

A STUDY OF THE KNOWLEDGE, PERCEPTIONS AND
BENEFITS OF PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT FOR
AWARDING COLLEGE CREDIT AT CABOT COLLEGE OF
APPLIED ARTS, TECHNOLOGY AND
CONTINUING EDUCATION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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SANDRA L. EVANS



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OF PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT FOR AWARDED COLLEGE CREDIT
AT CABOT COLLEGE OF APPLIED ARTS, TECHNOLOGY
AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the knowledge, perceptions and benefits of prior learning assessment as perceived by the Faculty and Management of Cabot College.

The study focused on: (a) their perceptions regarding learning from past work and life experiences; (b) what non-college learning activities they felt can result in learning equivalent to that taught in college courses; (c) their past practices of prior learning assessment and methods they felt should be used or would be willing to use; (d) who they felt should determine credit award, how it should appear on the student's transcript, and the maximum amount of credit that should be awarded; and (e) their perceived benefits of prior learning assessment for students and Cabot College.

The target group for the study was the full-time Faculty and Academic Management at Cabot College during the spring of 1994. Cabot College was selected for the study because it was the only public post secondary institution that was actively involved in the development and implementation of prior learning assessment. Also, the researcher anticipated that the information obtained would be useful in the continued development and implementation of prior learning assessment at Cabot College.

A questionnaire was used in the collection of data. The response rate was 81% for Management and 52% for Faculty. Frequencies and means were used to determine the correlation

between the independent and dependent variables. Analysis of Variance and Chi-Square were used to analyze the data, but no significant difference was found.

The findings of the study indicated that Faculty and Management at Cabot College are receptive to the concept of prior learning assessment. Both groups felt that many non-college learning activities can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses. While there has been minimal use of prior learning assessment in the past, both groups indicated they would like to see more application of it and generally felt that whatever method was used, the pass mark should be the same as the pass mark for the particular course the student was challenging.

Responses varied on who they felt should make the decision regarding credit award for non-credit learning, the maximum amount of credit that should be awarded, and how it should be transcribed. It was clear, however, that the transcript should indicate that the credit was obtained through prior learning assessment.

Finally, most respondents agreed that prior learning assessment is beneficial both to students and to Cabot College. The most common benefit cited by both groups was that it can save the student time. For Cabot College, respondents indicated that prior learning assessment would yield better use of both physical and human resources within the college.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

In February 1990, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released a paper outlining proposed changes to the provincial post secondary education system. A major initiative in this plan for a "Triple-E" policy framework of equality, excellence, and efficiency, was the restructuring of Memorial University and the provincial college system.

With the implementation of this restructuring plan, the community colleges and three institutes merged to form five new colleges of applied arts, technology and continuing education and the Marine Institute became affiliated with Memorial University of Newfoundland. Within the college system, certain community college boundaries were altered and colleges were amalgamated. The Avalon Community College amalgamated with Cabot Institute (formerly The College of Trades and Technology until 1987) and became Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology and Continuing Education (Cabot College) in 1992, and with Eastern College. It now serves the St. John's area with campuses on Bell Island, Duckworth Street, Parade Street, Prince Philip Drive, Ridge Road, Topsail Road and Seal Cove.

Cabot College is the largest post secondary educational and skills training college in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a result of more recent restructuring, some of the programs of

the Marine Institute were transferred to Cabot College. Thus Cabot has approximately 11,000 full-time and part-time students. With a Faculty of approximately 450 and 200 administrative and support staff, the College delivers 70 full-time and 200 part-time credit and non-credit courses within its facilities and the Division of Continuing Education. The College offers certificates and diplomas in Applied Arts, Business, Construction Resources, Electrical/Electronics, Engineering Technologies, Mechanical, Medical Sciences, Service Programs and Basic Adult Education. The college also delivers part-time programs through 10 Regional Training Centres on the Avalon Peninsula.

In recent years, Cabot College has seen an increase in student enrolment. This is in keeping with national trends where the number of students entering post secondary programs in Canada is increasing. Over the last four decades, the growth in full-time post secondary students has increased ten-fold, from 91,000 in 1952 to 950,000 in 1991 (HRDC, 1994b: 4).

In this province, with continuous government restraint, closure of many small businesses and a devastating cod moratorium that is affecting every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, there is a staggering unemployment rate that is almost double the national average (in 1994, approximately 21% for Newfoundland and Labrador, and 11% for Canada). Advances in technology have resulted in increased competition for fewer and newer jobs. As a result, more and more adults are

enroling in post secondary institutions for job training or retraining. In this province in the last 10 years, there has been an increase in enrolment at both Memorial University and the non-university institutions, from 16,619 students in 1986-87 to 18,155 in 1989-90 (Warren, P.J., 1990:5). Adults who are employed are also finding themselves in the position of having to upgrade their qualifications to remain employable in the present job market.

A number of students have previously acquired knowledge and skills obtained through significant work and life experiences. According to The Forum of Labour Market Ministers "...an increasing number of adults are updating their skills by registering for programs at colleges and universities. These adult learners have acquired skills and knowledge through work experience, community activities, homemaking, non-credit courses and independent study" (1993: 30). Due to time and financial constraints, these adult clients are not prepared to waste precious time and money relearning what has already been learned, thus wanting to use their available resources in the best way possible (p. 30). Simosko and Associates concurred that adults are carefully spending education dollars: "and adults themselves have become wise consumers. It is they who are no longer willing to pay to repeat learning they have already acquired" (1988: 5).

As a result of the continuously changing needs of the adult client, the Mission Statement of Cabot College has

recently been revised and reads: "to provide a broad range of educational opportunities of consistently high quality in response to the changing educational needs of the community" (Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology and Continuing Education, 1993-1994: 16).

In keeping with it's mission, in November 1991, Cabot College, in conjunction with Health and Welfare Canada and the provincial Departments of Education and Social Services, began a three-year pilot project to upgrade the qualifications of practising early childhood educators in Newfoundland and Labrador. There had been no provision for formal training programs for early childhood educators until ten years ago. The result was that approximately 500 early childhood educators who were employed in some 135 licensed child care centres, had received little or no training.

The primary objectives of this pilot project were to provide certification standards for early childhood educators and to design a competency-based diploma program in Early Childhood Education that could be offered through distance education. This project was administered by the Division of Continuing Education of Cabot College.

An integral component of the pilot project was the development and implementation of prior learning assessment, hereafter referred to as PLA. PLA is a process whereby a student documents knowledge and skills obtained from prior experiences for the purpose of "challenging for credit" toward

a course or program. That is, learning from prior experience, and not the experience itself, provides the basis for the assessment upon which academic credit can be awarded. A common approach used in PLA, and in this project, was the development of a portfolio. This allowed students to systematically record and document appropriate experiences, that have resulted in knowledge and skills appropriate to the early Childhood Education program content. The learning, considered to be "college level", earned most of the students some advanced standing in the program, thus avoiding unnecessary repetition in their training.

Awarding credit for learning from past experiences is very timely. Lamdin wrote:

in a rapidly changing economy, recognition of their learning is crucial to most working adults for whom progress on the career ladder is often tied to the acquisition of new skills and competencies. For many people, a significant portion of these skills and competencies have already been acquired on the job; it is critical that there be ways of measuring, evaluating, documenting and awarding credit for them (1992: xii).

PLA provides benefits for students, the institution and the community at large. Benefits include accessibility to

education, reduction in instances of unnecessary retraining, and a saving in time and money for some students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the knowledge, perceptions, and potential benefits of PLA as perceived by Management and full-time Faculty of Cabot College. More specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Faculty and Management at Cabot College regarding learning from past work and life experiences?
2. What non-college learning activities did Faculty and Management feel can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses?
3. What are the past practices of Faculty and Management regarding methods of assessing prior, non-credit learning and what methods do they feel should be used or would be willing to use?
4. What are the perceptions of Faculty and Management regarding the administrative issues of decision making, transcription and the maximum amount of credit awarded to individuals through PLA?
5. What are the benefits of awarding college credit for prior, non-credit learning, as perceived by Management and Faculty of Cabot College?

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations were recognized as being inherent within the study:

1. The results of the study were dependent on the cooperation of the Faculty and Management at Cabot College.
2. Participants may have been reluctant to respond to certain questions that may be personal or sensitive in nature.
3. The study was limited to the Management and Faculty of Cabot College; therefore caution should be exercised in generalizing these findings beyond the confines of Cabot College.

Delimitations of the Study

The following delimitations were recognized as being inherent within the study:

1. This study was limited to Management and Faculty of Cabot College who were employed at the college during the spring semester 1994.
2. Cabot College was chosen for the study because it was the only public post secondary institution that was active in the development and implementation of PIA at the time.

3. The researcher anticipated that the information obtained from the research would be useful in the continued development and implementation of PLA at Cabot College.
4. This study is descriptive and exploratory in nature and summarizes the data received. It does not attempt to further extend or draw conclusions.

Definition of Terms

- Competency essay:** an essay/narrative that describes a student's learning in a particular subject. Included in the essay would be what the student knows, how/where it was acquired, and how the knowledge has been applied in real situations.
- Portfolio:** a detailed manuscript prepared by a student to make a case for why credit should be awarded for learning acquired from past experiences. Included in this would be various documentation sources to verify the experiences leading to the learning.
- Prior academic education:** "that which has been acquired in a formal educational institution and is attested to by the institution through the awarding of course credits, certificates,

diplomas, and/or degrees" (Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades in Ontario, 1989: 90).

Prior experiential

learning: learning acquired from previous work/life experiences (non-credit); or the knowledge, skills and attitudes learned.

Prior learning

assessment: the process of evaluating non-credit learning from previous work/life experiences for the purpose of awarding credit.

Work and life

experiences: any activities such as community or volunteer work, family responsibilities, seminars, conferences, self-study and non-credit course work.

Organization of the Thesis

This introductory chapter provides the background to the study which includes a brief history of the restructuring of the community college system in Newfoundland and Labrador. The purpose of the study is stated and the research questions that the study addressed. The limitations and delimitations as well as a definition of terms are included. Chapter II provides a review of the literature on PLA. In the third

chapter, the design of the study is discussed. This includes the methodology used to investigate the research questions. Chapter IV presents the analysis of the data and the findings of the study; Chapter V provides a summary of the findings and makes recommendations and suggestions for further study.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Changing trends in education, demands and expectations of society, technological advances and a struggling economy have all contributed to a steady increase in the influx of adult learners into post secondary institutions. According to Goodall, the number of students 25-and-over has grown since 1971 in this country, "...within colleges alone, the 1991 fall enrolment by mature students was almost three times the 1971-72 level" (1994: 45). This influx of older, more mature adult clients is very much the trend in the United States as well. According to the American Vocational Association (1985: 51), "today, more than one out of three college students is 25 years of age or older" and "by the year 2000, there will be more students over 25 years of age on college campuses than under 25 years of age".

This increase in mature students has affected the way post secondary institutions operate. Gallagher (1990:3) wrote that "an original priority to full-time younger adult students in a pre-employment phase is now being balanced by an emerging concern for older, part-time learners who see upgrading and retraining as a standard requirement in contemporary society." As a result, post secondary institutions are continuously adjusting their services to meet the shifting needs of the maturing community they serve.

Many of these more mature adult clients possess a great deal of occupational and life experiences. Institutions of higher education are now beginning to recognize that these prior experiences have resulted in some learning. According to Barba et al. (1985: 121) "learning does not take place only in the classroom! Indeed, learning can and does occur in community activities, on vacation, in the military services, as well as on the job."

Selman and Dampier (1991) described adult education/learning in terms of three approaches, formal, non-formal, and informal. Formal education is associated with full-time study in traditional educational institutions. It usually involves comprehensive curricula, is graded into multi-year levels and is linked to a graduated system of certification (p. 11).

They describe non-formal education as "...all other organized, systematic educational activity which is carried out in society, whether offered by educational institutions or any other agency" (p. 11). Examples include a one-day conference, one-week short course, a correspondence course or a series of evening classes.

They describe the third type, informal education, as "...frequently unorganized, unsystematic, and at times perhaps even unintentional" (p.12). Examples of this type include learning from daily experiences and exposure to home, work and play.

As a part of this recognition of the variety of ways we learn, the concept of prior learning or experiential learning has emerged. Keeton and Associates (1976: 4-5) defined experiential learning as "learning that occurs outside of classrooms." Torbert (1972: 7) stated that "experiential learning involves becoming aware of the qualities, patterns, and consequences of one's own experience as one experiences it."

Peruniak (1991: 6) indicated that there are many terms related to experiential learning and goes on to list some of them: "action learning, adventure education, cooperative education, community experience, discovery learning, holistic learning, internship, informal learning, practicum, prior experiential learning, simulation, volunteer experience, and work experience."

Experiential learning theory is based on the assumption that people learn without having to be formally taught in a classroom setting. In fact, advocates of adult learning would concur that most learning does take place outside a formal classroom. Some have gone as far as to state that 70 to 80% of learning occurs in this manner through almost any type of activity/situation (Tough, 1979: 1). Some of these activities include volunteer/community work, workshops, self-study/reading, home projects, family responsibilities

and job experience. Caffarella wrote:

...adults on their own initiative acquire job skills, gain insights into how to manage home and family, pursue personal interests and hobbies, and just learn for the sake of acquiring knowledge. Self-direction in one's learning does not necessarily mean solitary learning. Rather, often in these self-initiated learning ventures, adults seek assistance in the form of human (for example, friends, family members, and experts in the content area) and material resources (for example, books, magazines, and videotapes), (1993: 27-28).

This experiential learning process is viewed quite differently than the process involved with traditional (classroom) learning. In fact, the two can be seen as almost exact opposites. Coleman (1976: 50-52) described both learning processes as a series of steps. With traditional learning, we proceed through four steps; we:

1. receive information through symbolic sources such as lectures or reading;
2. assimilate and organize this information so that a general principle is understood;
3. apply the general principle to a specific instance;
4. apply the general principle in new circumstances.

Coleman then described experiential learning in almost the reverse order, saying that we do not use a symbolic medium for transmitting information; in fact information is generated only through the sequence of steps themselves (1976: 51-52). Therefore, with experiential learning we:

1. carry out an action with self-observation of its effects;
2. understand the effects of the action, or have learned the consequences of the action;
3. come to understand the general principle and thus see a connection between the actions and effects over a range of circumstances;
4. apply the general principle in new circumstances.

According to Coleman, the most important difference between both types of learning is the source of information. With traditional learning, the source is "symbolic" such as listening to a lecture or reading. Whereas, with experiential learning, the source of the information is "acting" or "observing"; the learner is doing or watching someone else do.

Although traditional (classroom) learning has always been accepted as the norm, experiential learning theory has been slowly gaining wide-spread recognition as a credible means of learning. According to Cunningham (1983: 61), "experiential learning's strengths are intrinsic motivation, direct linkage to further action, and the tendency for learning from action to be less easily forgotten." In other words, when we learn

by doing, the learning is most meaningful and more likely to be remembered.

