types of adult learning are further described in terms of key dimensions like who provides the program or course, who pays for it, the learner’s purpose in taking it, the program duration and other design and delivery features. The ASETS make it possible to describe non-formal foundational learning in terms of provider, payer, purpose, prerequisites, distance education and one design feature, form of instruction in classroom based courses. One important aspect missing is duration of foundational non-formal activities.

Formal foundational learning activities
There are issues with using the ASETS for classifying formal foundational learning. For all formal programs (foundational and higher education alike), information related to the key
dimensions is collected for a learner’s most recent program in the reference year. As we found that among our sample - the large majority (87 per cent) took only one program in the reference period - this is less of a problem than was noticed for non-formal foundational courses. However, a more serious shortcoming is the fact that some questions, for example regarding payer and provider, exclude learners taking a high school program if they are under age 30. Our sensitivity analysis reveals that no less than 63 per cent of the 25 to 65 sample pursuing such studies in the most recent program were under the age of 30. It should be noted that this does not affect the estimate of overall participation in formal foundational learning activities, see Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Participation in formal foundational learning activities, percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in any program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in any program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident in Table 4.3, the fact that full information was collected only for the most recent program will not have any major implications for the analysis. However, as noted, the age restriction on some of the questions means that the findings on these key dimensions may be unreliable.

4.4 Higher education

As noted above for educational programs, the survey focuses on the dimensions of the respondents' most recent program. We conduct a sensitivity analysis to test whether these exclusions are a serious limitation to using ASETS data to describe types of higher education, see Table 4.4. The data presented there reveal that the estimated participation rates are almost identical in the two samples. It is therefore safe to conclude that using the information collected on the most recent higher education program provides a reliable picture of this sector.
Table 4.4: Participation in higher education, percentage pursuing higher education in any program and percentage pursuing higher education in the most recent program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing higher education in any program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing higher education in any program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing higher education in the most recent program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing higher education in the most recent program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Workplace-related learning

According to the definition, workplace-related learning consists of the most recent/randomly selected program or course supported by employers but with no foundational learning or higher education. Accordingly nothing in formal learning will fit this workplace-related learning definition. A second comment is that we have to rely on the most recent/randomly selected course since the information about employer support is available for that program or course only. Following this definition, Table 4.5 shows an overall participation rate for those aged 25 to 65 of 19.1 per cent in workplace-related learning.

Table 4.5: Participation in workplace-related learning, percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 25 to 54 or in adult social roles</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65 or in adult social roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The estimated figures are most likely an underestimation caused by the way workplace-learning is defined in the typology. As noted above, the experts question this definition and are concerned that part of what we have labeled as foundational and higher education might as well be referred to as workplace-related learning. To further explore this concern we look more closely at the role employers are playing in foundational and higher education.
As demonstrated in Tables 4.6-4.8 the employer plays a major role in what we have classified as non-formal foundational learning. The employer provided 43.7 per cent of all the non-formal foundational learning events taken by those in the sample aged 25-65. Well over half of the learning events (62.3 per cent) were financed by the employer and about the same proportion (58.4 per cent) noted that the employer had required them to take the course. An astonishing 83.6 per cent of the men mentioned that they had been required by their employer to take non-formal foundational learning.

**Table 4.6: Providers of non-formal foundational learning, percentages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the randomly select course</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the randomly select course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College or CEGEP</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade/vocational school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University or University College</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priv. training/business sch.</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7: Payer of non-formal foundational learning, percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payer</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the randomly select course</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the randomly select course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self/family</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimbursed</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional assoc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No fees</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Requested by whom to take non-formal foundational learning, percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requested by</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the randomly select course</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the randomly select course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>85.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A client</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A professional association</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A collective agreement</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turning to formal foundational learning, as might be expected it is evident that the employer does not play any noticeable role in this form of learning activity, see Table 4.9.
Table 4.9: Payer formal foundational learning, percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payer</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self/family</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>79.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimbursed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional assoc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No fees</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The situation concerning higher education is quite similar with the employer playing a minor role providing some economic support to 14 per cent of the participants. This should be compared to 84 per cent reporting self-financing.

In conclusion, the empirical evidence strongly supports the experts’ concerns and suggests that it is impossible to disentangle workplace-related learning and non-formal foundational learning following the definitions provided in the typology. Concerning formal foundational learning as well as higher education, there are no problems and the distinctions are readily made.

4.6 Labour market-related learning

In the typology, labour market-related learning is defined as the most recent/randomly selected program or course taken for job-related or educational reasons and that is not supported by employers and where there is no foundational learning or higher education.

The first two comments about this definition are the same as the ones from the workplace-related definition: (1) nothing in formal learning will fit this definition and (2) we have to rely on the most recent/randomly selected course only (employer support available for that
program or course only). Following this definition, see Table 4.10, 7.7 per cent of the 25 to 65 years olds reported participating in labour market-related learning.

**Table 4.10: Participation in labour market-related learning, percentages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age 25 to 54 or in adult social roles</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65 or in adult social roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with workplace-related learning, there are issues surrounding these figures, which go back to the definition. Looking at who paid for the labour market-related activities, Table 4.11, we find to our surprise that a large group (22.4 per cent) mentions the employer. This reveals a problem with our definition: the assumption was that this type of learning was not to be supported by employers, suggesting a need to change the definition.

**Table 4.11: Payer of labour-market related learning, percentages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payer</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54 or in adult social roles</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65 or in adult social roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own business</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self/family</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimbursed</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional assoc.</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No fees</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The experts raised the possibility that an individual can engage in a formal program for labour market-related reasons, something which the typology does not allow. Unfortunately there is no good way of checking this concern using the ASETS. However, the following analysis provides an indication of the problem alluded to by the experts. Table 4.12 reports on the proportion of those who had taken one formal program that answered "Perform better at your job or increase your knowledge" or "Prepare for your first career or find a job" to the question "You were previously asked about your objectives in taking this program. Has this program actually helped you to...”

**Table 4.12: Selected outcome of program, percentages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform better at your job or increase your knowledge</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for your first career or find a job</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings in Table 4.12 suggest that around one fifth of those who participated in a program reported that this had helped them prepare for their first career or find a job. It is of interest to note that of those engaged in non-formal foundational learning activities, only three per cent mentioned that these studies had helped them prepare for their first career or find a job. This is reasonable as one might expect that this kind of learning was more related to workplace learning, as suggested in the previous section. Although the collected information on outcomes does not constitute a particularly strong indicator of the motive to pursue the studies, it does tend to support the suggestion that there is an underlying problem with the way labour market-related learning is defined in the typology.

### 4.7 Personal/social learning

Personal/social learning is defined as programs or courses where the learner identifies the reason for learning as personal (for the 10 most recent programs or courses; respectively
for the most recent/randomly selected program or course) rather than job- or education-related. Using this definition the participation rates are presented in Table 4.13.

**Table 4.13: Participation in personal/social learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Took</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in any program or the randomly select course</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in any program or the randomly select course</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the last program or the randomly select course</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the last program or the randomly select course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal</strong></td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-formal</strong></td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14 cuttingly reveals a fundamental problem in using the typology to classify non-formal learning events using ASETS. As per our definition, none of the respondents reported personal/social learning without labour market reasons in their randomly selected course, which eliminates those taking non-formal learning for other reasons. However, there are concerns not only about the usefulness of the ASETS but also the possibility of disentangling social/personal from other forms of learning. Table 4.13 looks at providers of formal learning taken for non labour-market reasons.
Table 4.14: Among those who took personal/social formal learning without labour market reasons, what proportion is offered by the following providers, percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Providers</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in any program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in any program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 54, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</th>
<th>Age 25 to 65, or in adult social roles, or pursuing foundation learning in the most recent program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Took</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: University</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: University College (may grant university degrees)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: CEGEP</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: College, community college</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Publicly-funded technical institute/trade/vocational school</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Private business school or private training institute</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Another school above high school</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Secondary school, school board or high school</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Another school not above high school</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: Other</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings suggest a problem with disentangling personal/social from higher education in particular, but also foundational learning. Most often a person has a mixture of motives for engaging in these learning activities.

In summary, our analyses of how well the typology can capture actual participation patterns using ASETS data raise concern about the extent to which the five categories of adult learning, which make up the core of the typology, are mutually exclusive.
5. TESTING THE TYPOLOGY AGAINST ADULT LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

This section analyses the usefulness and robustness of the adult learning typology (Myers, Conte & Rubenson, 2011) in describing actual adult learning activities and participation patterns in British Columbia (BC). It follows the types of adult learning classified in the typology (foundational, higher education, workplace-related, labour market-related, personal/social), gives examples and data for BC, examines whether they fit the typology's classification scheme, and points out the major challenges in applying it. The review is particularly focused on adult learning in the public sector but also touches on adult learning activities elsewhere.

5.1 Responsibility for adult learning in BC’s public sector

A large and disparate set of providers characterizes the field of adult learning. Orton (2009) defines six types and many sub-types of post-secondary and adult education providers in Canada, including public, not-for-profit and for-profit institutions, delivering formal or non-formal programs. The formal system comprises post-secondary institutions and school boards, which deliver mainly accredited programs, but also some non-credit programs. The non-formal system comprises a variety of providers, such as non-profit societies, community and aboriginal organizations, volunteer groups, libraries, unions, private companies, employers and municipalities as well as consortiums.

In what follows, we mainly focus on the public sector in BC, in which responsibility for adult education is divided among the Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology7 and the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Advanced Education funds the 25 post-secondary institutions in BC. It also has lead responsibility for literacy and administers the “Community Adult Literacy Progress grant” (approx. $2.4 million per year), which is being disbursed to Decoda Literacy Solutions, the provincial literacy coalition, and to community organizations through requests for proposals (RFPs). The Ministry of Education provides funding to the school boards, who offer mostly formal adult education programs in the 60 school districts as well as to the 13 adult education centres run by the school districts. It also provides funding to community organizations for literacy and

---

7 In September 2012, the name of the Ministry was changed. For the purpose of brevity, I will use the Ministry’s previous name, “Ministry of Advanced Education” throughout the report.
personal/social adult education programs and oversees all public libraries and public library associations. In BC, 440,000 students are enrolled in over 1,900 programs offered by 25 post-secondary institutions\(^8\), funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education:

- 11 universities\(^9\) – including five new universities (since 2008).
- 11 colleges\(^10\) – serving rural and metropolitan communities in BC.
- Three institutes\(^11\) – offering a variety of specialised programs.

**Universities** offer more than undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Also available are courses and programs in trades, vocational and technical studies leading to certificates and diplomas, as well as so-called developmental or adult basic education programs that prepare adult learners for post-secondary studies.

**Colleges** offer programs that closely resemble those found in universities, but theirs are more tailored to the needs and characteristics of specific communities. College programs tend to be more job market-oriented and less research-oriented.

**Institutes** meet vocational and technical requirements of specific occupations, offering credentials from certificates to degrees. One of the institutes located in BC is aboriginal-governed and provides services for aboriginal students. Many of these institutions offer programs in partnership with other stakeholders such as unions, industries, and municipalities.

Private post-secondary institutions and out-of-province public institutions must be authorised to deliver degree programs under the *Degree Authorisation Act*. There are currently 17 private and out-of-province public institutions offering degree programs in BC.\(^{12}\) Fourteen theological institutions are authorised by private act to offer degrees in theology in the province, two of which are authorized to grant certain academic degrees. Fifty-one thousand students per year enrol in the 356 registered private career training institutions in BC.\(^{13}\)

---

\(^8\) Information from website of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology (http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/mediaroom/facts.htm) and British Columbia’s quality assurance of post-secondary education framework (2012). Discussion paper.

\(^9\) Capilano University; Emily Carr University of Art and Design; Kwantlen Polytechnic University; Royal Roads University; Simon Fraser University; Thompson Rivers University; University of British Columbia; University of the Fraser Valley; University of Northern British Columbia; University of Victoria; Vancouver Island University.

\(^10\) Camosun College; College of New Caledonia; College of the Rockies; Douglas College; Langara College; Okanagan College; North Island College; Northern Lights College; Northwest Community College; Selkirk College; Vancouver Community College

\(^11\) British Columbia Institute of Technology; Justice Institute of British Columbia; Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

\(^12\) Adler School of Professional Psychology; Alexander College; Art Institute of Vancouver; Athabasca University; City University of Seattle; Columbia College; Corpus Christi College; Fairleigh Dickinson University; Fraser International College;
**Table 5.1: Summary of Adult Education Providers in BC**

**Adult Education in British Columbia**

**Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology:**
- 25 post-secondary institutions: 11 universities; 11 colleges; 3 institutes
- 17 private and out-of-province institutions offering degree programs
- 356 registered private career training institutions
- Lead responsibility for literacy

**Ministry of Education:**
- 60 school districts (including District 093, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, which doesn’t have a fixed geographic location)
- 13 adult education centres
- Coordination of community organizations’ literacy work
- LearnNow BC (online learning web portal)
- Public libraries services branch

**Ministry of Social Development (WorkBC):**
- 94 Employment Services Centres in 73 catchment areas

**Employer-sponsored training at the workplace:**
- Sometimes organized in partnership with post-secondary institutions and/or community organizations, and unions.

---

Gonzaga University; New York Institute of Technology; Queen’s University; Quest University Canada; Sprott-Shaw Degree College; Trinity Western University; University Canada West; University of Oregon. Source: [http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/privatepsed/institutions.htm#private](http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/privatepsed/institutions.htm#private)."
Figure 5.1: Mapping responsibility for adult education in British Columbia

Legend
- Public Post-Secondary (82 including branches)
- Private Post-Secondary (13 degree granting in B.C.)
- WorkBC Centres (94)
- School Districts (59 not including District 093)

Sources:
http://www.learnlivebc.ca/map.htm
http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/
http://www.labourmarketservices.gov.bc.ca
5.2 Foundational learning

In the typology (Myers, Conte & Rubenson, 2011), foundational learning is defined as “instruction on the basic skills and learning strategies required for further learning or employment, typically below the Grade 12 level or IALS Level 3...including non-formal courses as well as formal high school/equivalency programs”. In BC, adults can take foundational programs in the following ways:

- at 18 public post-secondary (PSE) institutions (funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education)
- in the school district system (funded by the Ministry of Education)
- online through LearnNowBC (funded by the Ministry of Education)
- in community-based organizations, public libraries and unions, or at the workplace.

About 50,000 adult learners per year attend upgrading courses toward a high school diploma. Half of these students are served through post-secondary institutions (25,829 students in 2004/05), the other half through school districts (26,846 learners in 2005/06).

Table 5.2: Adult basic education (ABE) in the post-secondary and K-12 systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-secondary institutions (Adult Basic Education/ABE)</th>
<th>School district (K-12) system (“continuing” or “academic” education)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental level (literacy to Grade 8)</td>
<td>Literacy foundations (LF) (Literacy to Grade 10 entry) or Foundations Language Arts (FLA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate level (approximately Grade 9 and 10)</td>
<td>Grades 10,11, 12 (class-based or individualised programs), leading to the BC Certificate of Graduation (“Dogwood”) or the BC Adult Dogwood Graduation Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced level (approximately Grade 11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial level (Grade 12), leading to the BC Certificate of Graduation (“Dogwood”) or the BC Adult Dogwood Graduation Diploma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.1 Foundational learning in the post-secondary system

In the Academic year 2010-2011, 25,053 students attended formal basic education programs at 21 BC public post-secondary (PSE) institutions, including 14,080 female and

---

15 Data include both national and domestic students.
16 Data provided by the Ministry of Advanced Education. These data do not include the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, the University of Northern British Columbia and the University of Victoria. 21 institutions submit data to the
10,965 male students. The largest age group by far is 18-21 yrs., the second 22-24 yrs., indicating clearly that these programs constitute a transition between school and employment. Some 81 per cent of former ABE (adult basic education) students in the public post-secondary system indicated that they had enrolled to prepare for further study; eight per cent undertook high-school completion; and 7 per cent enrolled to improve their employment situation (BCStats, n.d., p. 7). In PSE institutions, ABE courses (also called ‘developmental’ programs) are organized at four standardized levels (Table 5.1): Fundamental (literacy to Grade 8), intermediate (approximately Grade 9 and 10), advanced (approximately Grade 11), and provincial (Grade 12).

In the Academic Year 2010-2011, 39,655 students attended developmental programs at BC’s 21 post-secondary institutions, including 34,510 domestic and 5,155 international students. From the statistics alone, it is not possible to understand that these numbers include all students enrolled in an ABE or English as a Second Language (ESL) course including those participating at the same time in other post-secondary programs such as Business Administration, University Transfer and General Studies programs. This overlap often happens when a student is allowed to enrol in a degree program but must take, for example, an ABE math course as a pre-requisite, thereby raising the question of how such learners should be classified. It would probably be more accurate to categorize them as PSE students since the foundational course is simply a precondition. The statistics, however, list the students as ‘developmental’ and probably also include them in the post-secondary category.