With this recognition of experiential learning, the concept of PLA emerged. PLA is a formalized process of acknowledging and evaluating experiential learning, or learning from past work and life experiences for the purpose of awarding credit where appropriate. Defined by the British Columbia Council of Admissions and Transfer:

PLA is assessment by some valid and reliable means, by a qualified specialist, of what has been learned through nonformal education/training or experience, that is worthy of credit in a course or program offered by the institution providing the credit (Koenig and Wolfson, 1994: 3).

With increasing numbers of adult learners in post secondary programs, educators have been faced with the challenge of recognizing these adults' past accomplishments and developing alternative approaches to assess prior learning, to award advanced standing where appropriate. Today, the assessment of prior experiential learning has evolved universally into a comprehensive, systematic process of evaluation using measurement tools such as an interview, challenge examination or performance evaluation as a means of assessing prior learning for the purpose of awarding credit.

The acknowledgement of learning from past experiences and awarding credit where appropriate results in a balance between fairness to adult clients of education and maintaining program standards. By doing this, education has become more accessible, affordable and attractive.

Prior Learning Assessment - Past and Present

Many countries have been or are becoming involved in PLA. PLA in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand are discussed below.

The United States

The concept of "PLA" appears to have had its roots in the United States. As a formalized, systematic process, PLA has been in existence in most institutions of higher learning for perhaps the last 40 years (Keeton, 1985; Knapp and Gardner, 1981; Peruniak, 1991). As an informal process, PLA has undoubtedly been in existence for a much longer period of time. Keeton speculated:

prior learning assessment has a much longer history than is commonly realized. Any good teacher, for all time, has begun by finding out why the learner has come to that teacher - what the learner already knows and can do - and on the basis of the information, that teacher has sought to discern what the learner might best next learn (1985: 2).

The exact origin of PLA is somewhat unclear. According to Peruniak (1991:3), "Baker (1974) cited evidence that the University of Chicago offered challenge examinations in the 1930's." However, he further stated that the first known and documented, formally recognized system of PLA began in the United States shortly after the Second World War. According to Peruniak (1991:3), "it was the returning World War II veterans who put real pressure on the formal system in the U.S. to recognize alternative sources of learning." As a result, the American Council on Education (ACE) initiated the GED (General Educational Development) Examinations; initially for people in the military services. After the war, these were continued and extended to the civilian population (Keeton, 1985: 2).

O'Houle (1976: 32) described PLA as appearing much later; "among undergraduate institutions, Brooklyn College in 1954 was perhaps the first to award credits directly to adults on the basis of the assessment of previous experience".

In the 1960's, the College Entrance Examination Board in the United States developed the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) and this program is still being used by some educational institutions today (Keeton, 1985: 2-3). Shortly after, a rival testing organization, the American Testing Service, created the Proficiency Examination Program (PEP), (Keeton, 1985: 3).

In the 1970's, a shift from formal examinations to

documentation of learning slowly emerged. Under the direction of the Educational Testing Service in the United States, the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning (CAEL) project was established and operated from 1974 to 1977. The mandate of the project was to conduct research in the area of experiential learning and to develop methods which would assist educational institutions in conducting PLA to award academic recognition (Peruniak, 1991: 3; Knapp and Gardnier, 1981: 8; Harris, 1989: 201). Keeton and Associates stated that, "CAEL arose primarily because of the fact that experience is no guarantor of learning" (1976: 4). In other words, it was the learning that resulted from the experience and not the experience itself, that provided the basis on which academic credit could be awarded.

As a result of the CAEL project, the idea of "portfolio development" emerged. The compilation of a portfolio became a means of students submitting detailed information about previous experiences, the learning that had resulted, and evidence to verify the learning. However, Knapp and Gardnier claimed that "portfolio construction and evaluation were nonstructured, and students had little information to help them understand how they were to go about demonstrating, for academic credit, their claims to learning" (1981: 10). Further, in their view, portfolios were often inadequate, few Faculty members knew the portfolio option existed and of those who did, many were critics. Often, the portfolio itself was

the only assessment method used, with Faculty members not even meeting the student to conduct any other form(s) of assessment.

In 1977, CAEL became a freestanding non-profit organization and was renamed Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning. In 1982, CAEL again changed its name, this time to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

Since its establishment, CAEL's purpose has remained unchanged, providing leadership and guidance in the area of PLA. According to Tate, the mission of CAEL has been "to expand lifelong learning opportunities for adults and to advance both experiential learning and its assessment" (1992: 127). Tate went on to say that in the last few years, the following statement has been added to their mission: "this learning should positively affect individuals, institutions and ultimately the society."

By 1981 a different picture of PLA had emerged. Knapp and Gardnier indicated that written guidelines on how to create a portfolio were in place for students, portfolio development courses were available and increasing numbers of students were submitting portfolios (1981: 10-11). Now the process of PLA was becoming more organized, formalized and systematic.

In 1984, CAEL conducted a nationwide survey that resulted in more than 1200 academic institutions reporting affiliation with PLA. In 1991, another nationwide institutional survey, conducted by CAEL, generated a survey to 3,694 academic institutions throughout the United States (CAEL, 1992). Questionnaires were returned by 1,732 (47%), with 86% of those reporting that they assess non-credit learning through various methods (p.5). This research revealed that since their nationwide survey in 1984, another 290 institutions were implementing PLA. According to Peruniak:

a number of factors have contributed to the increasing interest in prior learning including the competition for the adult education "market" with declines in the traditional 18-24 year olds, and the pressure to recognize certain kinds of industrial training especially where such training takes place as part of an overall collaboration between business and education (1991: 4).

Today, CAEL continues to remain active in PLA. It hosts a major international conference and several national conferences and workshops in the United States annually. CAEL is well known for its continuing research and development in the area of PLA and related consultation services.

Canada

The following is a summary of the PLA activities within each of the provinces in Canada.

Quebec.

Within Canada, Quebec was the first province as a whole, to become involved in PLA. In 1982, a study on Adult Education in Quebec recommended the implementation of PLA throughout the education system. In 1984, the Quebec government passed legislation making PLA a priority for its CEGEPS (Colleges of General and Professional Education), resulting in a province-wide initiative in PLA (Thomas, 1989: 11-12; Simosko and Associates, 1988: 167).

Ontario.

P. Zakos (personal communication, February 1992) indicated that Loyalist College in Ontario implemented PLA in its Human Services Worker Program in 1982. R. Burke (personal communication, February 1992) revealed that Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario began implementation of PLA to all programs in 1984.

In February, 1993, the Ontario government announced a province-wide comprehensive system of PLA. This framework included the establishment of a PLA Advisory and Coordinating Group, appropriate training for staff of all 23 colleges prior to their involvement in its implementation, and policy development at government level. In an open letter to the college system, David Cooke, Ontario Minister of Education and

Training, stated: "prior learning assessment will facilitate lifelong learning, make colleges more accessible to groups which have been underrepresented in the past and increase the efficiency of the colleges by eliminating the need for unnecessary retraining" (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993: 4). As part of this initiative, a PLA secretariat has also been established to address policy development, PLA training and the development of a monitoring and information system (HRDC, 1994a: 5).

British Columbia.

According to Peruniak "in early 1989 the government of British Columbia launched an initiative in PLA through the Open Learning Agency as part of the British Columbia Educational Credit Bank" (1991: 5). That initiative is very active today according to S. Brain (personal communication, February 1992). In 1994, the British Columbia Council for Admissions and Transfer embarked on a provincial initiative for the implementation of PLA in both the community colleges and universities (HRDC, 1994a: 6).

Alberta.

Within Alberta, PLA is practised by some colleges and by Athabasca University and the University of Alberta, although at this time, a provincial policy on PLA has not been established (HRDC, 1994a: 6). A Draft White Paper proposing a strategic plan for the transformation of Alberta's adult learning system, was released in March 1994 (Alberta Advanced

Education and Career Development, 1994: 12).

Saskatchewan.

There is no provincial policy on PLA in Saskatchewan; however, Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment is "developing a systematic approach to the assessment of and recognition for prior learning (HRDC, 1994a: 6).

Manitoba.

In Manitoba, there is no formal provincial policy on PLA. However, the Education Review Commission recently released a report which "...although making no specific reference to PLA, did recommend that credit transfer arrangement be done to better facilitate student movement between universities and colleges in Manitoba" (HRDC, 1994a: 5). Red River Community College however, has been actively involved in PLA with its Early Childhood Education and Nursing programs (D. Blower, personal communication, March 1992).

New Brunswick.

In New Brunswick, the Department of Advanced Education and Labour implemented a policy in September 1994, recognizing prior academic and experiential learning for the college system (HRDC, 1994a: 4).

Nova Scotia.

There is no provincial policy on PLA in Nova Scotia. The community college system is relatively new there, created by a process of transforming technical/vocational high schools to community colleges (HRDC, 1994: 3).

Prince Edward Island.

In Prince Edward Island there is no provincial policy on PLA in place (HRDC, 1994a: 3). However, L. Coffin (personal communication, May 1993) confirmed that Holland College has instituted PLA and this is available to all students entering the college.

Newfoundland and Labrador.

In Newfoundland and Labrador the introduction of PLA at Cabot College in St. John's in 1992 appears to have been the first systematic, methodical approach for the province. As part of a three-year pilot project to upgrade the qualifications of Early Childhood Educators in the province, Cabot College began research, development and implementation in PLA, with the intent to apply this concept to other college programs.

A provincial PLA Task Group has recently been established, under the Council on Higher Education. The mandate of the group is to prepare a discussion paper on PLA which will include a provincial policy and recommendations.

There is ample evidence that PLA is being practised in many post secondary colleges in this country. The practices range from individual and informal Faculty requests to systematic methods following appropriate policies and guidelines. Further, Baker (1984) reported that 12 Canadian Universities had some form of assessment available in at least some departments (p. 13). The literature did not discuss the

use of PLA within the private schools.

United Kingdom

The research and writings of Norman Evans has been key to the development of PLA in the United Kingdom (UK). Evans was first introduced to the work of CAEL (Council of Adult and Experiential Learning) in the late 1970s. In his work, Evans credited CAEL in the United States for providing him the foundation and background. Unlike North America where the term PLA became common, the UK have founded the concept APEL, assessment of prior experiential learning.

Not unlike the American system, demography in Britain suggested there was a real need to take into account the increasing proportions of adult learners. Thus, Evans' work involved researching the procedures in the United States with a view to introducing those most appropriate to the British system. From there, interest in PLA spread with a series of exchange visits between the U.S. and Britain during the early 1980s (Challis 1993: 2 and Evans in Simosko and Associates 1988: 157).

In the early 1980s, a project was commissioned by the "Further Education Unit", which resulted in publication of the 1984 document, Curriculum Opportunity: A Map of Experiential Learning in Entry Requirements to Higher and Further Education Award-Bearing Courses. From then on, APEL activities began to spread (Challis, 1993: xi-xii).

In 1986, the British government established the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), whose mandate was to set national standards in occupational competencies in all areas of employment (Evans, 1992: 62 and Koenig and Wolfson 1995: 6). According to Challis:

the British model is able to offer not only recognition and assessment, but also accreditation in a very practical and tangible sense in terms of certificates. This began first in higher education as academic credit towards diplomas, bachelors and masters degrees, and has since expanded to different areas, partly through the development of the unit-based framework of National Vocational Qualifications and other developing initiatives that seek to award credit for demonstrated learning within a context of clearly specified outcomes (1993: 5).

Also in 1986, Norman Evans established the Learning from Experience Trust, an education charity devoted to the development of work and the assessment of experiential learning (Evans in Simosko and Associates, 1988: 165).

According to Evans, APEL has gained widespread public recognition through policy statements of various departments, agencies and councils. Today, Britain still avails of CAEL publications for providing invaluable information on the

theory and practice of PLA, although according to Evans, "...however, things are now at a stage when we in the UK have significant experience of our own to draw on" (Evans in Simosko and Associates, 1988: 158).

Australia

In Australia, PLA is referred to as RPL, recognition for prior learning. RPL is already in place in a number of universities, both as an option for admission to a course or for advanced standing or credit within it (Cohen et al, 1992).

In 1992, a national survey revealed that 79% of the responding Australian universities were able to identify a number of PLA initiatives (Cohen et al, 1992). The study also revealed, however, that few of those universities have RPL policies and procedures formally in place, although a number have policies in draft stages and many using RPL on an ad-hoc basis. Other universities indicated an awareness of RPL and the need to introduce or further develop it (Cohen et al, 1992).

New Zealand

According to Cohen et al (1992), New Zealand has implemented a number of pilot studies to research the implementation of RPL. The adoption of RPL has also become policy in that country. The Educational Assessment Act (1990) requires the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to recognize prior learning within all education sectors (Cohen et al, 1992).

Methods Utilized in Prior Learning Assessment

Over time, PLA has evolved from an ad-hoc and informal procedure to become a comprehensive and systematic process. As a result, many different methods for assessment of prior learning have emerged. According to Knapp and Sharon (1985: 5) "...because experiential learning, in the sense employed in the CAEL project, often differs from traditional classroom learning, its assessment and evaluation require the consideration of measurement techniques that have not been widely employed in higher education." In other words, because experiential learning differs from traditional classroom learning, so should its techniques.

Institutions of higher learning differ in their use of measurement techniques. While some rely solely on the portfolio, others use a combination of several methods. Recently, the use of a portfolio in combination with one or several other methods has gained popularity and has thus been termed "portfolio-assisted" assessment.

The availability of well-written learning outcomes for all courses is a must for PLA to be successful regardless of the method that was used. Baker (1984: 11) stated "the vagueness of many course descriptions and the omission of learning objectives and outcomes from syllabi make it difficult for students to tell whether they have the skills and knowledge equivalent to a specific course."

The following is a brief description of the most common measurement techniques used in the assessment of prior learning.

The Portfolio

The portfolio is defined as "a file or folder of accumulated information about a student's experiences and accomplishments that can be the vehicle for organizing and distilling raw experiences into a manageable form for assessment" (Forrest, Knapp and Pendergrass, 1976: 162). The most common components found in a portfolio are usually a chronological record, a life history paper, a goals paper, a resume, a lengthy narrative containing the student's claim to learning (or several smaller narratives discussing specific areas of learning), and a documentation section.

According to Knapp and Gardner (1981: 9), "the portfolio is not only a written product; it represents a painstaking process through which experiences are translated into statements of learning outcomes that are documented, demonstrated, and evaluated for academic recognition." Barba et al. (1985: 122) stated "a portfolio goes beyond a traditional transcript by placing emphasis on accomplishments and experiences as other modes of learning. It further encourages self analysis not only of students' academic lives but of their professional lives."

In Canada and the United States, institutions involved in the use of a portfolio for PLA varied in their approach.

While some institutions offered a credit course on portfolio development, others offered minimal guidelines as to how to compile a portfolio.

A major advantage of the portfolio method was that it has the potential to be student-centred. That is, the student designs the portfolio, including the content and documentation sources he or she chooses to include.

Despite its popularity in Canada and the United States, the portfolio had some negative characteristics; such as the amount of work involved in creating a portfolio, and the whole process of "going back in time" to recall past experiences. The portfolio development process has even been described by some as a "painful process." McCormick said:

the assessment process can be very emotional for students. In order to earn credit through a portfolio process, they need to review their lives - scanning them to pluck out college-level learning experiences. When students review their lives, they sometimes snag upon painful memories that they would rather avoid (1990: 26-27).