The term ‘developmental’ is not used consistently throughout the post-secondary system, adding to the confusion. At Douglas College, for example, courses classified as developmental upgrade students in reading, writing and math skills. Other colleges may call these courses “Adult Basic Education”; some (e.g. Northern Lights College) use terms such as “Career and College preparation”. Not only the titles differ; content varies too. At Capilano University, “adult basic education” means the curriculum leading to high school graduation: reading, writing, and math, as well as English, biology, general science,
chemistry, physics, history, social studies and computer science. This inconsistency makes it difficult to classify and compare programs (table 5.2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designations of programs</th>
<th>Vancouver Community College</th>
<th>Camosun College</th>
<th>Capilano University</th>
<th>Douglas College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GED preparation</td>
<td>GED test-taking strategies, science and social studies content, fundamental and intermediate reading, writing and mathematics skills</td>
<td>Grants of ABE intermediate; adult upgrading (grade 10, 11, or 12 levels and GED preparation); and basic education (literacy to end of grade 8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic upgrading and high school</td>
<td>Includes ABE intermediate; adult upgrading (grade 10, 11, or 12 levels and GED preparation); and basic education (literacy to end of grade 8)</td>
<td>Grades 11 and 12, following the school curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Upgrading courses in reading, writing and math skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 equivalency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Basic Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follows the school curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 According to their websites
ABE programs in the PSE system are offered in a variety of formats ranging from semester-length classes to self-paced individualized instruction, including distance (online) education and community outreach with tutoring assistance. They may lead to a BC Certificate of Graduation (‘Dogwood’), a BC Adult Graduation Diploma (BCAGD; ‘Adult Dogwood’)\(^{20}\), or in some cases the General Educational Development Certificate (GED), which is sought by many learners as an employment credential,\(^{21}\) and to prerequisites for post-secondary programs. However, not all students work towards a graduation certificate; many attend courses to enter a post-secondary program or institution, or to upgrade their skills for further education or training. The ABE survey of 2005 showed that the majority of students taking ABE courses in the post-secondary system were interested in upgrading their skills and/or prepare further education (Thomas, 2006, p. 7/8). This has consequences for the typology as students who take the courses without being interested in the credential would be classified as participating in non-formal labour market-related learning, whereas those seeking the credential would be classified as participating in formal higher education. For the typology to be accurate, we would need reliable motivation data, which are not available.

Some colleges – for example Douglas College and Vancouver Community College – offer Adult Special Education (ASE) programs for students with a disability or “with special needs, or barriers to employment.”\(^{22}\) These programs include sub-programs such as: consumer and job preparation; basic educational preparation; and vocational training for students in three industry sectors: food services, electronics and general assembly, and retail and business services. We will apply the decision tree to the example of the customer service and cashier training sub-program at Douglas College. This 14-week program is designed to prepare students for employment in customer service, hospitality, merchandising, and cashiering. Students can obtain various certificates and graduate with a Douglas College Citation and 15 credits.\(^{23}\)

---

\(^{20}\) The BCAGD has the same foundational course requirements but fewer electives than the Dogwood certificate.

\(^{21}\) The GED is being offered for students who require it, but it doesn’t meet provincial standards. GED preparation is also offered by community organizations; it is less common in the school district system.

\(^{22}\) [http://www.douglas.bc.ca/programs/basic-occupational-education.html](http://www.douglas.bc.ca/programs/basic-occupational-education.html)

\(^{23}\) [http://www.douglas.bc.ca/programs/basic-occupational-education/customer.html](http://www.douglas.bc.ca/programs/basic-occupational-education/customer.html)
Customer service and cashier training program (part of the Adult Special Education (ASE) program at Douglas College):

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity leads to a recognized credential offered by the education system
- Program may lead to a Douglas College Citation and 15 credits, so it could be classified as formal learning
- Course does not lead to a secondary diploma or its equivalent so proceed to whether it is offered by a post-secondary institution
- Course is part of a program offered by a post-secondary institution
- So it is classified as higher education

However, not all sub-programs in the Adult Special Education program would be classified as higher education. Some would be foundational learning, such as the transition program, which is designed to support Grade 12 students in the move from school to work.24

Language training is an important part of foundational learning. In the academic year 2010-2011 about 14,300 students participated in English as a second language (ESL) programs in post-secondary institutions in BC (8,850 domestic students and 5,460 international students.) Among domestic students, the largest age group (2,500) was 30 to 39 years; for international students the largest age group (3,240) was 18 to 21 yrs. Hence, ESL programs are serving two different clusters: immigrants to Canada in the first group; young international students preparing for college and university in Canada in the second.25

In the typology, language training is categorized under “foundational learning”. We will apply the decision tree for two different cases to test this categorization in the post-secondary system.

ELSA program:

ELSA (English Language Services for Adults) is a basic and intermediate level English program targeted at immigrants to Canada. Besides English language training, it provides information about Canadian society, health care and the job market. Participants are assessed before they are placed in their appropriate level. The program goes from pre-beginner level (literacy) to high intermediate

---

24 http://www.douglas.bc.ca/programs/basic-occupational-education/transitions.html
25 Data provided by the Ministry of Advanced Education.
Adult learning typology

(level 5). Full-time study involves 25 hours of classes a week; part-time study comprises between nine and 15 hours of classes a week. ELSA programs are offered throughout the province.

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity leads to a recognized credential offered by the education system
- Does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so proceed to whether it is a course or workshop
- Activity is a course with structured format so it is considered non-formal learning
- It is targeted to learners below Grade 12 or IALS level 3
- So it is classified as foundational learning.

**Academic preparatory English at Douglas College:**

Academic Preparatory English at Douglas College prepares students for college or university studies. For full-time students, the program involves eight two-hour classes per week (16 hours in total) and 16 hours of study at home. Students must take a language test that places them in the most appropriate of five levels: beginning; intermediate; upper intermediate; advanced; academic preparatory. The program does not lead to a credential per se, but once students reach the advanced level, they can take university-transfer courses.

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity leads to a recognized credential offered by the education system
- Does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so proceed to whether it is a course or workshop
- Activity is a course with structured format so it is considered non-formal learning
- It is not foundational learning as the individuals taking this program usually have a secondary diploma
- It is not work-directed nor is it related to the firm in which the learner is employed
- It is not taken with purpose of advancing the learner’s labour market prospects (although one could argue that this is the long-term purpose)
- So it is classified as personal/social learning

---

26 [http://eslprograms.vcc.ca/ELSA/ELSA.html](http://eslprograms.vcc.ca/ELSA/ELSA.html)  
27 It should be noted that the ELSA program is being partly funded through the Labour Market Development Agreements, which fund labour market-related learning (see below under 5).
This is surprising as non-formal and personal/social learning is not normally associated with post-secondary institutions as can be seen from table 3. Douglas College also offers an English for foreign-trained professionals program, which would be classified as labour market-related, and an English as a second language immersion program, which offers intensive language training for employees of institutions or businesses, which would be classified as workplace-related.

5.2.2 Foundational learning in the K-12 (school district) system

Formal learning, generally leading to a certificate, is the focus in ‘foundational’ adult education programs run by the school boards (often called “continuing education” or “academic programs” in the K-12 system). In the year 2011-12, 23,509 students were enrolled in adult education programs run by school districts. As most of these students are part-time, the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments was much lower at 6,779 (British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, 2012).

According to the K-12 Adult Learner Outcomes Survey of 1999, learners in the K-12 system had a median age of 22 yrs. Some 58% of learners had left high school during Grade 12, and 22 per cent already had a high school diploma (Thomas, 2006, p. 8). The majority of learners involved in school district programs work towards secondary school completion, following a pathway from Literacy Foundations courses28 through Grade 10, 11 and 12 to the BC Certificate of Graduation (“Dogwood”) or the BC Adult Dogwood Graduation Diploma. Some adult students obtain a General Education Development Diploma (GED) or complete an Evergreen Certificate, which is based on an Individual Education Program (IEP). However, these latter certificates are not official graduation documents in BC and are not recognized for BC Ministry of Education funding purposes. The GED gives access to some post-secondary institutions in BC, depending on the program, but it is not recognized by research universities such as the University of British Columbia or Simon Fraser University.

Some school districts in BC also provide ELSA programs and ‘career and professional development’ courses leading to a provincial ‘employment-ready’ certificate, enabling adults to work in early childhood education, as receptionists in dental and medical offices, as bookkeepers, florists, in administration, etc.29 An example is the Florist Professional Training Diploma Program, which is

28 Literacy Foundations (LF) courses, offered by the school district system, serve those adult students between levels 0 to entry level 10 who need preparation to meet Adult Graduation Program requirements. The Literacy Foundations curriculum is designed to enable adult students to acquire the knowledge and skills in five content areas (English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and information and communications technology) that will prepare them for meeting the requirements of the BC Certificate of Graduation (“Dogwood”) or the BC Adult Dogwood Graduation Diploma. LF courses are non-credit, bridging courses.

29 The adult education branch of the school districts goes back to the long history of involvement of the school boards with adult education. However, in recent years many school districts have phased out their continuing education programs as they no longer
offered by the school district in Richmond. This course as well as the other employment-ready
courses don’t seem to fit any of the categories offered by the typology. They cannot at first glance be
identified as foundational in the same way as the adult education courses related to the formal
graduation certificate. They do not fit under higher education, defined as being “offered by a post-
secondary education institution and leading to a post-secondary credential”. But they also cannot
be classified as workplace- or labour-market related as they are not connected to or supported by
the firm in which the learner is employed, and do not constitute non-formal learning. Nor can they
be characterized as personal/social. We will apply the decision tree to find out how these “career”
courses run by the School Board fit into the typology.
Figure 5.2: Florist Professional Training Diploma Program

Intention to learn?