Because of the work involved in developing a portfolio, its creation is dependent upon strong writing skills and is therefore not practical for students who are weak in this area. The compilation of a portfolio is indeed a substantial

task for the returning adult learner, both physically and psychologically.

According to Evans (1992: 69), for prior learning to be brought to a point for formal consideration and assessment, "there is a sequence of tasks which have to be completed." The first he described as "psychological" and most apparent when adults prepare to enrol in post secondary institutions to have their prior learning assessed. Again, according to Evans, even adults with years of experience are intimidated by the thought of having to learn in a formal institution. He further elaborated: "...and this first task, psychologically, is to believe there is a possibility that people can know more and do more than they or anyone else gives them credit for" (p. 69).

Once the student overcomes this psychological stage, the hard work, to reveal the prior learning that has occurred, begins. Evans goes on to say that, "there are three subsequent stages for an individual wanting to identify prior learning with a view to accreditation" (p.70). The first he described as a review process, where the individual reviews past experiences, reflects upon them and identifies the learning that has resulted. Evans also asserts that "this attempt to extract significant learning experiences from the overall life and work experience of an adult is an essential preparation for the tough intellectual task which follows."

The second stage described by Evans is the formulation of learning statements. During this stage, the individual will "...begin to lay the basis for making a claim to possession of certain knowledge and skills through isolating significant learning drawn from the experiences which have been isolated previously" (p. 70).

Evans' third stage is "the collection and documenting of evidence." The important thing here is that the documentation substantiates the claim of learning being made. After this step, assessment begins, with accreditation to follow.

Challenge Examination

The use of examinations in the assessment of prior learning has been fairly popular. According to Simosko and Associates, "often examinations are the easiest form of prior learning assessment to get accepted by Faculty, since they resemble most closely what Faculty already use in assessing students" (1988: 53). For the student, examinations can also be the easiest tool used in PLA, because they often require less work than the completion of a portfolio.

Examinations used for PLA can be standardized or teacher-made. Their contents can be essay, objective or a combination of both.

The use of standardized examinations for the purpose of assessing prior learning appeared to be more widely accepted and used in the United States than in Canada, possibly because of the fact that most standardized examinations were developed

in the United States. Some of the more common standardized examinations included: College Proficiency Examination Program (CPEP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support (DANTES) and Advanced Placement Program (APP) (Simosko and Associates, 1988). Despite their popularity, Barkatoolah stated:

the limitations of standardized testing procedures that focus more on cognitive criteria are now being acknowledged. Such tests tend to neglect behavioral and affective competencies, especially those related to attitudes and motivations, and the ways in which contextual factors influence our choices (1989: 151).

When teacher-made tests were used to assess prior learning, the ideal examination was "general" in nature. That is, test items did not refer to specific readings, videos, etc, that a student could only be knowledgeable of if enrolled in the course. However, a teacher often administered this type of specific examination, the same examination that was used to test traditional learning. As Baker pointed out, unfortunately for the PLA student "for courses which are based on very specific content, it may be difficult for students to pass a challenge examination" (1984: 11).

Examinations were relatively inexpensive to administer and require minimal preparation in most cases. They were

viewed effective when the intent was to measure theory. Unfortunately this was also seen as a disadvantage as they were limited to testing knowledge and could not appropriately measure attitude or skill application. For students who had been away from formalized schooling, a major disadvantage was that writing an examination could be a very intimidating and painful process.

Product Assessment

Forrest, Knapp and Pendergrass, (1976: 169) described product assessment as "the evaluation of such products as pictures, musical compositions, writing samples, mechanical inventions, and the like." According to Simosko, and Associates (1988: 32) "product assessment is one of the most common and direct ways of evaluating students' learning" as they feel that "products lend themselves directly to the evaluation of skills and knowledge."

Unlike a performance assessment, product assessment produces an end product and that is used to "...make judgements about the student's learning" (Simosko and Associates, 1988: 32). This method of assessment was viewed ideal when the amount of time required to produce the product was too great. However, this was also seen as a disadvantage, as it was the product and not the process that was evaluated. Therefore, it may be difficult to determine if the product is actually the student's own work. In the more recent literature, products have been referred to as documentation.

Performance Tests

Termed performance evaluation or performance appraisal, evaluation of performance is a method of assessment used to measure application of knowledge. Described by Simosko and Associates (1988: 35) "unlike product assessment...in performance assessment, it is the process itself, the act of doing, which is considered." Forrest, Knapp and Pendergrass, (1976: 169) described the performance test as follows: "frequently, a performance test is nothing but a work sample requiring the accomplishment of specific tasks in a controlled setting, but it may consist of a situational observation of performance in a natural setting."

Performance assessment could take place in a real-life situation, termed "prepared performance" by Simosko and Associates, or if impractical, in a simulated environment, termed a "simulated performance" (1988: 35). The student can be aware of and see the observer or it can be done unobtrusively, with the aid of audiovisual devices. This was practical if it was anticipated that the student's behaviour would be altered due to the presence of the observer.

The use of performance evaluation was ideal when evaluating performance as opposed to direct theory. This type of assessment worked especially well with competency-based learning. Unfortunately, performance testing can be costly both in terms of time and money for the institution and the student.

Simulations

A simulation is the creation of a real-life situation. Described by Simosko and Associates (1988: 36), "in the assessment of a simulated performance, the assessor endeavours to create a situation reflecting the real-life one in which the student claims competence."

When using simulations as a means of assessment, "these tests require the student to pretend that he or she is engaged in some realistic task, the nature and content of which are described in some detail before the individual begins to assume an assigned or unassigned role" (Forrest, Knapp and Pendergrass, 1976: 169-70).

Simulations work well when the performance cannot be measured in the real situation or by other means. For example, a simulation would be most effective when evaluating life-threatening situations. According to Forrest, Knapp and Pendergrass, (1976: 170) "simulations are ordinarily used to assess complex qualities such as analytical thinking, goal setting, risk taking, interpersonal competence, decision making, sensitivity to the behaviours of others, oral communications, and planning skills." During a simulation, the evaluator has the opportunity to challenge the student by asking questions, to obtain more information for assessment if needed.

Interviews

Defined by Forrest, Knapp and Pendergrass, (1976: 170), interviews are "face-to-face interpersonal role situations in which the interviewer asks the student questions designed to obtain answers that will lead to an evaluation of one or more learning outcomes." They go on to say that "the interview is the most practical and widely used measurement device in the portfolio process."

According to Simosko and Associates, "interviews can help us to exchange information, verify information, influence or change behaviour, diagnose problems, or serve any number of other purposes" (1988: 39). The interview can be conducted by one person or a panel, it can be very formal or informal. It can also be very structured with specific questions developed ahead of time, or unstructured, resulting in informal conversation. The interview works well for students who may have a learning/reading disability, thus enabling them to properly express themselves without paper.

The interview has the advantage of being "student-focused," thus adaptable for individual student use. Like other assessment methods, the interview process can be time-consuming and costly.

Another type of interview structure described by Simosko and Associates (1988: 400) was the "leaderless group discussion." According to Simosko and Associates, with this type of situation, students are brought together to discuss a

topic while assessors observe and evaluate according to pre-defined criteria. The students may or may not be asked to assume a particular role within the group. The assessors do not enter into the discussion; their role is strictly to observe.

As PLA has evolved over the last decade, so has the methods of assessment for gathering information on a student's prior learning. In recent years, there has been a trend towards "portfolio-assisted assessment" as a means of fairly evaluating a student's prior learning. With this approach, the student is responsible for compiling a portfolio for assessment. During the assessment, any content that is lacking can be further assessed through any one or combination of the other methods discussed above.

Whatever method(s) chosen by the post secondary institution to assess prior non-credit learning, preparing their prior learning for assessment and accreditation becomes a rigorous process for the adult learner.

Issues with Prior Learning Assessment

The introduction of PLA into higher education has not been a smooth process. With it, has been concerns and misgivings that educational standards will be jeopardized as credit is awarded for almost anything. Many of the opponents of PLA have described it as a means of quickly obtaining academic credentials without having to enrol in all required

program courses. However, proponents of PLA have argued that if it is done systematically and correctly, standards will be upheld and learning outcomes equivalent to those of students who have taken the course work.

According to Strange in Lamdin et al (1992: 51), "one of the most frequent charges is that the evaluation of experiential learning, especially PLA, will cheapen the degree." The argument being that standards will drop, non-academic evaluators will tarnish the reputation of academic decisions and that the possession of practical skills will replace theory. However, Strange argues that because Faculty set the standards, if they continue to employ them for the PLA student, then standards will not be lowered. In reality, Faculty can be as stringent as they like to insure the outcomes of the course, for which the student is seeking prior learning credit, have been met.

Another issue raised by opponents of PLA is that theoretical knowledge will be replaced by practical skills. That is, credit will be awarded for having an experience and not for the learning itself. However, Strange argues that in traditional learning, too much emphasis is on theory, whereas, with experiential learning, there is a balance of theory and practical which is a more appropriate outcome (Lamdin et al, 1991: 52). Ironically, when references are completed on graduates, the reference is often made on the performance of the student and not academic achievement.

The issue of job loss is another major concern, especially among Faculty. According to Strange, "an argument often offered by Faculty against the formal recognition of experiential learning is that assessment of experiential learning programs reduce the need for Faculty" (Lamdin et al, 1991: 52). The fear among Faculty is that as institutions award credit for prior learning, there will be fewer students taking courses. However, in response, Strange argues that "every institution which has wholeheartedly recognized the validity of experiential learning, and developed an effective program for implementing its evaluation, has significantly increased its enrolment and the demand for Faculty" (p. 52). Students receiving exemption/advanced standing through PLA, often enter programs in the second semester and beyond, when enrolments have dropped drastically due to drop out and termination. As a result, enrolments are actually increased in those semesters, necessitating the need for Faculty. According to Baker (1984: 12) "the adoption of credit for prior learning might increase the number of teaching jobs, if more adult students are encouraged to register in university by the availability of credit for what they already know."

Another common concern with PLA is the cost factor associated with it; that PLA will prove to be too costly. Once again, Strange (Lamdin et al, 1991: 54) argued that if need be, institutions can charge what it costs to administer PLA; "people are willing to pay for saving time and tuition

dollars." A second argument that he offered is that PLA programs can make money for an institution, as long as students are taught in groups, how to pull together their prior learning documentation, as taking an individualized approach would increase costs.

Another argument against the charge that PLA is costly, is that it can be used as a recruitment tool, increasing enrolments, thus increasing tuition intake. Ironically, according to Peruniak, (1991: 12) "however, we now have the situation where a government such as in Britain, possibly to a lesser extent in Quebec and British Columbia, have expropriated PLA procedures as part, albeit a minor part, of a strategy for solving economic and manpower problems."

In the province of Ontario, the provincial government has taken an initiative to implement PLA province-wide. A study on the economics of PLA contained the following, "assuming prior learning assessment applicants have a similar success rate in obtaining credits as 'regular' learners, it would cost twice as much to obtain an equivalent number of credits through enrolment in courses than through prior learning assessment" (Ontario Council of Regents for the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 1992: 48).

Another contentious issue among opponents of PLA is the fact that credit is given for experience and not for learning. Critics argued that adults are awarded credit just for "being somewhere or doing something," or as discussed by Knapp and

Gardnier (1981: 8), "many Faculty members feared that students would be awarded college credit just for living." According to Strange (Lamdin et al, 1992: 54), this can happen if institutions lower their standards. It is important that institutions advertise that they are awarding credit for prior learning from experience and not for the experience itself. Strange stated, "there is nothing inherent in experiential learning programs that necessitates a lower set of standards" (1991: 54). As with traditional learning, institutions are responsible for setting standards and adhering to them.

Faculty opponents/critics of PLA have also expressed the concern that credit for prior learning is not acceptable because "the student did not learn it from me" or "did not learn it here." Strange argued that opponents will not overcome this obstacle until they recognize "that we all learn in a variety of ways, and from a large number of sources" (1991: 56). But this issue was an issue long before PLA emerged.

Standards for Assessing Learning

In an attempt to guide personnel in decision-making and possibly overcome contentious issues, experts in the field of PLA discuss standards to follow as a means of maintaining quality control and quality standards.

In his book, Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures, Urban Whitaker discussed ten standards for quality assurance in assessing learning for credit. The first five, described as Academic Standards, are those directly related to the assessment process itself. The other five, termed the Administrative Standards, are those related to the administrative context in which the assessment and award of credit should occur.

These ten standards have become very well known among PLA personnel; so much so, they are referred to quite frequently in the PLA literature. These standards are often used by post secondary institutions as a basis for formulating PLA policy.

According to Whitaker, "the first requirement for quality assurance in the assessment of learning is the identification of some rules for describing acceptable outcomes." Thus Whitaker's ten well-known standards are written below with a brief explanation of each.

Academic Standards

1. Credit should be awarded only for learning, not for experience (Whitaker, 1989: 10).

Whitaker described this standard as the most important, yet the most frequently violated. He explained that no experience is the same for all participants, therefore it is the learning from the experience that should be given the recognition. (Whitaker, 1992, CAEL conference).

Whitaker wrote: "some clear negative rules emerge: seat time, hours on the job, and life experience should not be calculated in assessing learning. They may be effective educational inputs, but they don't guarantee credible learning outcomes" (1989: 11). Evans (1992: 80) stated "the insistence throughout must be that the experience of a student is significant only as a source of the learning."

For the student, the challenge begins with the breakdown of past experiences to identify the learning that has occurred. A portfolio development course or assistance of keen Faculty, makes this identification easier.

2. College credit should be awarded only for college-level learning (p. 11).

According to Whitaker, "in any case there are two questions that must be answered before college credit should be awarded: is the subject matter appropriate for credit at the college level and is the learner's competence in the subject sufficient for college level credit?" (p. 12). Whitaker elaborated further, saying that answering these questions is difficult and this ends up being a "judgement call." He went on to say that application of standards three, four and five help to insure the quality assurance.

Smith and McCormick (1992) said college-level learning "is generalizable, conceptual, and contains an appropriate mix of theoretical and practical knowledge" (p. 22-23). Tate (1983) said "though college-level learning is difficult to

define, most Faculty have little difficulty in recognizing it when they see it, regardless of the circumstances under which it was gained" (p. 62).

Although adults will identify much learning from their many experiences, the key is to assist the student in identifying which learning is college-level and which is not.

3. Credit should be awarded only for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the subject, between theory and practical application (p. 13).

Whitaker stated that a common complaint of traditional learners is that they may be strong in theory but weak in practice. On the contrary, a common complaint about experiential learners is that they "can do something" but cannot explain the how or why because they have not mastered the theory. Thus the argument and the need for this third standard; when assessing prior learning, the assessor must look for an appropriate balance in theory and practice. (However, depending on the situation, a practical component may not exist, such as in the assessment of a student's ability to recall history).