YES

Leads to a recognized credential offered by education system?

YES

Formal learning

Leads to secondary diploma/equivalent?

No

Offered by a post-secondary institution?

No

FOUNDATIONAL
According to the typology, this course would be foundational. However, for the school board, which provides the course, entry to foundational programs requires Grade 10 English skills, and Grade 10 English is part of the adult secondary school completion program rather than the Foundations Language Arts (FLA) series. Although these employment-ready courses fit into the typology’s definition of foundational it would make more sense to classify them as labour market-related, as the motivation of the learners is clearly employment.

5.2.3 Foundational learning in community-based organizations

Community-based learning is generally non-formal learning. Numerous community-based organizations in BC provide non-formal foundational education. There are 429 community adult literacy programs, serving people with low literacy skills. Some 17,965 adults attended these courses in the year 2010/11. Generally, these programs do not lead to a formal credential, but they constitute steps that may help learners to acquire a credential in the future. Many community organizations provide opportunities for informal learning that help them build the capacity to deal with socio-economic disadvantages such as unemployment, poverty and health issues, for example in aboriginal communities. Learning opportunities can take forms other than courses, including workshops for target groups (such as business for women and employment-readiness for youth); special events such as the celebration of literacy day; and exhibitions or other community initiatives. Seniors are targeted in 114 community programs, usually providing computer/technology instruction, which were attended by 6,976 participants in the year 2010/11.

Public libraries (243) are another site of foundational learning. In more than 200 communities in BC, they provide services for participants with a low level of literacy, mostly in the field of language learning. The 18 public libraries of the Tri-City region (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody) offer weekly practice groups where immigrants and refugees come to improve their English language skills. Tri-City libraries also offer literacy programs funded, since 2007, through the “LiteracyNow”

---

31 Decoda Literacy Solutions acts as umbrella organization of the literacy community providers. Decoda receives funding from the federal Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) and the provincial Ministry of Education, as well as from the Ministry of Advanced Education. Decoda grants funding for community-based providers especially for the coordination of literacy through the 102 “task group tables”, representing more than 400 communities in BC. The “task group tables” coordinate literacy work among the providers and submit reports to the Ministry of Education.
32 Data source: Decoda Literacy Solutions, BC
33 There are 71 public library systems in British Columbia with 243 individual library locations (Source: Libraries and Literacy, Ministry of Education).
34 http://www.bclibrarieschangelives.ca/didyouknow.html and http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pls/
initiative which allows them to pay a coordinator, train volunteers, and strengthen capacities and collaboration.

Other programs provided by public libraries include Canadian citizenship classes, offered in partnership with local immigrant settlement agencies. Another recent development is the implementation of an Urban Library Settlement program in ten libraries in Metro Vancouver. The program is managed by InterLink, the public libraries’ umbrella organization, and funded by the Province. Its aim is to enhance the opportunities for successful newcomer settlement and integration.

Using the decision tree to classify the type of learning happening in the TriCity libraries’ English practice groups reveals some lack of clarity with regard to the typology:

**English practice groups:**

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential.
- Does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so the question is whether it should be defined as organized learning in a course or workshop, then it would be classified non-formal learning. It is somewhat organized but doesn’t have a structured curriculum so it could be defined as informal learning.
- If classified as non-formal: as the program targets mostly learners who are below grade 12 or IALS level 3, it would be classified as **foundational learning**.
- If classified as informal: The long-term goal may be work-directed but at the current level of the learners it is probably more appropriate to classify it as **personal/social learning**.

However, in this case the boundaries between informal/non-formal learning and foundational and personal/social are far from clear.
5.3 Higher Education

In the typology, “higher education” is defined as “education or training that is offered by a post-secondary education institution and leads to a post-secondary credential”; thus it includes formal learning only.

According to the website of the Ministry of Advanced Education, approximately 440,000 students are enrolled in at least one course at a public post-secondary institution in BC in any year.\(^{35}\) This number includes:

a. Over 23,000 students coming directly from BC high schools.

b. Over 24,000 public post-secondary students who identified themselves as Aboriginal.

c. Over 29,000 international students.

d. Over 20,000 graduate students in master’s and doctoral programs.

Other numbers related to higher education in BC are:

2. Over 50,000 credentials (certificates, diplomas, degrees) awarded by the public post-secondary system each year.

3. 94,000 – the approximate number of international students in BC (K-12, post-secondary and Language Canada schools).

4. Over 7,000 – the approximate number of students enrolled in private and non-BC public post-secondary institutions with degree-granting authority in BC.

5. Over 50,000 – the approximate number of enrolments at PCTIA registered private career training institutions.

6. Approximately 111,000 students applied to BC institutions through the province’s online application service, ApplyBC, between August 2010 and July 2011.\(^{36}\)

BC’s parallel university/college system is characteristic for Canada. College diplomas and certificates usually take two years and lead to a professional qualification such as Business Management, Accounting Management or Education Assistant. University degrees take longer, between three and four years for a bachelor’s degree, which may be followed by a master’s degree (typically two years). There are many transfer opportunities between the two systems. Simon Fraser University admitted a total of 10,930 BC College transfer students between 2003/04 and 2007/08 (compared to 7,768 students between 1998/99 and 2002/03). The top three most popular degree choices for transfer students were Bachelor of Arts (78 per cent), Bachelor of Science (eight per cent), and Bachelor of

\(^{35}\) In 2011, the population of British Columbia (BC) stood at 4,573,321. (Source: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca).

Business Administration (five per cent). Between 2001 and 2005, 7,046 students transferred from colleges to the University of British Columbia, compared to 18,299 students admitted from a BC high school. Most transfer students to UBC enter into the second year of a program. There are also partnership programs, where students start their studies at a college and then continue at a university.

**Apprenticeship programs** are a form of post-secondary education that combines paid, work-based training (about 85 per cent of training) with technical training in a classroom (about 15 per cent of training). After successful completion of both components, and examinations, participants become certified tradespersons. The length of an apprenticeship ranges from one to five years, but most require four years to complete. In addition, there is the school-based pre-apprenticeship training (foundation industry training, formerly known as entry-level trades training), which generally leads towards credit apprenticeship completion. As of March 31, 2012, there were 34,597 registered apprentices in BC. By far the most popular was electrician (5,782), followed by carpenter (5,053) and cook (3,022). In order to become an apprentice, the student needs to find an employer to sponsor them and **must** register the apprenticeship with the **Industry Training Authority (ITA)**. According to the ITA website, industry training is available in BC for 140 careers.

An example is the electrician apprenticeship program offered at the Fort St. John campus of Northern Lights College. The program involves four levels of study at 10 weeks per level. Admission requirements are registration as an apprentice with the ITA or successful completion of the related Foundation Trades Training program. We will apply the decision tree to this program:

---

37 British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (2009), p. i.
39 Industry Training Authority (2011/2012).
40 The Industry Training Authority is a provincial government agency in BC. Established in 2004 to replace the Industry, Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC), its mandate is to facilitate training in the trades and industry occupations in the province. It oversees BC’s industry training and apprenticeship system.
41 [http://nlc.bc.ca/Programs/AllPrograms/ElectricianApprenticeship.aspx](http://nlc.bc.ca/Programs/AllPrograms/ElectricianApprenticeship.aspx)
Electrician apprentice:
- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential
- Program leads to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so it is classified as formal learning
- Program does not lead to a secondary diploma or its equivalent so proceed to whether it is offered by a post-secondary institution
- Program is offered by a post-secondary institution
- So it is classified as higher education

Trades/vocational:
BC public and private post-secondary institutions offer a variety of trades training programs: from carpentry, mechanics, and culinary arts to electronics, power plant engineering, and welding. They are usually short programs of one year or less that involve practical training experience with tools and equipment. They allow students to obtain or upgrade job skills for direct job entry or to obtain skills that will help them get sponsored as apprentices. The majority of students are males under the age of 30. Trades training programs are offered in 15 public post-secondary institutions in BC at several levels: The foundation program consists of level 1 technical training in addition to practical and essential skills related to the apprentice program. High school students can start apprenticeships through a youth (ACE-IT) program. Vocational programs tend to lead to a Diploma of Technology. They provide expertise that goes further than foundational training, are typically longer in duration and combine academic and practical skills.

The main problem with the definition of higher education in the typology is the credential requirement. Not all students in PSE work towards credentials; some may be brushing up workplace-related skills. As only enrolment data are readily available, the latter case would be counted as a drop-out. According to an informed source, about one third of students enrol in formal higher education to undertake work-related learning without aiming at a credential. How, then, should this type of learning be classified? As non-formal, it would not fit into the typology. But it could be classified as workplace-

---

42 According to the College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey (Ministry of Advanced Education & BCStats, 2006), approximately one-half of former trades training students (who were in a trades training programs designed for pre-apprenticeship) said they attempted to become apprentices. Of those who tried, 69 per cent were successful, especially those in Electrical, Plumbing, Heating & Ventilation, and Carpentry programs (85, 84, and 80 per cent respectively).
44 a high-level employee of the Ministry of Advanced Education
related learning taking place in a higher education institution. We will use the decision tree to illustrate this case, having in mind a learner who is employed and already has a degree and is taking a statistics course for work-related purposes.

**Non-degree statistics course at a university:**
- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential
- Does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so proceed to whether it is a course or a workshop
- Activity is a course with a structured format so it is considered non-formal learning
- Activity is not targeted to learners below grade 12 of IALS level 3
- It is related to the firm in which the learner is currently employed
- So it is classified as **workplace-related learning**.

The decision tree does not really help to clarify this case. There are two complications. First, in the tree we say that the course does not lead to a credential but it does, in fact, do so; it is the learner that chooses not to pursue the credential. Second, whether or not the employer supports the learner cannot be seen from the available data. It is likely that this is the case, however, so the classification as workplace-related makes sense, even if it is not clear cut.

### 5.4 Workplace-related learning

The typology defines workplace-related learning as "learning related to the firm in which the learner is employed that is supported at least to some extent by the employer, but that is not foundational or higher education"; it includes non-formal courses, workshops, seminars, and informal on-the-job training.

Workplace training is an important trend in adult education policies. Participation in adult education and training in Canada is strongly linked to the world of work, and the dominating motivation of adult learners is by far job-related (Rubenson, Desjardins & Yoon, 2007). BCs Labour Market Strategy to 2020 (BC Ministry of Regional Economic Skills Development, n.d.) announces the promotion of workplace training. In 2010 and 2011, the *workplace training for innovation program* enabled small organizations (less than 50 employees) to apply for funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development for employee training. BC has more small businesses and service industries than other Canadian provinces. The service sector in BC accounts for slightly more than 75
per cent of economic activity in the province. Nearly 80 per cent of BC’s workforce is employed in this sector. According to research carried out by the Conference Board of Canada (2011) on work-related learning programs in 45 Canadian and international small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the most-often cited barrier to workplace learning programs in smaller companies is a lack of resources – time, money, and human resources and strategies. Some employers are concerned that employees may be ‘poached’ by other companies and the investment may not pay off. Most SMEs invest in workplace learning to support organizational and structural change, or the introduction of new products and/or services that require new skills, or security training. Some SMEs invest in apprenticeships to develop workers’ skills rather than relying on the labour market, or they implement workplace-related training programs to develop capacity in local communities.

Existing workplace programs in BC are often related to the ‘nine essential skills’ developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and funded through the federal-provincial Labour Market Agreements (LMAs). BC’s LMA-funded SkillsPlus is an initiative designed to assist employers in integrating essential skills into workplace training. Note that workplace-related training which is funded or co-funded by employers is intended mostly for senior and leading personnel (Myers & De Broucker, 2006).

Typical models for workplace-related programs are partnerships between companies, post-secondary institutions and/or community organizations, as well as partnerships with unions. Several post-secondary institutions in BC offer corporate industry training services. These programs are sponsored by companies and partly funded by full-time equivalent (FTEs) students and tuition fees. For example, the BC Institute of Technology (BCIT) offers courses in communication; business and media; computing and IT; engineering, applied and natural sciences; and health sciences. In partnership with BCIT and the Vancouver Community College (VCC), the Municipal District of Maple Ridge offers training to employees (particularly future senior staff) in the form of onsite, workplace-related, full certificate programs ranging from literacy to business administration to leadership. The leadership program (“Top Performing Municipality Program”) is ‘at the core of employee development at Maple Ridge’. At a given time, over 50 employees (out of 400 municipal workers and 289 full time employees) are

45 Reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills and computer use.
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/tools_resources/tools_audience/what_are_essential_skills.shtml
46 During the 2008-09 and 2009-10 fiscal years, $4 million was invested in SkillsPlus, which is the first workplace program funded in BC (CLLN, 2012, p. 74).
working towards a certificate, diploma, or degree. In addition to classroom training, the district also offers informal learning opportunities such as coaching, mentoring and focus groups. In 2008, the two-year BCIT Leadership Certificate Program had 44 participants. This program consists of credit courses such as “introduction to business”, “leadership 1-3”, “supervisory skills”, “entrepreneurial management” and “organizational behaviour”. We will apply the decision tree to understand how the Leadership program can be classified:

**BCIT Leadership Certificate Program:**

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential
- Course leads to a college certificate in leadership, so it is classified as formal learning
- Course does not lead to a secondary diploma or its equivalent so proceed to whether it is offered by a post-secondary institution
- Course is part of a program offered by a post-secondary institution.
- So it is classified as **higher education**

An example of a partnership between a provincial agency, provincial organizations and community organizations is the job readiness program for Aboriginal people run by BC Housing, the crown agency that manages housing for people in need. This program is carried out in partnership with Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) and the Aboriginal Community Career Services Society (ACCESS), and is administered through the Essential Skills for Aboriginal Futures (ESAF) initiative, partly funded by the federal government. BC Housing is particularly interested in using the program to develop candidates for positions as building managers, janitorial staff and groundskeepers. We will apply the decision tree to this example:

---

48 http://www.bcit.ca/study/programs/6830acert#courses
**BC Housing job readiness program:**

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential
- Program does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system (although certain program elements may lead to certification), so proceed to whether it is a course or workshop
- Activity is a program with structured format, so it is considered non-formal learning
- It may be targeted to learners below Grade 12 or IALS level 3, but in any case the training is customized to the needs of the BC Housing
- So it is classified as **workplace-related learning**

Another example is the BC Safety Authority, originally a provincial agency, but now an independent organization responsible for overseeing the safety standards applied to a wide variety of commercial systems in BC. When the BC Safety Authority planned to offer new services, including prevention, audit services and education aimed at the general public, the management implemented work-related learning programs to allow their 140 safety officers to become confident public speakers and certified auditors. The work-related learning program, which is mostly delivered through external providers, consists of occupational health and safety; technical training; professional development; and client education. Occupational health and safety training has a budget of $104,000 (not including administration costs). The largest budget is provided for the professional development component with $226,000. Of this amount, tuition aid accounted for over $90,000, with more than half of that amount invested in the training of executives.  

**BC Safety Authority workplace training program:**

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential
- Program does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so proceed to whether it is a course or workshop (although certain program elements may lead to certification)
- Activity is a program with structured format, so it is considered non-formal learning
- It is related to the organization in which the learner is employed
- So it is classified as **workplace-related learning**

---

Unions play a big role in workplace-related learning. SkillPlan, an organization that emerged from the BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council, develops workplace literacy and essential skills programs. SkillPlan trains workers in the foundational skills and the nine essential skills needed for a specific trade. About 85 per cent of the training delivered by SkillPlan is carried out in partnership with unions in the unions’ technical training schools, and is funded by unions and employers. Some of the training is at the foundational level, e.g. English learning support classes for workers with language difficulties. These classes may be reading classes with workplace-specific content; or courses in plain language writing for e-mails, newsletters and memos. Much of the training is also technical, such as mentorship workshops for journey workers, supervisors and contractors. This training is both workplace-related (when it directly concerns a company) and labour market-related (when it is relevant to a specific trade).

A vast amount of workplace-related learning is not captured here as it is organized by firms and organizations and is not connected to any program. These offerings are generally related to the introduction or revision of services and practices, technologies and regulations. No data are available for this significant sector.

We have seen in this section that the typology's definition of workplace-related learning, which excludes foundational and higher education, does not always work with the examples we have used. In some cases, foundational learning is supported by the company (for example SkillPlan); there are also cases where employees take higher education credentials, supported by their employer (for example the District of Maple Ridge). The definition would also be more accurate if firm was extended to include organizations in order to recognize training provided by non-governmental and governmental agencies.

5.5 Labour market-related learning

The typology defines labour market-related learning as that which “improve[s] labour market prospects, but is not related to the firm in which a learner is employed, and is not Foundational or Higher Education”; it includes non-formal courses, workshops and seminars and informal training.

Employment services centres play an important role in facilitating labour-market related learning in BC. There is a move towards a ‘one stop’ system, giving access to a wide range of employment services beneath one roof. Under the “WorkBC” initiative, these centres are financed through funding from the

---

51 SkillPlan/BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council (2012)
52 http://www.skillplan.ca/construction
Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA), signed between the provincial/territorial and the federal governments. The federal government provides BC with about $375 million annually for the support of labour market training programs (BC Ministry of Regional Economic Skills Development, n.d.). LMDA funding is spent primarily on employment services. The province signed a new LMDA with the federal government in 2008. A new delivery model, implemented in April 2012, brought about changes in the delivery of services. Non-profit as well as for-profit private providers can now bid for funding to deliver employment services in the new WorkBC Centres located in 73 catchment areas across the province (see Figure 1, Map of BC). WorkBC Centres offer job search assistance, workshops on résumés and job interviews; direction toward training that may assist re-employment such as provincially certified programs for specific jobs e.g. Food Safe, World Host and First Aid. As an example, Food Safe is a certificate available at two levels for personnel working in the food industry; it can be obtained through classroom instruction, online via Open School BC, or correspondence.