Whitaker contended, "a common test is whether the learning is transferable to other contexts than that of the specific learning environment" (p. 13). If so, then the learning is the same as that of the traditional student who would be taught to apply the knowledge in more than one situation.

4. The determination of competence levels and of credit awards must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic experts (p. 15).

According to Whitaker, there should be two kinds of expertise when making decisions about credit. One being content expertise, to determine how much the learner knows and how well; and the other being "academic expertise: given the extent and quality of the learning, is college credit appropriate, and if so, how much, in what subject(s), at what level, and with or without the completion of additional learning." Whitaker elaborated that ideally one person will possess both, thus being able to make both decisions. When appropriate, this expert should be from the Faculty, except in circumstances that may warrant the consultation of outside expertise such as to preserve quality assurance while extending the institution's flexibility (p. 15).

5. Credit should be appropriate to the academic context in which it is accepted (p. 15).

This standard is self-explanatory. Whitaker was implying here that a student who is challenging against a "history" credit obviously has to use a knowledge of history from which to base a case. In other words, discussing a knowledge of "welding" or "poetry" will not suffice in this case.

Administrative Standards

6. Credit awards and their transcript entries should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning (p. 16).

According to Whitaker, this becomes a simple administrative task, "however, it may require academic judgement in cases where the relationships of the subject matter are complex or where credited learning has not been adequately described or clearly labelled" (p. 16). As with transcribing traditional learning, the practice needs to be clearly monitored to avoid duplication.

7. Policies and procedures applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available (p. 17).

According to Whitaker, every effort should be made to advertise the rules applied to assessing learning. He said that "it is important that the rules be comprehensive, explicit, and accessible..." and that "every caution should be taken to avoid misleading statements that encourage unrealistic expectations" (p. 17). Experiential learning programs can be confusing to newcomers; it is important that the institution emphasizes that the award of credit is for learning from prior experiences and not for the experiences themselves.

8. Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of

credit awarded (p. 17).

According to Whitaker, the cost of a traditional course is the same whether the student passes and receives credit or fails and does not receive credit. Therefore, the same should apply for experiential learning. He stated that "fees do vary as the amount of credit attempted varies. But fees must not be based solely on the amount of credit awarded" (p 17).

9. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should receive adequate training for the functions they perform, and there should be provisions for their continued professional development (p. 17).

Whitaker stated that "this standard is as badly needed for classroom teachers and assessors as it is for experiential learning personnel." He elaborated that even those who are experts in assessment of classroom learning, it is essential that they be provided professional development in any experiential learning assessment they are involved in (p. 18). As with anything, the success of PLA can only be attributed to those who are directly involved with its administration.

10. Assessment programs should be monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served and in the state of the assessment arts (p. 18).

Again, as with anything in education, evaluation should be an ongoing process. Whitaker discussed how local evaluation can take many forms, and there are other outside

national agencies that can assist in monitoring programs and assuring quality (p. 18).

Summary

There have been many challenges faced by the education system in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. With government cutbacks, closure of businesses and a continued moratorium on the cod fishery, more and more adults are joining thousands of other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who have been forced to turn to government assistance. As a result, temporary unemployment insurance benefits have become the main source of income for many families in Newfoundland and Labrador. For most of these adults, training or retraining is the only viable option to take advantage of the new opportunities in the new economy.

As a result, the introduction of PLA could not be more timely for this province. Assuming that most or all of these adults possess a wealth of experiences, such a formalized system has enabled adult educators to assist adults to articulate and document the learning that has resulted from these experiences.

The variety of methods used in the assessment of prior learning would allow educators to individualize assessment according to the learners needs. The development of a portfolio would be an excellent tool for the student who is uncertain of what opportunities are available and not ready to

start writing examinations. Whereas, challenge examinations could be administered to the learner who feels more comfortable with that type of assessment. Whatever method(s) used, the adult client must be treated with fairness while program standards are maintained.

Because Cabot College has taken a lead role in research, development and implementation of PLA, the opportunity is there for Cabot College to continue to build upon, and other post secondary institutions in this province to learn from, the Cabot experience.

Chapter III

Design of the Study

Introduction

This study attempted to ascertain the knowledge, attitudes and potential benefits of PLA, as perceived by Management and full-time Faculty of Cabot College. The review of the literature did not provide sufficient information to respond to all of the questions put forth in this research. Also, the literature did not reveal an instrument appropriate for such research; consequently, an appropriate instrument was devised. This chapter explains the procedure that was followed to accomplish these tasks, the population used in the research and the methods used to analyze the data to arrive at meaningful conclusions.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was Management and Faculty from Cabot College during the Spring semester, 1994. The Management at Cabot College was divided into academic and administrative personnel. For the purposes of this study, those from Academic Management only (see Table 3-1), which represented 17 personnel including the Director of Programs and Academic Services, the six Deans from the two divisions and four faculties, the Registrar, eight Managers and one Campus Director, were chosen for this research. However, one Academic manager, Manager of Computing Resources, was not included in this research because his role is non-academic.

Table 3-1: Academic Management at Cabot College

Second-level management	Third-level management
Director of Programs and Academic Services	
Dean, Faculty of Business	
Dean, Faculty of Engineering Technology; Campus Director, Engineering Technology Centre	Manager, Technology Programs Manager, Trades Programs Manager, Seal Cove Campus Manager, Computing Resources
Dean, Faculty of Medical Sciences; Campus Director, Topsail Road Campus	
Dean, Division of Student Services	Registrar
Dean, Division of Continuing Education	Manager, Contract Training Manager, Evening and Extension
Dean, Faculty of Community Education and Applied Arts; Campus Director, Parade Street Campus	Manager, Adult Basic Education Manager, Community Education
	Campus Director, Bell Island

The number of full-time Faculty at Cabot College during the spring 1994 was 236, however, 15 of those were considered "non-teaching" Faculty belonging to the Divisions of Continuing Education and Student Services. These Faculty did not have teaching responsibilities, therefore were not included in this study, leaving a total of 221 full-time Faculty as the population. They were associated with the faculties of Business and Applied Arts, Community Education, Engineering Technology and Medical Sciences at Cabot College for the Spring semester, 1994 (See Table 3-2). In order to identify the members of this population, a list of Faculty was obtained from the Human Resources Department at Cabot College.

Table 3-2: Full-time Faculty at Cabot College, Spring 1994

Faculty/Division	Total number of full-time faculty	Percentage of total population
Business and Applied Arts	39	16.5
Community Education	47	19.9
Engineering Technology	77	32.7
Medical Sciences	57	24.1
Continuing Education	13	5.5
Student Services	3	1.3
Total	236	100.00

Type of Instrument

A questionnaire was used to gather data for this study (Appendices A and B). Kidder and Judd (1986: 222) discussed four advantages to using a questionnaire: The first they described as low cost, saying "written questionnaires are the least-expensive means of data gathering, and cost is not a trivial consideration."

The second advantage Kidder and Judd cited was that the questionnaire method eliminates interviewer bias, "research has shown that the way the interviewer asks questions and even the interviewer's general appearance or vocal qualities may influence respondents' answers."

A third advantage they cited was that "written questionnaires may place less pressure for immediate response on the subject" especially on questions that may be attitudinal-type.

A fourth advantage cited by Kidder and Judd was that "written questionnaires are sometimes credited with another advantage - giving respondents a greater feeling of anonymity and therefore encouraging open responses to sensitive questions."

The questionnaire used in this study was designed to gather all necessary information and avoid asking questions that would generate unnecessary information. The items were carefully designed to be as clear and concise as possible.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts: parts A - D. The first three parts focused on statements specific to PLA and elicited responses through the use of yes and no answers and a Likert-type scale. This type of scale is frequently used to measure an individual's attitude toward a particular subject/practice (Borg and Gall, 1989: 311). The scale used was a five-point scale, with respondents asked to make a choice: SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), or SD (strongly disagree). According to Kidder and Judd (1986: 210) "summated scales of the form developed by Likert (1932) are the most widely used in the social sciences today."

Part A of the questionnaire consisted of general information on PLA and asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with six statements. A seventh item asked respondents to indicate from a list of 12 non-college learning activities, which they felt could result in learning that

could be equivalent to that taught in college courses.

Part B of the questionnaire consisted of six items, each dealing with a specific method of assessing prior learning. Each of the six items consisted of three parts, eliciting the following information: was the assessment method used in the past, did participants feel it should be used/would be willing to use it in the future, and what respondents felt should be the pass mark for the particular method.

Part C of the questionnaire dealt with administrative issues and consisted of five items. The first asked respondents to select from a list of choices, who they felt should make the decision to award credit for non-credit, prior learning. The second question provided a list of choices and asked respondents how they felt credit for non-credit learning should be recorded on the student's transcript. The third question asked respondents to select from a list of choices, what they felt should be the maximum amount of credit awarded to a student for non-credit prior learning. Item four asked for level of agreement regarding PLA being beneficial to students at any post secondary institution, and item five requested respondents to indicate their level of agreement regarding PLA being beneficial to Cabot College.

A second part to each of these last two questions asked those who strongly agreed or agreed, to indicate what they see as benefits. The questionnaire sent to Management included a third part to these last two questions, asking those who

strongly disagreed or disagreed, to explain why.

The last part of the questionnaire, Part D, obtained background information on the respondents, using a checklist type of format to elicit responses. On the Faculty questionnaire, respondents were asked to identify their age, gender, associated Faculty/Division of Cabot College, highest level of post secondary education and the number of years teaching at the post secondary level. To ensure confidentiality, part D on the questionnaire sent to Management differed slightly. Due to small numbers of Management in some faculties they were not asked to identify which Faculty/Division of the college they worked at the time. However, they were asked the number of years experience they had as an administrator at the post secondary level.

Procedure

The following steps were taken in order to carry out this research at Cabot College:

1. A letter was submitted to the President of Cabot College (Appendix C). This letter briefly discussed the purpose of the study and asked for permission to proceed, using the college internal mail system to expedite the process.
2. Upon approval of the President, a letter was sent to the Deans at Cabot College whose Faculty were involved in the study (Appendix C). This letter briefly discussed the purpose of the study and asked for their cooperation and

support. The Deans were asked to coordinate the distribution of the surveys and follow-up letters to the Faculty in their respective areas.

3. A pretest of the questionnaire was carried out to refine and validate the questionnaire and locate any ambiguities that may exist. This step allowed for revision and retesting of items, until all items were phrased to be easily understood. Fifteen full-time Faculty and two Academic Management were selected from the population and asked to participate in the pretest.
4. The questionnaire was distributed the end of May, 1994 to Academic Management and full-time Faculty. The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter that briefly explained the purpose of the study and asked the participants for their cooperation and support in completing the questionnaire (Appendices A and B).
5. One week after the questionnaire was distributed, a letter of reminder was distributed to all Academic Management and Faculty in the study, thanking them for their participation and reminding them to complete and submit the questionnaire if they had not already done so (Appendix C).
6. One week after the first follow-up letter, a second follow-up letter was distributed only to those who had not returned their questionnaire (Appendix C). This letter included an extra copy of the questionnaire in

case the participant had misplaced the original.

Data Analysis

Using the computer statistical analysis program SPSS (Norúsis, 1990) frequencies and means were used to determine the correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Independent variables included age, gender, Faculty/Division associated with at Cabot College, highest level of postsecondary education, number of years teaching experience, and the number of years experience as an administrator at the post secondary level. Dependent variables included attitudes toward learning from life and work experience, past use of six assessment methods, willingness to use the six assessment methods, perceptions regarding pass mark for each assessment method, perceptions regarding who should make the decision to award credit, perceptions regarding how PLA should be recorded on the transcript, perceptions regarding the maximum amount of credit that should be awarded for PLA, and perceptions regarding the benefits of PLA for Cabot College and students. Analysis of variance and Chi-Square were used in the analysis of the data, but no significant differences were noted between the dependent and independent variables.

Reliability

According to Babbie (1979: 129) "reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the

same objects, would yield the same results each time." For this research, to ensure reliability, the survey asked about information the respondents were likely to know the answer to, or express no opinion.

Upon completion of the first draft of the questionnaire, a pretest was conducted to determine reliability of the survey instrument. The questionnaire was administered to 15 full-time Faculty and two Academic Management to determine if problems existed with language or if there was possible ambiguity. With most Faculty leaving for summer vacation within two weeks, once all feedback was received from the Faculty pre-test, the survey was sent via the internal mail at Cabot College.

Validity

Babbie (1979: 132) states "validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration." In preparing the instrument for this study, an extensive literature review was conducted. The initial questionnaire was designed, and reviewed by three university professors and two PLA practitioners in Ontario. The questionnaire was also reviewed by Faculty and staff at Cabot College who have been directly or indirectly involved with PLA. A pilot study was then carried out as discussed on the previous pages.

Chapter IV
Analysis of the Data

Data for this study were collected using questionnaires which were facilitated through the internal mail at Cabot College. These questionnaires were sent to 221 full-time Faculty and 16 Academic Management, who were teaching/administering in the spring of 1994. Thirteen of the 16 Academic Management (81%), hereafter referred to as Management, and 115 of the 221 full-time Faculty (52.0%), hereafter referred to as Faculty, returned completed questionnaires. This high rate of return from Management was not surprising considering they have been exposed to PLA on several occasions through presentations and policy discussions, each time expressing interest. The lower return rate for Faculty was understandable, considering the fact that they have not received the same exposure to the concept of PLA as Management and they were in the process of concluding the year's normal activities.

As outlined in the data in Table 4-1, a majority of the respondents were over 40 years of age (67.0% of Faculty and 76.9% of Management). Within each group, there were more male respondents than female (56.5% Faculty and 61.5% Management).

Table 4-1: Age and Gender of Respondents

Variable	Item	Faculty		Management	
		%	N	%	N
1. Age	0-29	5.2	6	-	
	30-39	26.1	30	23.1	3
	40-49	48.7	56	61.5	8
	50-59	17.4	20	15.4	2
	60+	.9	1	-	
	Missing cases:		2		0
2. Gender	Male	56.5	65	61.5	8
	Female	41.7	48	38.5	5
	Missing cases:		2		0

Among faculty, the largest response was from the Faculty of Engineering Technology (see Table 4-2 for tabulation of this data). However, this was expected as this faculty accounted for a large number of full-time faculty during the spring 1994.

Table 4-2: Associated Faculty/Division of Faculty Respondents

Faculty/Division	Faculty	
	%	N
Business	19.1	22
Community Education	15.7	18
Engineering Technology	39.1	45
Medical Sciences	22.6	26
Student Services	.9	1
Missing cases		3

Among faculty, 48.7% have at least a Bachelor's degree; and 23.5% have at least a Master's Degree. Within management, formal qualifications fared somewhat higher with 23.1% having at least a Bachelor's degree and 61.5% having at least a Master's degree (see Table 4-3 for tabulation of these findings). Responses to other for faculty included "almost completed a Bachelors Degree" and "Professional Certification."