Certified labour market-related training programs aim particularly at assisting low-skilled people to find work. The urban community organization ACCESS (Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society), in partnership with provincial authorities and/or post-secondary institutions, offers these programs for students from the Aboriginal community; examples include piping (10 months, offered with Service Canada); metal fabrication (nine months, offered with ITA); boilermaking (six months, offered with BCIT); transportation trades (three months, offered with Vancouver Community College); and Welding C level (eight months, offered with BCIT). Learners with a minimum of grade 10 education are eligible; some demand ‘strong math skills, and good reading comprehension’; other programs require essential skills upgrading (three months).

Since 1994, a partnership between ACCESS, Métis Nation British Columbia, and Service Canada has run “BladeRunners”, an employment program for at-risk youth, providing foundational skills training; entry-level workplace certifications; and continuous one-on-one support. Young people who complete the program are hired mostly in the construction industry. After two years, 80 per cent remain in the construction trades with 30 per cent continuing on to journeyperson status or entrepreneurship. To find out how this program can be classified, we will apply the decision tree:
BladeRunners program:

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential
- Does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so proceed to whether it is a course or a workshop
- Activity is a program with a structured format so it is considered non-formal learning
- In any case, the program provides entry-level workplace certifications for learners below Grade 12 or IALS Level 3, so it is classified as foundational learning

This program is not a clear-cut case. As some of the certificates granted through this program are provincially recognized, it could be classified as formal learning. It would make more sense to classify it as labour market-related learning as its purpose is clearly to improve job prospects for young people. In the typology, labour market-related learning is defined as “not foundational or higher education”, but this example shows, as do others in this section, that labour market-related learning is often foundational, undertaken by students who are below Grade 12 level or IALS Level 3. At the same time, as has been shown in the Higher Education section, many students take higher education courses to upgrade their job-related skills. Thus, an inconsistency clearly exists in the typology's definition of labour market-related learning, which excludes higher and foundational learning.

5.6 Personal/social learning

The typology defines personal/social learning as that “directed to individuals in the context of their families and communities for the purpose of personal, social, cultural, civic or spiritual growth or enrichment”. Learning for personal/social reasons is usually non-formal or informal, and community-based. Opportunities are offered by school districts, community centres, community organizations, private providers, churches, museums, and public libraries. Subject areas range from arts, sports, health and nutrition, to computer skills, emergency first aid, and language learning. For these purposes, a community can mean people who live in the same neighbourhood, or who belong to the same linguistic, minority, or ethnic groups; a community can also be generated around shared interests (flamenco, yoga, films, etc.).

In school districts, courses under this category are often referred to as Arts & Crafts. Under that heading, the Richmond school district includes: cake decorating, floral art, drawing, music, painting, and photography. Chinese speakers have access to culturally relevant courses taught in Mandarin.
Community centres offer a wide variety of programs in the personal/social category, including health, wellness, and safety programs; book and travel clubs; language, writing, and creative arts classes; as well as sports and dance activities. Most of these programs are easy to classify as personal/social. However, there are some exceptions. One is a series of workshops offered at Vancouver’s Dunbar Community Centre, in partnership with the Granville Settlement Services Centre, directed to helping Korean immigrants adapt to their new host country. Almost all the workshops are related to business and financial issues. We will use the decision tree to classify this learning activity:

**SUCCESS workshop series offered in the Dunbar Community Centre in Vancouver:**

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential
- Does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so proceed to whether it is a course or workshop
- Activity is a course with structured format so it is considered non-formal learning
- It is not targeted to learners below Grade 12 or IALS level 3, nor is it related to the firm in which the learner is currently employed
- So the activity would be classified as **labour market-related or personal/social learning**

The challenge of clearly classifying this learning activity lies in the definitions of both “personal/social learning” and “labour market-related learning”, neither of which seem to sufficiently match this example. Personal/social learning is defined as “directed to individuals in the context of their families and communities for the purpose of personal, social, cultural, civic, or spiritual growth or enrichment”. The workshops aim at helping participants set up a business; is this activity anticipated in the definition? Not really. But labour market-related learning seems to provide no better match, unless setting up a business relates to “improving labour market prospects”, which it might.

Language study is a popular field in personal/social learning. The Chinese community constitutes the largest ethnic group in BC, and Mandarin is the second most-commonly spoken language in Vancouver. Many school districts, community centres, and community organizations offer Mandarin courses for children and adults. Post-secondary institutions in Vancouver and Victoria also offer Mandarin language courses. The Vancouver Community College offers courses in Arabic, Cantonese, Korean, French, Japanese, Italian, Mandarin and Spanish, while Douglas College offers Chinese, French, German, Japanese and Spanish. But as the colleges target language courses predominantly towards young
people interested in obtaining credit certificates, mature students taking courses for personal interest tend to be exceptions.

To find out whether post-secondary institutions offer programs under the “personal/social” category, we will use the decision tree to classify a creative writing program offered by the Vancouver Community College. The program is addressed to ‘all writers’ and consists of courses designed to cover different interests such as poetry, blogging, and so on. The course involves six three-hour sessions and costs $185. Age is the only course requirement (18 years or older.)

Creative writing program offered by the Vancouver Community College:

- There is intention to learn, so proceed to question of whether activity is part of a series of courses leading to a credential
- Does not lead to a recognized credential offered by the education system, so proceed to whether it is a course or workshop
- Activity is a course with structured format so it is considered non-formal learning
- It is not targeted to learners below Grade 12 or IALS level 3, nor is it related to the firm in which the learner is currently employed
- If we assume that the learner takes the program with the purpose of advancing her/his labour market prospects, we would classify it as labour market-related learning
- If we assume that the learner takes the program out of personal interest, we would classify it as personal/social learning
- If the learner’s firm supports their participation in the program, we might also classify it as workplace-related

The challenge here, as elsewhere, is that we cannot classify this type of learning without knowing the motivation of the learner, nor would it be easy to find such data. We would need to discover, for example, whether a learner attends a Mandarin course to better communicate with neighbours and others, or because Mandarin would be helpful in the workplace. The same applies to courses in computer skills, writing, and so on. This is the major challenge with the personal/social learning category, which is otherwise quite clear.

The examples of personal/social learning mentioned in the typology neglect to mention one major consumer of training: the voluntary sector Board members and directors, literacy tutors, museum

56 http://www.vcc.ca/programs-courses/details.cfm?div=22&area=CSWRITING&prog=CREATIVE#courses
docents, hospice helpers, tourist guides, charity volunteers, peer counsellors, and many more – all receive training from basic orientation through to highly specialized services.

5.7 Conclusion

Overall, it was possible to classify most learning activities examined in this report using the typology. However, application of the decision tree revealed unclear cases in all five categories.

**Foundational learning:** In most cases it is possible to discern whether learners are below Grade 12 or IALS level so the category is fairly clear. The main problems arise from ambiguities in the data (for example, some learners included in the developmental program statistics are taking post-secondary programs at the same time) and inconsistencies in terminology both across and within the two systems (post-secondary and K-12). In the case of the employment-ready courses offered by the school district, the typology classifies them as foundational, unlike the school district itself. Some of these programs could be considered as higher education, when offered by a post-secondary institution, or personal/social learning, in the case, for example, of the English practice groups run in public libraries.

**Higher education:** Higher education is easy to classify as it is only delivered by the post-secondary system. The main problem relates to the typology’s definition of higher education as “leading to a post-secondary credential.” Many students in the system do not work towards credentials. And, as the decision tree shows for statistics and academic preparatory English, some learning can be classified as workplace-related and personal/social, but these categorizations are not supported by the available data.

**Workplace-related learning:** This category is problematic. In many cases, the typology’s definition of workplace-related learning as “not foundational or higher education” contradicts the fact that employers support both. Missing data in this category make it impossible to understand which learning activities in higher education are supported by the employer and actually workplace-related. Moreover, there is no available data on the abundance of workplace-related learning organized within firms and organizations.

**Labour market-related:** This category could be regarded as the most problematic. The definition of labour market-related learning in the typology as “not foundational or higher education” fails to reflect the reality of learning activities in BC where labour market-related learning is often both. As “the long arm of work” (Rubenson, 2001) is the main motivating factor for adult learning, it is difficult to clearly distinguish other forms from this type of learning (as was shown in the example of the academic
preparatory English program at Douglas College). In some cases blurred boundaries between formal and non-formal (e.g. BladeRunners job-entry program) make it difficult to clearly categorize this type of learning. Moreover, boundaries between labour market-related learning and personal/social learning are sometimes indistinct. Here, the classification depends on the motivation of the learner (e.g. the “creative writing” course and the SUCCESS workshop series).