Table 4-3: Highest Level of Post Secondary Education

Level of post secondary education	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Certificate	3.5	4	-	-
Diploma	18.3	21	7.7	1
Bachelors degree	48.7	56	23.1	3
Masters degree	23.5	27	61.5	8
Doctorate	.9	1	7.7	1
Other	2.6	3	-	-
Missing cases		3		-

The number of years of teaching experience was similar among faculty and management. Of the faculty, 46.9%, and 55.5% of management have between 11-20 years of teaching experience. Regarding administrative experience, 66.7% of management have between 11-20 years of experience as an

administrator at the post secondary level. (See Table 4-4 for tabulation of these findings).

Table 4-4: Number of Years Teaching/Administering at the Post Secondary Level

	Number of years	Faculty		Management	
		%	N	%	N
Teaching	0-10	35.5	40	33.3	3
	11-20	46.9	53	55.5	5
	> 20	17.9	20	11.1	1
	Missing cases		2		4
Administering	0-10			33.2	4
	11-20			66.7	8
	> 20			-	-
	Missing cases				1

In order to obtain the perceptions of faculty and management regarding PLA, a number of questions were formulated. Findings of the study are presented below using the research questions as a format for the discussion.

Perceptions Regarding Learning

Question 1: What are the perceptions of faculty and management at Cabot College regarding learning from past work and life experiences?

The questionnaire attempted to determine the level of agreement among faculty and management with the following six statements:

- (a) people may learn from life experiences;
- (b) some knowledge gained from life experiences can be equivalent to that taught in college courses;
- (c) some skills gained from life experiences can be equivalent to those taught in college courses;
- (d) people may learn from work experiences;
- (e) some knowledge gained from work experiences can be equivalent to that taught in college courses; and
- (f) some skills gained from work experiences can be equivalent to those taught in college courses.

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement using the Likert-type scale as discussed previously. Tables 4-5 to 4-10 show the results of these findings. All percentages are based on the number of respondents to the particular item.

People May Learn from Life Experiences

Of the 114 faculty who responded to this item, two-thirds (64.0%) strongly agreed that people learn from life experiences. None of the respondents were undecided or disagreed. Of the 13 management who responded, the findings were fairly consistent; 69.2% strongly agreed and 30.8% agreed. There were none undecided or disagreed. Table 4-5 tabulates these results.

Table 4-5: People May Learn from Life Experiences

Level of agreement	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	64.0	73	69.2	9
Agree	36.0	41	30.8	4
Undecided	-	-	-	-
Disagree	-	-	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		1		0

Some Knowledge Gained from Life Experiences can be Equivalent to that Taught in College Courses

The findings on this item were even more consistent among the groups; 30.7% of faculty and 30.8% of management strongly agreed with this statement, and 58.8% of faculty and 61.5% of management agreed. Almost eight percent of faculty were undecided; 2.6% of faculty and 7.7% of management disagreed with this statement (see Table 4-6 for tabulation of this data).

Table 4-6: Some Knowledge Gained from Life Experiences can be Equivalent to that Taught in College Courses

Level of agreement	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	30.7	35	30.8	4
Agree	58.8	67	61.5	8
Undecided	7.9	9	-	-
Disagree	2.6	3	7.7	1
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		1		0

Some Skills Gained from Life Experiences can be Equivalent to Those Taught in College Courses

The findings on this item varied somewhat between the groups; 40.4% of faculty and 53.8% of management strongly agreed; 49.1% of faculty and 38.5% of management agreed, and a small percentage, 3.5% of faculty and 7.7% of management disagreed. Table 4-7 tabulates these findings.

Table 4-7: Some Skills Gained from Life Experiences can be Equivalent to Those Taught in College Courses

Level of agreement	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	40.4	46	53.8	7
Agree	49.1	56	38.5	5
Undecided	7.0	8	-	-
Disagree	3.5	4	7.7	1
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		1		0

People may Learn from Work Experiences

Of the 114 faculty that responded to this item, a majority (74.6%) strongly agreed and 25.4% agreed, which was consistent with management, at 76.9% and 23.1% respectively. Neither group was undecided or disagreed with this statement (see Table 4-8 for tabulation of this data).

Table 4-8: People may Learn from Work Experiences

Level of agreement	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	74.6	85	76.9	10
Agree	25.4	29	23.1	3
Undecided	-	-	-	-
Disagree	-	-	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		1		0

Some Knowledge Gained from Work Experiences can be Equivalent to that Taught in College Courses

Among faculty, 39.5% strongly agreed, whereas a larger percentage, 52.6% agreed with the above statement. A small number of faculty were undecided or disagreed. For management, more strongly agreed than agreed (at 53.8% and 46.2% respectively). No one from management was undecided or disagreed with the statement. Table 4-9 tabulates the results of these findings.

Table 4-9: Some Knowledge Gained from Work Experiences can be Equivalent to that Taught in College Courses

Level of agreement	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	39.5	45	53.8	7
Agree	52.6	60	46.2	6
Undecided	6.1	7	-	-
Disagree	.9	1	-	-
Strongly disagree	.9	1	-	-
Missing cases		1		0

Some Skills Gained from Work Experiences can be Equivalent to those Taught in College Courses

Compared to previous statements, the percentage of those who strongly agreed, increased with this statement, with just under half (49.1%) of faculty and well over half (61.5%) of management who strongly agreed and 47.4% of faculty and 38.5% of management who agreed. A small percentage of both was undecided or disagreed (see Table 4-10 for a tabulation of this data).

Table 4-10: Some Skills Gained from Work Experiences can be Equivalent to those Taught in College Courses

Level of agreement	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	49.1	56	61.5	8
Agree	47.4	54	38.5	5
Undecided	2.6	3	-	-
Disagree	-	-	-	-
Strongly disagree	.9	1	-	-
Missing cases		1		0

Non-college Learning Activities

Question 2: Which non-college learning activities did faculty and management feel can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses?

Faculty and management were asked to select, from a list of 12 choices, the activities that they felt can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses. Table 4-11 tabulates their responses.

Table 4-11: Activities that can Result in Knowledge and/or Skills Equivalent to College Courses

Activity	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Seminar	58.3	67	92.3	12
Conference	55.7	64	84.6	11
Workshop	66.1	76	92.3	12
Independent reading	57.4	66	76.9	10
Correspondence course	77.4	89	92.3	12
Community work	47.8	55	69.2	9
Independent projects	54.8	63	76.9	10
Travel	47.0	54	61.5	8
Recreation and hobbies	48.7	56	69.2	9
Work experience	87.8	101	100.0	13
Family life experiences	43.5	50	69.2	9
Volunteer work	60.9	70	84.6	11

Work experience was the activity that was chosen the most, by 87.8% of faculty and 100% of management. The second-most popular choice for faculty was correspondence courses, chosen by 77.4%. Correspondence courses, seminars and workshops were the second-most popular choices of management, chosen by 92.3%. Less than 50% of faculty felt community work (47.8%), travel (47%) and recreation and hobbies (48.7%) can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses.

The least popular activity, that is the activity chosen by the least number of faculty, was family life experiences (43.5%) whereas travel was chosen least by management at 61.5%.

The activity showing least consistency among the groups choices was seminars, with just over half of faculty (58.3%) and a majority of management (92.3%) choosing this activity. The activity showing most consistency among the groups choices was work experience, with 87.8% of faculty and 100% of management indicating they felt that this activity can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to those taught in college courses.

The pre-test of this questionnaire resulted in a slight wording change in this item. On the faculty questionnaire, the question read as follows:

"Of the following list of non-college learning activities, which do you feel can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses? Please check the appropriate box(es)."

On the management survey, this question was reworded as follows:

"Of the following list of non-college learning activities, which do you feel can result in **some of the** knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses? Please check the appropriate box(es)."

The reason for this wording change was that the researcher received a pre-test back from one of the management, after the specified return deadline. By this time, the finalized questionnaire had already gone to all full-time faculty because of time constraints. However, there was still time to make this change to the questionnaire sent to management and the researcher felt it was worth making this change and comparing the results with this in mind.

However, the addition of "some of the" may have been the reason why each of the 12 non-college learning activities were chosen, on average, by approximately 22% more of management than faculty.

Past Practices of Prior Learning Assessment

Question 3: What are the past practices of faculty and management regarding methods of assessing prior, non-credit learning, and what methods do they feel should be used/would be willing to use?

Each of the six questions regarding methods asked faculty to indicate if they have (or have not) used that particular method in the past to assess non-credit prior learning, or if it has not been applicable to their work.

A second part to each question asked respondents if they would use that type of assessment method, or felt it should be used, on a scale of SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), SD (strongly disagree).

Part C of each question asked those who agreed or strongly agreed with the second part, to indicate if they felt the pass mark for that particular method should be higher, the same, or lower than the pass mark for the course. Results of the findings are discussed below and details are summarized in Tables 4-12 to 4-29. All percentages are based on the number of respondents to the particular item.

Past Practice/Willing to PracticeChallenge Examination.

Results of the data revealed that in the past, 25% of faculty have administered a challenge examination to assess non-credit prior learning, whereas almost twice as many management (46.2%) indicated they have. (See Table 4-12 for a tabulation of this data).

Table 4-12: Past Use of Challenge Examination

Past use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Yes	25.0	28	46.2	6
No	54.5	61	23.1	3
Not applicable	20.5	23	30.8	4
Missing cases		3		0

When asked if they would be willing to use this method, 88.5% of faculty and 92.3% of management either strongly agreed or agreed. A small percentage of each group disagreed, and a small percentage of faculty was undecided. See Table 4-13 for a tabulation of this data.

Table 4-13: Willing to Use Challenge Examination

Willing to use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	33.3	38	53.8	7
Agree	55.2	63	38.5	5
Undecided	6.1	7	-	-
Disagree	1.8	2	-	-
Strongly disagree	1.8	2	7.7	1
Not applicable	1.8	2	-	-
Missing cases		1		0

Challenge Essay.

The use of a challenge essay in the past, to assess non-credit prior learning, differed among both groups. Whereas, only 8.9% of faculty indicated they have used this method, 38.4% of management indicated they have. Almost one-third of each group, 27.7% of faculty and 30.8% of management indicated this type of assessment is not applicable to their situation. A big difference was noted in the percentage of those who have not used this method at all, 30.8% of management and twice as many faculty, 63.4%. See Table 4-14 for a tabulation of these findings.

Table 4-14: Past Use of Challenge Essay

Past use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Yes	8.9	10	38.4	5
No	63.4	71	30.8	4
Not applicable	27.7	31	30.8	4
Missing cases		3		0

When asked if they would be willing to use this method to assess non-credit prior learning, only 50.9% of faculty, compared to 84.6% of management indicated that they would. Only 15.4% of management were undecided and none disagreed, whereas almost half of faculty (49.1%) either strongly disagreed, disagreed, were undecided or felt it was not applicable to their situation. (See Table 4-15 for a tabulation of this data).

Table 4-15: Willing to Use Challenge Essay

Willing to use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	14.3	16	46.1	6
Agree	36.6	41	38.5	5
Undecided	17.0	19	15.4	2
Disagree	17.9	20	-	-
Strongly disagree	7.1	8	-	-
Not applicable	7.1	8	-	-
Missing cases		3		0

Documentation.

The use of documentation to assess non-credit prior learning has been common among both groups with 46% of faculty and 61.5% of management indicating they have used this method in the past. A small percentage of each, 16.2% of faculty and 23.1% of management, indicated they felt this method was not applicable to their situation (see Table 4-16).

Table 4-16: Past Use of Documentation

Past use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Yes	46.0	51	61.5	8
No	37.8	42	15.4	2
Not applicable	16.2	18	23.1	3
Missing cases		4		0

The percentage of faculty and management willing to use documentation to assess prior learning was very high with 80.7% of faculty and 92.3% of management strongly agreeing or agreeing. A small percentage of faculty (19.3%) either disagreed, strongly disagreed, were undecided or felt it was not applicable to their situation. Table 4-17 tabulates these findings.

Table 4-17: Willing to Use Documentation

Willing to use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	30.7	35	53.8	7
Agree	50.0	57	38.5	5
Undecided	7.9	9	7.7	1
Disagree	6.1	7	-	-
Strongly disagree	1.8	2	-	-
Not applicable	3.5	4	-	-
Missing cases		1		0

Performance Evaluation.

The use of a performance evaluation in the past to assess prior, non-credit learning has not been very common with only 23.2% of faculty and 38.5% of management indicating its past use. Over half of faculty (58.0%) and 30.8% of management indicated they have not used this method in the past to assess prior, non-credit learning. See Table 4-18 for a tabulation of this data.

Table 4-18: Past Use of Performance Evaluation

Past use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Yes	23.2	26	38.5	5
No	58.0	65	30.8	4
Not applicable	18.8	21	30.7	4
Missing cases		3		0

Despite its low popularity in the past, a much larger percentage, 78.1% of faculty and 92.4% of management, indicated they would be willing to use a performance evaluation to assess prior, non-credit learning. Almost one-quarter of faculty (21.9%) were undecided, disagreed, strongly disagreed or felt it was not applicable to their situation. See Table 4-19 for a tabulation of this data.

Table 4-19: Willing to Use Performance Evaluation

Willing to use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	27.2	31	46.2	6
Agree	50.9	58	46.2	6
Undecided	7.0	8	7.7	1
Disagree	6.1	7	-	-
Strongly disagree	1.8	2	-	-
Not applicable	7.0	8	-	-
Missing cases		1		0

Simulation.

Use of this method of assessment in the past has been even less popular than a performance evaluation, with only 12.6% of faculty and 23.1% of management indicating its past use. Almost one-quarter of faculty (24.3%) and 38.5% of management felt it was not applicable to their situation. See Table 4-20 for a tabulation of these findings.

Table 4-20: Past Use of Simulation

Past use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Yes	12.6	14	23.1	3
No	63.1	70	38.4	5
Not applicable	24.3	27	38.5	5
Missing cases	4		0	

However, a greater percentage of each group indicated they would be willing to use simulation, especially those from Management (100%). Among Faculty, 62.5% indicated they would be willing to use this method to assess prior, non-credit learning. A little over one-third of Faculty (37.5%) were either undecided, strongly disagreed, disagreed or felt it was not applicable to their situation. See Table 4-21 for a tabulation of this data.

Table 4-21: Willing to Use Simulation

	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Willing to use				
Strongly agree	19.6	22	23.1	3
Agree	42.9	48	76.9	10
Undecided	11.6	13	-	-
Disagree	10.7	12	-	-
Strongly disagree	2.7	3	-	-
Not applicable	12.5	14	-	-
Missing cases		3		0

Interview.

The results of the data revealed that this method of assessing prior, non-credit learning has also been used minimally. Few faculty, 12.6%, and only 23.1% of management have used an interview in the past and 19.8% of faculty and 38.5% of management indicated they felt it was not applicable to their situation. This data is tabulated in Table 4-22.

Table 4-22: Past Use of Interview

Past use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Yes	12.6	14	23.1	3
No	67.6	75	38.4	5
Not applicable	19.8	22	38.5	5
Missing cases		4		0

However, a greater percentage of each group indicated they would be willing to use this method, 40.2% of Faculty and 77.0% of Management. Almost one-quarter of Faculty (23.2%) was undecided (see Table 4-23 for a tabulation of this data).

Table 4-23: Willing to Use Interview

Willing to use	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	10.7	12	30.8	4
Agree	29.5	33	46.2	6
Undecided	23.2	26	-	-
Disagree	22.3	25	15.4	2
Strongly disagree	6.3	7	7.7	1
Not applicable	8.0	9	-	-
Missing cases		3		0

Overall, the results of this data revealed that the most common practice in the past for both Faculty and Management, has been to allow students to present pieces of documentation to assess for possible exemption from a particular college course, 46% of Faculty and 61.5% of Management respectively. When asked what methods each group would be willing to use, 88.6% of Faculty indicated they would use a challenge examination to assess prior, non-credit learning, whereas 100% of Management indicated they felt simulation should be used.

The method used least by faculty in the past is the challenge essay (8.9%), whereas 23.1% of management indicated that simulation and interview have been used the least. The method that faculty and management are least willing to use or feel should be used is the interview, 40.0% and 76.0% respectively.

The method showing the largest difference between past use and willing to use/should be used was the challenge examination for faculty, 25% in the past and 88.6% in the future, and simulation for management, 23.1 in the past and 100% in the future.

The method showing the least difference between past use and willing to use was the interview for faculty, 12.6%, 40% respectively and documentation for management 61.5%, 92.3% respectively.

With all six methods of assessment, more management than faculty indicated they have used the method in the past to assess prior non-credit learning. A possible explanation for this difference could be that management has performed most of the assessment in the past, thus the student may not require any intervention from faculty.

The pre-test of this questionnaire also resulted in a slight wording change in these six items, again for the same reason as described previously. On the faculty questionnaire, the questions read as follows:

"If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course that I teach, I would be willing to allow the student to <method> for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed."

On the management questionnaire, this question was reworded as follows:

"If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity to <method> for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed **and this type of assessment was suitable to the course.**"

The addition of "and this type of assessment was suitable to the course" may have been the reason why, on average, approximately 22% more management than faculty indicated they would be willing to use the methods discussed above, to assess prior learning.

Pass Mark for Assessment

Finally, each of the six questions on assessment methods also asked those who strongly agreed or agreed that a particular method should be used/willing to use to assess prior, non-credit learning, what they felt should be the pass mark. Those who were undecided or disagreed were instructed to proceed to the next question, thus accounting for the large

number of missing cases. All percentages are based on the number of participants who responded to the item. Discussion of each method is presented below and results of the data are summarized in Tables 4-24 to 4-29.

Pass Mark for Challenge Examination.

With this method of assessment, the responses were fairly consistent among the groups with 36.1% of faculty and 33.3% of management indicating that the pass mark in a challenge examination should be higher than the pass mark for the course. Approximately two-thirds of each group, 62.9% of faculty and 66.7% of management, indicated they felt it should be the same. A small percentage (1.0%) of faculty and none from management felt the pass mark should be lower. See Table 4-24 for a tabulation of this data.

Table 4-24: Pass Mark for Challenge Examination

	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Pass mark compared to course pass mark				
Higher	36.1	35	33.3	4
Same	62.9	61	66.7	8
Lower	1.0	1	-	-
Missing cases		18		1

Pass Mark for Challenge Essay.

Like the challenge examination, responses to pass mark for this method were also fairly consistent among the groups with 43.6% of Faculty and 36.4% of Management indicating that the pass mark in a challenge essay should be higher than the pass mark for the course. The remainder, 56.4% of Faculty and 63.6% of Management felt it should be the same with no one from either group indicating they felt it should be lower. See Table 4-25 for a tabulation of this data.

Table 4-25: Pass Mark for Challenge Essay

Pass mark compared to course pass mark	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Higher	43.6	24	36.4	4
Same	56.4	31	63.6	7
Lower	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		60		2

Pass Mark for Documentation.

Responses to this item were also very consistent, with 28.1% of Faculty and 25.0% of Management indicating the pass mark when assessing documentation, should be higher than the pass mark for the course. The remaining three-quarters in each group indicated they felt it should be the same (71.9% of Faculty and 75.0% of Management). Again, no one from either group indicated that it should be lower. The findings of this data are tabulated in Table 4-26.

Table 4-26: Pass Mark for Documentation

Pass mark compared to course pass mark	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Higher	28.1	25	25.0	3
Same	71.9	64	75.0	9
Lower	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		26		1

Pass Mark for Performance Evaluation.

Both groups were somewhat consistent in their responses to this method as well. While 28.7% of Faculty felt the pass mark for a performance evaluation should be higher than the pass mark for the course, so did 18.2% of Management; leaving 71.3% of Faculty and 81.8% of Management indicating they felt it should be the same as the pass mark for the course. Again, no one from either group indicated they felt the pass mark should be lower (see Table 4-27 for tabulation of this data).

Table 4-27: Pass Mark for Performance Evaluation

Pass mark compared to course pass mark	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Higher	28.7	25	18.2	2
Same	71.3	62	81.8	9
Lower	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		28		2

Pass Mark for Simulation.

The responses to this item were also fairly consistent between the groups with 31.9% of Faculty and 25.0% of Management indicating they felt the pass mark for a simulation should be higher than the pass mark for the course. The remainder, 68.1% of Faculty and 75.0% of Management indicated they felt it should be the same. As with the other methods discussed, no one from either group indicated they felt it should be lower. (See Table 4-28 for a tabulation of this data).

Table 4-28: Pass Mark for Simulation

	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Pass mark compared to course pass mark				
Higher	31.9	22	25.0	3
Same	68.1	47	75.0	9
Lower	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		46		1

Pass Mark for Interview.

The responses to this method revealed the biggest difference in opinion between the groups. Whereas 34.1% of faculty indicated that they felt the pass mark in an interview should be higher than the pass mark for the course, only 11.1% of management indicated the same. Thus, 65.9% of faculty and 88.9% of management indicated they felt it should be the same and no-one from either group felt it should be lower than the pass mark for the course. Table 4-29 tabulates this data.

Table 4-29: Pass Mark for Interview

	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Pass mark compared to course pass mark				
Higher	34.1	15	11.1	1
Same	65.9	29	88.9	8
Lower	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		71		4

Perceptions Regarding Administrative Issues

Question 4: What are the perceptions of faculty and management regarding the administrative issues of decision making, transcription and maximum amount of credit awarded?

There were three items on the questionnaire pertaining to administrative issues: who should make the decision to award credit, how should PLA credit appear on the transcript, and the maximum amount of credit award for PLA. Cross tabulations were also done with the data obtained from these items and some of the demographic information. Results of the findings are discussed below and the data are tabulated in Tables 4-30 to 4-48. All of the percentages are based on the number of respondents to the particular item.

Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award

Faculty and management were asked to select from a list of choices, who they felt should make the decision regarding the awarding of credit for prior, non-credit learning. Among the choices were: (a) Dean of the division/faculty; (b) Faculty teaching the course; (c) Faculty teaching the course in consultation with the Dean; (d) Faculty teaching the course in consultation with a person knowledgeable about PLA; and (e) other. The responses to this question varied somewhat within and between the groups. The data are tabulated in Table 4-30.

Table 4-30: Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award

Person to decide	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Dean	1.8	2	7.7	1
Faculty, Dean	50.9	58	23.1	3
Faculty	5.2	6	-	-
Faculty, PLA person	35.1	40	30.8	4
Other	7.0	8	38.5	5
Missing cases		1		0

The most common response from faculty was "faculty and Dean" (50.9%), whereas the response chosen most by management was "other" at 38.5%. Written responses to "other" from management indicated that all 38.5% felt the decision to award credit should be made by the Dean, faculty, and a person knowledgeable about PLA. Among the very small percentage of faculty who indicated "other" (7.0%), half felt the decision should be made by the "Dean, faculty and person knowledgeable about PLA". Others indicated: "a faculty person teaching the course who is knowledgeable about PLA"; "faculty teaching the course, the Registrar and a person knowledgeable about PLA"; "faculty teaching the course, a person knowledgeable about PLA with the Manager's approval"; and "the Dean and Registrar". Very few (1.8% of faculty and 7.7% of management) felt the

decision should be made by the Dean alone and 5.2% of faculty and no one from management felt the decision should be made by the faculty person alone.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between some of the demographic information obtained on the questionnaire and the choice of who should make the decision to award credit for non-credit prior learning. Demographic information included highest level of post secondary education for faculty and administration, faculty/division the faculty person was associated with, number of years teaching experience for faculty and management, and number of years administrative experience for those from management. Significance level (p) was set at $<.05$.

Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Person(s)
to Decide on Credit Award.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant difference between these two variables. For management, Chi-square calculated at 14.74 with a significance level (p) of .0982. Therefore, no significant difference was noted (see Table 4-31 for a tabulation of these findings).

Table 4-31: Crosstabs of Management Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award

Person to decide	Management highest level of post secondary education											
	Cert		Diploma		Bachelors		Masters		Doc		Other	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Dean	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.7	1	-	-
Faculty, Dean	-	-	-	-	7.7	1	15.4	2	-	-	-	-
Faculty	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Faculty, PLA person	-	-	-	-	7.7	1	23.1	3	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	7.7	1	7.7	1	23.1	3	-	-	-	-
Missing cases												0

$X^2 = 14.74236$
 $p = .0982$

Among faculty, most of the respondents with a Masters Degree favoured the faculty and Dean making the decision. Of those with a Bachelors Degree, most either favoured the faculty and Dean or the faculty and a person knowledgeable about PLA. However, Chi-square calculated at 10.04 with a significance level (p) of .9674; therefore, no significant difference was noted. See Table 4-32 for a tabulation of this data.

Table 4-32: Crosstabs of Faculty Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award

Person to decide	Faculty highest level of post secondary education											
	Cert		Diploma		Bachelors		Masters		Doc		Other	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Dean	-	-	-	-	.9	1	.9	1	-	-	-	-
Fac, Dean	1.8	2	9.0	10	21.6	24	15.3	17	.9	1	1.8	2
Fac	-	-	1.8	2	1.8	2	1.8	2	-	-	-	-
Fac, PLA person	1.8	2	5.4	6	22.5	25	4.5	5	-	-	.9	1
Other	-	-	1.8	2	3.6	4	1.8	2	-	-	-	-
Missing cases												4

$$X^2 = 10.04391$$

$$p = .96737$$

Faculty/Division Associated with and Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine any significance between the faculty/division the faculty respondent was associated with and their choice of who should decide on the credit award for prior, non-credit learning. Most of the respondents from the faculties of Business and Engineering Technology chose the Faculty and Dean, however, Chi-square calculated at 16.87 with a significance level (p) of .3940. Therefore, no significant difference was noted. Table 4-33 presents a tabulation of this data.

Table 4-33: Crosstabs of Faculty/Division Associated with and Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award

Person to decide	Faculty/Division associated with									
	Bus		Comm Ed		Eng Tech		Med Sci		Stu Serv	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Dean	-	-	-	-	.9	1	.9	1	-	-
Faculty Dean	13.5	15	6.3	7	23.4	26	7.2	8	.9	1
Faculty	.9	1	-	-	1.8	2	2.7	3	-	-
Faculty PLA person	5.9	6	9.0	10	11.7	13	8.1	9	-	-
Other	-	-	.9	1	2.7	3	3.6	4	-	-
Missing cases										4

$$\chi^2 = 16.87075$$

$$p = .39401$$

Number of Years Teaching Experience and Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significance between the number of years teaching experience of both faculty and administration and choice of who should award credit for prior learning. Within faculty, those with more than 11 years teaching experience seemed to favour the faculty and Dean, however, Chi-square calculated at 21.86 with a significance level (p) of .3479. Therefore, no significant difference was noted (Table 4-34 tabulates the results of this data).

Table 4-34: Crosstabs of Faculty Number of Years Teaching Experience and Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award

Person to decide	Faculty years of teaching experience					
	0-10		11-20		>20	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Dean	.9	1	-	-	.9	1
Fac, Dean	14.4	16	25.2	28	10.8	12
Fac	-	-	3.6	4	1.8	2
Fac, PLA person	1.4	16	17.1	19	4.5	5
Other	5.4	6	1.8	2	-	-
Missing cases						3

$$\chi^2 = 21.86395$$

$$p = .34794$$

For management, Chi-square calculated at 11.63 with a significance level (p) of .4763. Therefore, again no significant difference was noted with these variables. Results of this data are tabulated in Table 4-35

Table 4-35: Crosstabs of Management Number of Years Teaching Experience and Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award

Person to decide	Management years of teaching experience					
	0-10		11-20		>20	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Dean	-	-	.11	1	.11	1
Fac, Dean	.11	1	.11	1	-	-
Fac	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fac, PLA person	-	-	.22	2	-	-
Other	.22	2	.11	1	.11	1
Missing cases						4

$X^2 = 11.62500$
 $p = .47625$

Number of Years Administrative Experience and Person(s)
to Decide on Credit Award.

Finally, cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significance between the number of years administrative experience management had and their choice of who should decide on credit award. Chi-square calculated at 23.83 with a significance level (p) of .3012. Therefore, no significant difference was noted. Table 4-36 tabulates the findings of this data.

Table 4-36: Crosstabs of Number of Years Administrative Experience and Person(s) to Decide on Credit Award

Person to decide	Management years of administrative experience					
	0-10		11-20		>20	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Dean	-	-	8.3	1	-	-
Fac, Dean	8.3	1	16.6	2	-	-
Fac	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fac, PLA person	24.9	3	8.3	1	-	-
Other	-	-	33.2	4	-	-
Missing cases						0

$\chi^2 = 23.83333$
p = .30120

Transcription of PLA

Also with administrative issues, respondents were asked to indicate from a list of choices, how they felt prior, non-credit learning should be recorded on the student's transcript. Table 4-37 lists the choices and tabulates the results of these findings.

Table 4-37: Transcription of PLA

Choice of transcription	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Exemption	23.9	27	15.4	2
Numerical grade	6.2	7	-	-
Letter grade	.9	1	-	-
C-PLA, no mark	31.0	35	23.1	3
C-PLA, grade consistent with course marking scheme	37.2	42	30.8	4
Other	.9	1	30.8	4
Missing cases		2		0

Responses indicated that a letter or numerical grade alone were the least favoured responses among the groups with no one from management and only a small percentage from faculty choosing either of these, .9% and 6.2% respectively. The response chosen the most by faculty (37.2%) was "C-PLA, grade consistent with the marking scheme of the particular course". The next popular choice was "C-PLA, with no mark", chosen by 31.0% of faculty. The only faculty response to "other" was: "depends on the course standards."

Among management, the choices "C-PLA, grade consistent with the marking scheme of the particular course" and "other" were the most popular choices, at 30.8% each. Responses to "other" included: "C-PLA with a mark where possible, otherwise an Exemption"; "Transfer Credit"; and "mark same as course standard without the C-PLA designation"

Cross tabulations were also calculated to determine if there was any significance between some of the demographic information obtained on the questionnaire and the choice of how prior, non-credit learning should be recorded on the student's official transcript. Demographic information included highest level of post secondary education for faculty and management, faculty/division the faculty person was associated with, number of years teaching experience for faculty and number of years administrative experience for management. Again, the significance level was set at $<.05$ and Tables 4-38 to 4-42 summarize the findings of this data.