**Personal/social learning:** This category is clear but it is necessary to know the motivation of learners to distinguish between personal/social learning and labour market-related learning.

Two remarks should be made with regard to data and terminology. Some information is available on the websites of the Ministries of education and advanced education. Specific and detailed data are difficult to obtain and must be solicited, and they can vary from source to source. As an example, the 2012 BC Education Facts report compiled by the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation indicates that 23,509 students were enrolled in ‘adult education’ in the school districts in the year 2011-12. But according to BC Ministry of Education statistics for the same year57, 13,350 students were enrolled in school-district ‘continuing education’ programs. The gap between these numbers indicates that statistics are compiled from different sources, and that the reporting and interpretation of data may not always be consistent. The different terminology used in the reports (adult vs continuing education) makes it even more difficult to interpret the data.

Inconsistency of terminology is a major challenge to the creation of a typology of adult learning. It derives primarily from the fact that responsibilities for adult education in the province are divided among many actors. An example is the unclear responsibility for literacy, which is divided between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education (figure 1). This is a phenomenon of the Canadian education system, which has been addressed in many policy reports (OECD, 2002; CMEC, 2005). The Thomas report (2006) pointed to the challenges arising from these parallel systems and argued for a “collaborative, rather than competitive approach to the delivery of services” (p. 15) between them. Both the K-12 and the post-secondary systems provide adult education, but use inconsistent terminology. As an example, in the school district system foundational learning is called ‘continuing education’, whereas in the post-secondary system it is referred to as ‘developmental’ or ‘basic’ education. What exacerbates this challenge is that the terminology is not even consistent within the two systems. Whereas the school board in Richmond refers to foundational education as ‘continuing education’, the school board in Coquitlam refers to the same courses as ‘academic

---

57 retrieved from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/
programs’ whereas ‘continuing studies’ means vocational programs. This applies also to the post-secondary system, where ‘continuing studies’ sometimes designates labour market-related learning, for example at the Vancouver Community College or Camosun College. This inconsistency is a major obstacle for classifying adult learning activities, collecting data, and being able to carry out comparative studies.

5.8 Overview of types of learning by providers in British Columbia according to the adult learning typology and availability of data

The table below summarizes the findings of the above BC section by giving an overview of the typology’s five types of learning categorized by the providers that offer that type of learning. It also aims at showing the availability of data per category and, where the categorization is not clear-cut, indicates the main challenge. One category – higher education – is offered only by one type of provider (post-secondary institutions), whereas all other categories are provided by different providers.
Table 5.4: Overview of types of learning by providers in British Columbia according to the adult learning typology and availability of data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Providers</th>
<th>Foundational</th>
<th>Higher Education</th>
<th>Workplace-related</th>
<th>Labour Market-related</th>
<th>Personal/Social related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary system:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges, universities, institutes</td>
<td>✓ Data available from the Ministry of Advanced Education</td>
<td>✓ Data available from the Ministry of Advanced Education</td>
<td>✓ No data available. Selected data could be collected through colleges, employers and HRSDC.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developmental programs include Adult Basic Education (see Table 1; for examples, see Table 2), Adult Special Education, and English as a Second Language.</td>
<td>Data don’t disclose students who do not take credentials</td>
<td>In some cases, partnership programs between employers and post-secondary institutions</td>
<td>According to the typology, labour market-related learning is not supposed to include higher education but in fact it may as not all learners in the PSE system work towards a credential.</td>
<td>As shown in the “personal/social learning” section and in the example of the Academic Preparatory English course under 2.1. of this report, some personal/social learning is happening in the PSE system, depending on the motivation of the learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private colleges; career institutions</td>
<td>✓ Foundational programs may be offered in exceptional cases but is not the norm</td>
<td>✓ Data available from PCTIA</td>
<td>✓ Selected data could be collected from institutes, but is not readily available</td>
<td>✓ Data available from PCTIA</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Adult learning typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Providers</th>
<th>Foundational</th>
<th>Higher Education</th>
<th>Workplace-related</th>
<th>Labour Market-related</th>
<th>Personal/Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>K-12 (school district) system</strong></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data available from the Ministry of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employment programs for immigrants and refugees; Business management courses; online courses, e.g. in business administration; web programming; computer skills, writing and publishing etc. Data would be difficult to get as only some districts offer these courses.</td>
<td>√ Arts and crafts courses (e.g. painting, drawing, music, photography); Home Arts (e.g. cooking) Language courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuing education, leading to high school graduation (see Table 1) ELSA programs Career and professional development courses leading to a provincial certificate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community-based organizations</strong></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data available from the Ministry of Education/Decoda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Most of the learning happening in community organizations is foundational, some may be labour market-related, but the boundaries are blurred.</td>
<td>√ Most of the learning is foundational, some may be qualified as personal/social, but the boundaries are blurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy Family literacy GED preparation Employment-oriented workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Adult learning typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Providers</th>
<th>Foundational</th>
<th>Higher Education</th>
<th>Workplace-related</th>
<th>Labour Market-related</th>
<th>Personal/Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities:</td>
<td>√ Data not easily available English practice groups; literacy programs (one-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√ Community Centres: Parenting, music, sports, dance, cookings, creative arts, health, fitness, safety, language and writing classes Libraries: Settlement and citizenship programs; training for volunteer literacy tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centres;</td>
<td>to-one or small group tutoring)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning funded and/or regulated by employers</td>
<td>√ No data or only occasional data available</td>
<td>X no data available (employers may support their employees in acquiring a higher education degree)</td>
<td>√ No data or only occasional data available</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions</td>
<td>√ Some unions or organizations such as SkillPlan have data, but not easily available</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In our examination of the proposed typology we noted some shortcomings and identified restrictions in the survey data that limit their usefulness. In this section we first discuss the issues surrounding existing surveys on participation in adult learning. Thereafter we summarize the concerns raised about the typology and on the basis thereof briefly explore alternatives.

6.1 Limitations in survey data

The importance attached to adult learning in Canadian and supranational policy documents seems at odds with efforts made to secure data reliable enough to support evidence-based policies. The policy discourse promotes private and public investments in adult learning as central elements of a skills strategy. When it comes to developing and monitoring this strategy, however, adult learning tends to be noted rather than elaborated. There seems to be a mismatch between the heavy investment in developing instruments to measure competencies and the lack of focus on the role of different parts of the 'adult learning system' in generating and maintaining these competencies.

Looking closer at surveys like ASETS and PIAAC, three features stand out. First, there is a strong focus on formal education. This is understandable as national ambitions to increase the pool of competencies are often expressed in terms of targeted minimum levels of educational attainment in the population. The level of formal education is also central in discussions around how to assist vulnerable groups to improve their economic and social opportunities. However, as was evident in the International Assessment of Adult Literacy Survey and Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey, non-formal learning activities are also important for a country's pool of competencies. Further, some forms of non-formal learning activities help individuals to respond to the economic and social challenges they face. Countries with high participation in adult learning, such as the Nordic states, are distinguished by a well-developed non-formal sector (Rubenson, 2006). Most likely the existence of a vibrant non-formal adult education sector partly explains why the Nordic countries have a larger skill pool than could be expected by their formal level of educational attainment. This suggests that the skills debate should pay closer attention to the nature and
importance of non-formal learning activities. Always remembering the restrictions of a survey and the difficulties in collecting information, it would be helpful to know the nature, extent and providers of non-formal learning activities. Without this information it will be difficult to gauge the performance of adult learning and training systems in generating required competencies, which of course makes it impossible to examine the efficiency of certain policy levers more closely.

Second, a noticeable job-related bias in ASETS, and to a certain extent in the PIAAC survey, prevents certain learning activities from being followed up, making it impossible to identify learning that, according to the typology, should be defined as social/personal. The rationale for this approach is never discussed but the logic seems to suggest that only job-related learning activities are important for the national skills pool. The problem with this argument is that it is difficult to justify such a policy on existing evidence. People studying for job-related reasons do apply the acquired skills or knowledge at work to a higher degree than those who participate for personal development, as the literature shows. However, more interesting is the extent to which what is learned in one context can be transferred to another. Thus, in the 1997 Adult Education Training Survey, half of those taking courses for personal reasons reported that the acquired skills or knowledge were also greatly or somewhat useful at work.