Faculty Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Transcription of PLA.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between faculty's highest level of post secondary education and their choice of how credit for non-credit prior learning should be recorded on the student's official transcript. Chi-square was calculated at 27.90 with a significance level (p) of .3126. Thus, no significant difference was noted (see Table 4-38).

Table 4-38: Crosstabs of Faculty Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Transcription of PLA

	Faculty highest level of post secondary education											
	Cert		Diploma		Bachelors		Masters		Doc		Other	
Choice of trans.	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Exempt	-	-	4.5	5	9.0	10	8.1	9	-	-	1.8	2
Num grade	.9	1	1.8	2	1.8	2	.9	1	.9	1	-	-
Letter grade	-	-	-	-	.9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
C-PLA, no mark	.9	1	4.5	5	18.0	20	6.3	7	-	-	-	-
C-PLA, grade same as course	1.8	2	8.1	9	18.0	20	9.0	10	-	-	.9	1
Other	-	-	-	-	.9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Missing cases												5

$\chi^2 = 27.89784$
 $p = .31258$

Management Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Transcription of PLA.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between the highest level of post secondary education of management and their choice of how credit for non-credit prior learning should be recorded on the student's official transcript. Chi-square was calculated at 9.34 with a significance level (p) of .4062. Thus, no significant difference was noted (see Table 4-39).

Table 4-39: Crosstabs of Management Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Transcription of PLA

Choice of transcr.	Management highest level of post secondary education											
	Cert		Diploma		Bachelors		Masters		Doc		Other	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Exempt	-	-	-	-	7.7	1	7.7	1	-	-	-	-
Num grade	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Letter grade	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
C-PLA, no mark	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.4	2	7.7	1	-	-
C-PLA, grade same as course	-	-	-	-	15.4	2	15.4	2	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	7.7	1	-	-	23.1	3	-	-	-	-
Missing cases												0

$\chi^2 = 9.34375$
 $p = .40617$

Faculty/Division Associated with and Transcription of PLA.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between the faculty/division one was teaching with and their choice of how credit for non-credit prior learning should be recorded on the student's official transcript. A majority of respondents from all of the faculties indicated they would like to see C-PLA recorded on the transcript. Chi-square was calculated at 22.61 with a significance level (p) of .3083. Thus, no significant difference was noted (see Table 4-40).

Table 4-40: Crosstabs of Faculty/Division Associated with and Transcription of PLA

Choice of transc	Faculty/Division associated with									
	Bus		Comm Ed		Eng Tech		Med Sci		Stu Serv	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Exemp	3.6	4	2.7	3	14.5	16	2.7	3	-	-
Num grade	2.7	3	-	-	2.7	3	.9	1	-	-
Letter grade	-	-	.9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
C-PLA, no mark	8.2	9	3.6	4	9.0	10	9.0	10	-	-
C-PLA, grade same as course	4.5	5	9.0	10	13.6	15	10.0	11	.9	1
Other	-	-	-	-	.9	1	-	-	-	-
Missing cases										5

$$X^2 = 22.61146$$

$$p = .30827$$

Number of Years Teaching Experience and Transcription of
PLA.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between the number of years teaching experience faculty had and their choice of how credit for non-credit prior learning should be recorded on the student's official transcript. Most of the respondents with less than 20 years of teaching experience indicated they would like to see C-PLA on the transcript. However, Chi-square was calculated at 30.18 with a significance level (p) of .2178. Thus, no significant difference was noted (see Table 4-41).

Table 4-41: Crosstabs of Faculty Number of Years Teaching Experience and Choice of Transcription

Choice of transc	Faculty years teaching experience					
	0-10		11-20		>20	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Exempt	8.1	9	10.8	12	4.5	5
Num grade	-	-	1.8	2	4.5	5
Letter grade	-	-	.9	1	-	-
C-PLA, no mark	10.8	12	15.3	17	4.5	5
C-PLA, grade same as course	15.3	17	18.0	20	4.5	5
Other	.9	1	-	-	-	-
Missing cases						4

$\chi^2 = 30.17510$
 $p = .21780$

Number of Years Administrative Experience and
Transcription of PLA.

Cross tabulations were also calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between the number of years of administrative experience for management and their choice of how credit for non-credit prior learning should be recorded on the student's official transcript. Chi-square was calculated at 27.50 with a significance level (p) of .1549. Thus, no significant difference was noted. A tabulation of this data is found in Table 4-42.

Table 4-42: Crosstabs of Number of Years Administrative Experience and Transcription of PLA

Choice of transc	Management years of administrative experience					
	0-10		11-20		>20	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Exempt	16.2	2	-	-	-	-
Num grade	-	-	-	-	-	-
Letter grade	-	-	-	-	-	-
C-PLA, no mark	8.3	1	8.3	1	-	-
C-PLA, grade same as course	8.3	1	24.9	3	-	-
Other	-	-	33.2	4	-	-
Missing cases						1

$\chi^2 = 27.50000$
 $p = .15491$

Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA

The third administrative issue participants were asked to respond to was the maximum amount of credit, from a list of choices, they felt should be awarded to a student for non-credit prior learning. Table 4-43 lists these choices and tabulates this data.

Table 4-43: Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA

Maximum credit	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
0%	5.0	5	-	-
1-25%	37.6	38	23.1	3
26-50%	26.7	27	23.1	3
51-75%	12.9	13	38.4	5
76-100%	17.8	18	15.4	2
Missing cases		14		0

Within both groups, responses were well distributed among the choices. Among faculty, the response chosen the most was "1-25%", chosen by 37.6%, in comparison to management whose most favoured response was "51-75%", chosen by 38.4%. The response chosen the least was 0%, chosen by a very small proportion of faculty (5.0%) and none of management.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between some of the demographic information obtained from the questionnaire and the maximum amount of credit respondents felt should be awarded for non-credit prior learning. Demographic information included faculty/division associated with, highest level of post secondary education for faculty and management, number of years teaching experience for faculty and number of years administrative experience for management. Significance levels were set at $<.05$ and Tables 4-44 to 4-48 summarizes this data.

Faculty/Division Associated with and Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between the Faculty/Division the Faculty member was associated with and the maximum amount of credit they felt should be awarded for prior, non-credit learning. The most popular choice from the Faculties of Business, Community Education and Engineering Technology was 1-25%; Medical Sciences was divided and the only respondent from the Division of Student Services chose 26-50%. Chi-square was calculated at 24.42 with a significance level (p) of .0807. Therefore, no significant difference was noted. A tabulation of this data is found in Table 4-44.

Table 4-44: Crosstabs of Faculty/Division Associated with and Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA

Maximum credit	Faculty/Division associated with									
	Bus		Comm Ed		Eng Tech		Med Sci		Stu Serv	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
	1.0	1	-	-	4.0	4	-	-	-	-
1-25%	8.0	8	8.0	8	16.0	16	5.0	5	-	-
26-50%	4.0	4	2.0	2	14.0	14	5.0	5	1.0	1
51-75%	5.0	5	2.0	2	1.0	1	5.0	5	-	-
76-100%	2.0	2	5.0	5	4.0	4	2.0	2	-	-
Missing cases										16

$$x^2 = 24.41996$$

$$p = .08073$$

Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between the highest level of post secondary education and the maximum amount of credit respondents felt should be awarded for prior, non-credit learning.

Among faculty, those with a certificate or diploma were fairly divided, whereas, the 1-25% range was most popular among the respondents with a Bachelors or Masters degree. Chi-square was calculated at 15.24 with a significance level (p) of .7626. Therefore, no significant difference was noted. This data is tabulated in Table 4-45.

Table 4-45: Crosstabs of Faculty Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA

	Faculty highest level of post secondary education											
	Cert		Diploma		Bachelors		Masters		Doc		Other	
Max cred	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
0 %	-	-	-	-	4.0	4	1.0	1	-	-	-	-
1-25%	1.0	1	5.0	5	17.0	17	12.0	12	1.0	1	1.0	1
26-50%	-	-	5.0	5	14.0	14	5.0	5	-	-	2.0	2
51-75%	1.0	1	5.0	5	6.0	6	1.0	1	-	-	-	-
76-100%	1.0	1	4.0	4	8.0	8	5.0	5	-	-	-	-
Missing cases											16	

$$\chi^2 = 15.23837$$

$$p = .76261$$

Among management, most of the respondents had a Masters degree and were evenly distributed in their choices. Chi-square was calculated at 12.35 with a significance level (p) of .1943. Therefore, again no significant difference was noted. A tabulation of this data is found in Table 4-46.

Table 4-46: Crosstabs of Management Highest Level of Post Secondary Education and Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA

	Management highest level of post secondary education											
	Cert		Diploma		Bachelors		Masters		Doc		Other	
Maximum credit	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
0 %	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1-25%	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.4	2	7.7	1	-	-
26-50%	-	-	7.7	1	-	-	15.4	2	-	-	-	-
51-75%	-	-	-	-	23.1	3	15.4	2	-	-	-	-
76-100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.4	2	-	-	-	-
Missing cases												0

$$\chi^2 = 12.35000$$

$$p = .19429$$

Number of Years Teaching Experience and Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between the number of years teaching experience faculty had and the maximum amount of credit they felt should be awarded for prior, non-credit learning. Responses to this item were distributed among the choices, although there was a tendency toward the 1-50% range from all respondents from all three categories of teaching experience. However, Chi-square was calculated at 17.73 with a significance level (p) of .6050. Therefore, no significant difference was noted. A tabulation of this data is found in Table 4-47.

Table 4-47: Crosstabs of Faculty Number of Years Teaching Experience and Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA

	Faculty years of teaching experience					
	0-10		11-20		>20	
Maximum credit	%	N	%	N	%	N
0%	2.0	2	3.0	3	-	-
1-25%	10.0	10	19.0	19	8.0	8
26-50%	11.0	11	14.0	14	2.0	2
51-75%	6.0	6	3.0	3	3.0	3
76-100%	8.0	8	8.0	8	2.0	2
Missing cases						16

$$x^2 = 17.73260$$

$$p = .60502$$

Number of Years Administrative Experience and Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA.

Cross tabulations were calculated to determine if there was any significant relationship between the number of years administrative experience management had and the maximum amount of credit they felt should be awarded for prior, non-credit learning. Most of the respondents with 11-20 years of administrative experience indicated preference with the 26-75% range. Chi-square was calculated at 27.53 with a significance level (p) of .1539. Therefore, no significant difference was noted. A tabulation of this data is found in Table 4-48.

Table 4-48: Crosstabs of Number of Years Administrative Experience and Maximum Amount of Credit Award for PLA

	Management years of administrative experience					
	0-10		11-20		>20	
Maximum credit	%	N	%	N	%	N
0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
1-25%	8.3	1	8.3	1	-	-
26-50%	-	-	24.9	3	-	-
51-75%	16.6	2	24.9	3	-	-
76-100%	8.3	1	8.3	1	-	-
Missing cases						1

$\chi^2 = 27.53333$
 $p = .15389$

Perceived Benefits of Prior Learning Assessment

Question 5: What are the benefits of awarding college credit for prior learning, as perceived by the administration and faculty of Cabot College?

With this item respondents were first asked to indicate their level of agreement on a scale of SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), SD (strongly disagree), that (a) PLA is beneficial to students at any post secondary institution and (b) PLA is beneficial for Cabot College.

PLA is Beneficial to Students

Specific to PLA being beneficial to students, a large majority (85.4%) of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed, whereas all 100% of management strongly agreed or agreed. A small percentage of faculty were either undecided (12.8%) or disagreed (1.8%). Table 4-49 tabulates the findings of this data.

Table 4-49: PLA is Beneficial to Students

Level of agreement	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	32.2	35	53.8	7
Agree	53.2	58	46.2	6
Undecided	12.8	14	-	-
Disagree	1.8	2	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-
Missing cases		6		0

The second part of this question asked respondents to indicate what they see as benefits. Sixty percent of Faculty (70 of the 115 respondents) and 76.9% of administration (10 of the 13 respondents) completed this section. The responses are summarized below and all responses are recorded in Appendix D.

A number of the Faculty respondents indicated they felt PLA would result in time-saving for the student. As a result, the student would not be wasting time on material already learned, therefore applying energies where best needed. For some, this could possibly accelerate the time needed to complete their program. Comments included: "older students won't spend valuable time in a classroom" and "allows student more time to work on other courses."

As well, some Faculty indicated that they felt PLA would boost self-confidence and self-esteem for the student, providing them with much needed encouragement to continue with their studies, and in some cases be the motivating force to partake/continue. Comments included: "very beneficial to older students to prove they can learn because they were already learning and may not have realized it", "attitude and commitment much higher, more focused student", as well as "helps maintain motivation as the student is not bored in the classroom with redundant work".

The benefit of a reduced workload was also cited by a small number of faculty respondents, being that if students were to receive credit for non-credit learning, they would possibly have a lighter course load in a semester(s). This was seen as beneficial for the student who has been away from formal studies for some time and needing to "readjust" to the formal learning situation. One respondent wrote: "slower pace - especially for older students".

The value of just being given recognition for what was previously learned, was another benefit cited by some of the faculty. This would encourage students to draw on previously learned material and assimilate it to new learning situations. Comments included: "gives the individual student a basic knowledge of his/her level of achievement/knowledge per subject" and "promotes the concept/validity of lifelong learning".

Other benefits that a small number of faculty indicated were increasing accessibility to post secondary education, determining students needs and saving the student money.

Among management, time-saving was the benefit also cited the most. Like faculty, management indicated that this could lessen the amount of time needed to complete a formal program. The issue of motivation was cited by three management respondents, indicating that students would receive satisfaction of having a post secondary institution recognize their past learning for credit purposes.

Accessibility to post secondary education, mobility in the workforce and cost saving to the student were also cited by management as benefits of PLA.

PLA is Beneficial to Cabot College

Specific to PLA being beneficial to Cabot College, again a large majority (82.4%) of faculty either strongly agreed or agreed whereas, 100% of management strongly agreed or agreed. A small percentage of faculty (15.8%) were undecided, 0.9% disagreed and 0.9% strongly disagreed. Table 4-50 tabulates this data.

Table 4-50: PLA is Beneficial to Cabot College

Level of agreement	Faculty		Management	
	%	N	%	N
Strongly agree	28.7	31	46.2	6
Agree	53.7	58	53.8	7
Undecided	15.8	17	-	-
Disagree	.9	1	-	-
Strongly disagree	.9	1	-	-
Missing cases		7		0

The second part of this question also asked respondents to indicate what they see as benefits. A little over 58% percent of faculty (67 of 115 respondents) and 76.9% of management (10 of 13 respondents) responded to this section of

the question. The responses are summarized below and all responses are recorded in Appendix D.

For Faculty, a large number indicated they felt that PLA would result in better use of material and human resources; this would result in an overall cost saving for the college in the end. Specific comments included: "frees up classroom space and instructor time for students who need it", saves administration and teaching costs", and "students can fill empty spaces in the senior years so resources not wasted."

Faculty also indicated that they felt PLA would be responding to the changing needs of the mature adult learner. This in turn would benefit the college in that more students would be served. Specific comments included: "shows Cabot's recognition of value for adults experiences - respect for its learners", enhances progressive image of the college", and "makes us more receptive to the variety of backgrounds and experiences older students are bringing with them - our student population is becoming increasingly older."