The same finding, albeit to a lesser extent, is true for courses taken for job-related reasons, which also benefit participants in their personal lives (see for example Statistics Canada, 2001). Thus, from a strict economic perspective, it is important not to neglect studies taken for other than job-related reasons. Further, the literature does not support a simplistic division into job-related and non-job-related learning, as there are many simultaneous reasons for actively engaging in learning. As noted above, this makes it difficult to separate workplace-related learning, foundational learning, and labour market-related training. A final comment from a policy perspective is that adult learning is being promoted as a means for meeting not only employment and work-related demands but also for making “important contributions to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development” (EC, 2011, p. 2.). The supranational policy discourse centres overwhelmingly around production and labour-market concerns, yet social and cultural practices are shifting in ways that require higher levels of skills for full participation in democratic processes, cultural life and increasingly complex everyday contexts. For example, the increasing sophistication of basic
public services, even consumption, requires adults to possess a heightened level of general skills in order to avoid new modes of social exclusion and tension. In this all-encompassing perspective, the debate on adult learning and skills formation – now occupied primarily with national differences in job-related education and training – needs to be substantially broadened to embrace the many forms of participation in lifelong learning.

Third, after past less-than-successful attempts, ASETS and PIAAC do not collect information on informal learning activities. As a result, nothing can be said about these activities in the typology. Note also that while EUROSTAT’s 2012 AES has an informal learning module, no data on accidental non-purposeful informal learning are collected. Comments from some of our reviewers, and discussions in the literature, reinforce the general view that this kind of learning is of central importance, particularly in workplace-related learning. The economic literature recognizes the value of such learning through the attention given to experience, as reflected in job tenure.

Based on these observations we would 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.

- Questionnaires on participation in adult learning and education should be designed from a lifelong learning perspective and not from a narrow job-related perspective.

- Canada should initiate an international research program to address the difficult problem of how to collect survey information on informal learning.

### 6.2 An overall assessment of the typology

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation’s Adult Learning Typology was constructed as a heuristic device capable of capturing an overall classification of all types of learning within one framework. Through a primarily conceptual process the authors arrived at five classes of learning activities: *foundational learning* (targeted to adults with skills levels below Grade 12 or IALS Level 3); *higher education* (leads to credentials offered by a recognised post-secondary institution); *workplace learning* (related to one’s current firm and supported by one’s employer, but not leading to a post-secondary credential and not
targeted to individuals with skills below the Grade 12 level or IALS level 3); labour market-related learning (improves labour market prospects but is not related to one's current firm, is not targeted to adults below Grade 12 level or IALS level 3, and does not lead to a post-secondary credential); personal/social learning (intended primarily for personal/family, social, cultural, or civic purposes, and/or spiritual growth or enrichment). The five key types of learning were further described in terms of providers, funders, motivations, duration, and other design and delivery features. The usefulness of such a typology depends on how well it reduces complexity and achieves parsimony through categories that are both exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Bailey, 1994).

Our examination raises some concerns regarding how well the proposed typology fulfills these criteria. The expert reviewers cautioned against using learners’ motivations as a criterion for classification as this could lead to subsuming heterogeneous activities under a single heading. They also questioned the possibility of clearly distinguishing between the five categories of adult learning and suggested there might be a need for a higher order structure. Similar problems were noticed when the typology was used to classify learning events recorded in the ASET survey. Many of the difficulties in classification had more to do with limitations in survey design than with the typology as such; nevertheless, some of the limitations highlighted by the experts became evident. This is particularly apparent in three of the five core categories: workplace learning, labour-market training, and learning for personal/social reasons. The analyses show that much of what is labeled as non-formal foundational learning, following the criteria set out in the typology, also fits into the category of workplace learning. We also discovered that some respondents reported participation in a formal program for labour-market reasons, for which the typology does not allow. Similarly, the examination pointed to substantial problems disentangling social/personal from higher education (in particular) but also foundational learning.

We found some classification problems as to which activities should be labeled higher education when applying the typology to administrative data and course information on adult education offerings in British Columbia. Similarly, some of the continuing education offerings by community centres, school boards, and post-secondary institutions were readily classified as personal/social. Workplace related and labour market-related learning, on the other hand, were considerably more difficult to classify as the typology's definitions did not
adequately describe what was really happening. In conclusion, the empirical tests as well as the experts' review suggest the need for some modifications to the typology.

6.3 Revisiting the typology

This exercise has once again highlighted the challenges of attempting to develop a generic typology of adult learning. Constructing a typology for a specific classification, such as formal or workplace-related learning, would be relatively straightforward but not particularly useful in furthering the emerging gestalt combining skills and competencies; adult learning and education practices; and policy levers and outcomes. Thus, we retain the ambition of developing a heuristic typology capable of classifying the totality of adult learning activities.

The examination of the typology conducted herein seems to suggest we need a higher order structure than is presently the case; a triad constituted by formal and non-formal education, and informal learning might serve this purpose. Note that we use the term 'education' rather than 'learning' when referring to formal and non-formal activities, as 'education' more appropriately captures the organized nature of these events. EUROSTAT has recently implemented a similar change in nomenclature for the 2012 AES (Eurostat, 2012b).

In the existing typology, the triad affords an intermediate step rather than the overall structure of classification. The empirical test using ASETS data indicates that the typology's criteria for formal and non-formal learning allow for clear classification of these activities (see section 4.2), as do the criteria for classifying adult education in British Columbia. By reducing the number of categories from five to three it will be easier to fulfill the criterion of exclusiveness. Also, adopting the triad as the structural framework allows direct comparison with EUROSTAT’s Adult Education Survey, which is one of the most developed instruments for collection and classification of adult learning data. Making this suggestion especially attractive is the attention being paid by the EC to the collection of information on adult learning for use in evidence-informed policy-making. As in the original proposal the new framework's three categories will be analyzed according to field of study, providers, funders, duration, learners' motivations, and other design and delivery features. This approach will allow an in-depth look at work-related educational and learning activities across the three core categories.
Accepting the triad as the principal framework we will need to establish policy-relevant subcategories that are more specific-less blended-than those in the original typology. The challenge comes in finding meaningful dimensions that suggest what John Meyer (1977) calls the social charter of an institution or, in our case, of a specific educational/learning activity. For formal education, the 2011 ISCED codes start to address this aspect and we recommend using them to establish sub-classes for this category. We also suggest adopting the EUROSTAT criterion of at least one semester duration for an event to be classified as formal. Previously, where a learner was enrolled in a one-semester module of a longer program and it was unclear if the goal was to take the whole program, the activity would be classified as non-formal. If the recommendation is followed, however, and assuming the institution provides an official transcript, it would be classified as formal. The ISCED code would rank the course level, and duration would be an indicator of intensity. To meet the ISCED and EUROSTAT criteria for classification as formal learning a course or program must meet requirements for admission, registration duration (at least one semester long) and recognition (accepted by relevant institutions).

It is more difficult to develop sub-classes for non-formal learning, as a large array of disparate learning events could fall under this category. Having reviewed participation data and existing classification schemes (particularly the suggested changes for EUROSTAT’s Adult Education Survey), we favour the following three sub-classes: courses that cannot be considered formal; seminars and workshops; and guided on-the-job-training. The AES pilot study found some difficulties in achieving compatibility for the latter sub-class. We suggest following EUROSTAT’s revised definitions (Eurostat, 2012b, p. 6).

**Courses:** Defined as “a planned series of single learning activities in a particular range of subject-matters offered by a provider” (p. 6). Courses are typically subject-oriented and taught by one or more persons specialized in the field(s) of education and training. May take place in various settings/environments and be delivered as classroom instruction, a lecture series, or a theoretical/practical combination.

**Seminars or workshops:** Sessions combining theoretical instruction with hands-on training.

**Guided on-the-job training:** Characterized by planned periods of training, instruction or practical experience, using normal tools of work, either in the immediate place of work or in the work situation, with the presence of a tutor. Usually organized by the employer to
facilitate adaptation of (new) staff. May include general training about the company (organization, operating procedures, etc.) as well as specific job-related instructions (safety and health hazards, working practices).

The AES pilot study recommends that where a respondent is unsure whether an activity is a course or on-the-job training, preference should be given to 'course'. We recommend applying the same principle to uncertainties about classifying seminars and workshops. And, as in the original typology, non-formal activities can be further described in terms of provider, field of study, funder, duration, learner's motivations, and other design and delivery features.

Regarding purposeful informal learning, research (e.g. Livingstone, 2006) suggests that life roles, rather than learning tools (e.g. computers) offer a sound basis for sub-classifications. Potential sub-classes would include learning related to: work; the community and civil society; the household; and for general interest.
Learning Activity

Intention to learn?

leads to a certificate/diploma/degree, at least one semester in length

NO

Incidental learning

YES

Organized educational activities

NO

Informal learning

YES

Courses

Workshops/Seminars

On-the-job-training

FORMAL EDUCATION

ISCED 1 → ISCED 6

NON – FORMAL EDUCATION

INFORMAL LEARNING

Work-related

Community/Civil

society-related

Household-related

General interest-related

Figure 6.1: Revised typology of adult learning
7. REFERENCES


Ministry of Advanced Education & BCStats (2006). Trades training in BC Colleges, University Colleges and Institutes. *College and Institute student outcomes (CISO)*.