Others also saw PLA as a marketing tool that could be used to attract learners to the college thus possibly increasing enrolment. Specific comments included: "attracts experienced students", "smooth access or completion of further post secondary studies", "it will be another example of the student coming first - it will enhance Cabot's profile as an institute that cares about its students more so than its tuition dollars."

The idea that PLA could be used as a marketing tool was also indicated by a number of the management respondents. Comments included: "the college could be seen as a forerunner in these ideas in the province and that the college recognizes life and work skills obtained prior to college is valid and important", and "better student access to full-time and part-time programs."

A number of the management respondents also indicated that they felt PLA would be responding to the changing needs of the mature adult learner thus improving the image of the college. Comments included: "improves Cabot image/reputation with respect to meeting adult learners needs" and "increased opportunities for a variety of persons."

Two management respondents indicated they felt that PLA would increase funds to the college; specifically: "more security of funds as more students return for retraining" and "may be revenue generating for the college."

Other individual comments which could be thought-provoking include: "challenge us to separate 'nice to know' from 'need to know'" and "instructor/course/program renewal which comes from the in-depth review of content necessary to the PLA process."

A third part to these two questions was included on the questionnaire sent to management. This item asked those respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed, why they do. No one from this group disagreed or strongly disagreed,

therefore there were no responses to this item.

Overall, both Faculty and Management indicated that PLA was beneficial to both students and to Cabot College. For students, receiving credit for prior, non-credit learning could result in not repeating material already mastered, thus saving the student time. For Cabot, this could be used as a marketing strategy which might increase enrolments and possibly increase revenue for the college.

The idea that PLA would boost self-concept and self-esteem and increase motivation was also cited by both groups, as students would feel they are valued as a person and that their previous learning has counted for something. Both groups felt that PLA would be responding to the changing needs of the adult learner which would improve the image of the college, having it seen as more flexible and progressive.

In short, the findings of the study indicated that both Faculty and Management at Cabot College are receptive to the concept of PLA. Both groups generally agree that people may learn from life and work experiences, and that knowledge and skills gained from these experiences can be equivalent to that taught in college courses.

Faculty and Management at Cabot College felt that many non-college learning activities can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses.

In the past, there was minimal use of the methods of PLA, however, in all cases, both faculty and management indicated they would use/like to see these methods used more. Regarding pass mark for challenging a course through one of these methods, the majority of both groups felt that the pass mark should be the same as the pass mark for the course.

With regard to who should decide on credit award for prior, non-credit learning, responses from both groups varied with no one person/team of persons clearly favoured over the other choices.

The responses to the issue of transcription of PLA again did not reveal any specific choice. However, it was clear from both management and faculty that the transcript should reflect that the credit was obtained through PLA, using the designation C-PLA (Credit - Prior Learning Assessment).

The issue of maximum amount of credit award for non-credit learning also revealed no clear choice. In fact, both groups were clearly divided on all five of the choices provided.

Finally, most faculty and all management who responded to the questionnaire, agreed that PLA is beneficial to students. Similar comments from both groups included: PLA would be a time-saving for the student, a source of motivation for the student and possibly reduce the student's workload. Regarding benefits to Cabot College, again, the majority of faculty and all management who responded, agreed that PLA is beneficial to

Cabot College. Common benefits cited by both groups included that it responded to the needs of the community, it could improve the college's reputation and it could result in better use of human and material resources.

Chapter V

Summary and Recommendations

Presented in this chapter is a summary of the study of the perceptions of full-time Faculty and Academic Management at Cabot College, regarding Prior Learning Assessment, and the conclusions reached in the study. Recommendations and suggestions for further research are also included.

Summary

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of adults enrolling in post secondary institutions in Newfoundland and Labrador for job training or retraining. This has been due, in part, to government restraint, closure of businesses, changes in economic opportunity and advances in technology requiring retraining to stay abreast.

Many of these mature adults possess a wealth of knowledge and skills that may be equivalent to what is being taught in some of these post secondary programs. Some of this prior learning has been acquired through a prescribed education or training program, where formal credentials have been awarded and the present mechanism of transfer credit/exemption is applied. However, there is an area of informal/non-credit learning that is not always recognized. Thus, a need exists to provide a mechanism to assess this non-credit learning to award credit where appropriate, and this is known as PLA.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the knowledge, perceptions, and potential benefits of PLA, as perceived by Management and Faculty of Cabot College. A questionnaire was sent to 221 full-time Faculty and 16 Academic Management personnel who were teaching/administering at Cabot College in the spring of 1994. Eighty-one percent of Management and 52% of Faculty returned completed questionnaires. Through this questionnaire, information was gathered to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Faculty and Management at Cabot College regarding learning from past work and life experiences?
2. What non-college learning activities did Faculty and Management feel can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses?
3. What are the past practices of Faculty and Management regarding methods of assessing prior, non-credit learning and what methods do they feel should be used or would be willing to use?
4. What are the perceptions of Faculty and Management regarding the administrative issues of decision making, transcription and the maximum amount of credit awarded to individuals through PLA?
5. What are the benefits of awarding college credit for prior non-credit learning, as perceived by Management and Faculty of Cabot College?

Perceptions Regarding Learning from Past Experiences

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following six statements: a) people may learn from life experiences, (b) some knowledge gained from life experiences can be equivalent to that taught in college courses, (c) some skills gained from life experiences can be equivalent to those taught in college courses, (d) people may learn from work experiences, (e) some knowledge gained from work experiences can be equivalent to that taught in college courses, and (f) some skills gained from work experiences can be equivalent to those taught in college courses.

Both Faculty and Management who responded to the survey, agreed that people may learn from work and life experiences. The number who strongly disagreed, disagreed or was undecided was very minimal among both Management and Faculty.

As statements became more specific, for example, asking whether knowledge or skills gained from work or life experiences could be equivalent to that taught in college courses, there was variation in the level of agreement from both groups. Overall, both Faculty and Management were more inclined to agree that work experience can result in college level learning (knowledge and skills), as compared to life experience. Thus, both groups indicated that work experience is better than life experience, for providing college level learning. No significant difference was found in the data analysis for this item.

Non-college Learning Activities Equivalent to College Courses

Respondents were asked to indicate from a list of 12 non-college learning activities, which they felt could result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses. The activities listed were seminar, conference, workshop, independent reading, correspondence course, community work, independent project, travel, recreation and hobbies, work experience, family life experience and volunteer work.

Overall, both Management and Faculty indicated that these activities can result in knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses. Seminars, conferences, workshops, correspondence courses and work experience were chosen by a majority of Management respondents, while work experience appeared to be most popular among Faculty.

The activities least favoured by Faculty as a source of learning equivalent to that taught in college courses were: community work, travel, recreation and hobbies and family life experiences. For Management, the activity least favoured was travel.

The activity that showed the least difference of opinion between the groups was work experience. The activity that showed the most difference in opinion between the groups was a seminar, with many more Management than Faculty feeling this activity can result in college level learning. No significant difference was noted in the data.

Past Practices of PLA and Methods Willing to Use

Respondents were asked to indicate from the six methods presented, which they had used or would be willing to use to assess non-credit prior learning. The six methods included challenge examination, challenge essay, documentation, performance evaluation, simulation and interview.

With all six methods of assessment, more Management than Faculty indicated they have allowed a student to challenge for credit in the past.

Overall, both Faculty and Management indicated they would like to be doing more PLA than they have been, using all six methods. However, this was indicated by a greater percentage of Management than Faculty.

While Faculty have used the interview method minimally in the past and do not appear to be too keen on its future use, a large majority of Management indicated they would like to see that method used in future. The literature indicates, however, that the interview method is the most practical and widely-used method in the portfolio process. Low popularity of this method among Faculty could possibly be due to time constraints, fear of subjectivity and the fact that this method is rarely used in everyday classroom evaluation.

The method most favoured among Faculty was the challenge examination, which could be due to the fact that this method is often used to assess traditional classroom learning. This is in keeping with the literature that indicates that the

examination is often the easiest form of PLA to get accepted by Faculty since it resembles most closely what faculty are already using to assess students.

All of the Management respondents felt they would like to see simulation used to evaluate prior learning. This is probably inferring that the ideal situation could be used to accurately assess a person's non-credit prior learning. Approximately two-thirds of Faculty indicated they were in favour of using this method.

This section of the questionnaire included a question that asked if the pass mark for a method of PLA should be higher, the same, or lower than the pass mark for the course. Approximately two-thirds of each group responded "the same" for all six methods of assessment. On average, only one-third of each of the two groups indicated they felt the pass mark should be higher.

However, one method that a large number of Faculty felt should require a higher pass mark than that of the course, was the challenge essay. The method that most Management respondents felt should require a higher pass mark than that of the course, was also the challenge essay and the method that the least number of Management felt the pass mark should be higher than the pass mark for the course, was the interview. The possible reason for the challenge essay being the method chosen the most by both groups, to require a higher pass mark, may be the idea that essays are often not

invigilated. As a result, respondents to the questionnaire may be questioning the validity, thus feeling that raising the pass mark may assist in maintaining standards. Again, no significant difference was noted in the data analysis.

Perceptions of Faculty and Management Regarding Administrative Issues Associated with Awarding Credit

Faculty and Management were asked to select, from a list of choices, who they felt should make the decision regarding the awarding of credit for prior, non-credit learning. Among the choices were: (a) Dean of the Division/Faculty; (b) Faculty teaching the course; (c) Faculty teaching the course in consultation with the Dean; (d) Faculty teaching the course in consultation with a person knowledgeable about PLA; and (e) other.

Responses to this question from both groups varied with no one person/team of persons clearly favoured over the other choices. Half of the Faculty indicated they felt it should be them in consultation with the Dean. A smaller number of Management felt this was the best procedure. Responses from Management indicated that some felt that the Faculty and Dean alone should make the decision, while others felt that a person knowledgeable about PLA should participate in the decision as well. Yet, others felt that the Faculty member teaching the course along with the PLA person could make the decision. A small percentage of Faculty and no one from Management felt that Faculty alone should make the decision to

award credit for non-credit learning. However, Faculty were included in most choices which is in keeping with one of the quality assurance standards discussed in the literature review.

With regard to transcription of PLA, respondents were asked to indicate their preference of how they felt credit for non-credit learning should be recorded on the student's transcript. The choices were: exemption, numerical grade, letter grade, C-PLA with no mark, C-PLA with a grade consistent with the course marking scheme and other.

Responses to this question were also divided among the groups with no choice clearly favoured by either group. The choices of a letter grade or number grade only, received very few responses, whereas the remaining choices were almost evenly divided. It was clear, however, from both Management and Faculty that the transcript should reflect that the credit was obtained through PLA, using the designation C-PLA (Credit - Prior Learning Assessment). While the literature did not provide any information relating to how PLA should be recorded on the transcript, one of the quality assurance standards discussed included monitoring of PLA credit awards to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.

Regarding amount of credit award, respondents were asked to indicate their preference of the maximum amount of credit that should be awarded through PLA. The choices were 0%, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51-75% and 76-100%.

Responses to this question were again widely divided among and within both groups, with no clear choice favoured. Within Faculty, the most popular choice was the 1-25% category, chosen by a little more than one-third of the group; whereas almost the same percentage of Management favoured the 51-75% category. No significant difference was found in this data.

Perception of Faculty and Management Regarding Benefits of Prior Learning Assessment for Students and Cabot College

Most Faculty and all Management who responded to the questionnaire, agreed that PLA is beneficial to students. Specific comments from the respondents revealed that the most common benefit appears to be time-saving for the student, allowing him/her to better spend valuable time learning new material. Respondents from both groups also indicated they felt that PLA could provide motivation for the mature student, reinforcing the idea that they are never too old to learn and that their past learning is valuable to the college.

Some Faculty indicated that PLA could possibly reduce a student's workload in a semester if he/she was exempted from a course(s) for prior learning. Some Management respondents indicated that PLA could possibly be a cost-saving for the student also. Respondents from both groups indicated they felt it could also increase accessibility for the student, to post secondary programs.

With regard to benefits for Cabot College, again a large

number of Faculty and all Management respondents agreed that PLA is beneficial to Cabot College.

A large number of Faculty and Management indicated they felt that PLA would be responding to the changing needs of the mature adult learner. This, in turn, would improve the image/reputation of the college, which as respondents from both groups indicated, could be used as a marketing tool.

A large number of Faculty indicated that PLA would result in better use of human and material resources, resulting in an overall cost-saving for the college. Some Management felt that it could even generate more revenue for the college. The literature supports this fact that PLA can increase enrolments and thus increase the amount of tuition intake.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, several recommendations are offered:

1. Management and Faculty at Cabot College should continue to work together to develop and implement PLA for fair and accurate measurement of students' prior learning.
2. A PLA office should be established with a full-time PLA Coordinator to oversee the continuous development and implementation of PLA at Cabot College.
3. An intensive PLA training program should be developed and implemented at the college. Such a program should

provide general information on PLA to all new employees, and intensive training to those who would be directly or indirectly involved with its implementation.

4. Cabot College should provide on-going in-service education to Cabot Faculty, administration and support staff to assist personnel to acquire the skills needed for effective understanding and implementation of PLA.
5. Long-term research should be conducted to assess whether attitudes/perceptions of PLA have changed among Faculty and Management. This could build upon this present research, by comparing such aspects as the perceptions of full-time Faculty and Academic Management, possible reasons for differences and how they could be resolved.
6. A pilot study should be conducted on the attitudes/perceptions of the entire public post secondary system in the province to include all colleges and Memorial University.

In conclusion, the focus of this research was an exploration of the perceptions of full-time Faculty and Academic Management at Cabot College regarding PLA. A questionnaire was the mechanism used to offer this group an opportunity to express their level of agreement and opinions on the concept and issues around PLA. It also provided the opportunity to ascertain past practice involving assessment of non-credit prior learning and the willingness of Faculty and

Management to implement PLA for assessing non-credit learning. While the findings revealed interesting data, no statistical significance was found.

As the age of the student entering post secondary programs continues to increase, and the concept of lifelong learning is encouraged and accepted, Prior Learning Assessment has the potential to become common practice in all post secondary institutions in this province.

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Appendix A
Management Questionnaire

May 30, 1994

Division of Continuing Education
Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology
and Continuing Education

Dear Colleague:

As part of the requirements for completion of a graduate program in Educational Administration at Memorial University, under the direction of Dr. G.A. Hickman, I have elected to pursue a thesis in the area of Prior Learning Assessment. As you may be aware, over the last two years, Cabot College has conducted extensive research and development in this area, specifically within a pilot project with the Early Childhood Education diploma program. It is the intent of the college to expand prior learning assessment into other courses/programs as appropriate information and training is provided. Therefore, this research will be beneficial to both my personal development as well as the ongoing development and implementation of prior learning assessment at Cabot College.

The aim of this study is to determine the perceptions, knowledge of and benefits of prior learning assessment as perceived by Academic Management and full-time faculty at Cabot College. To do this, I have devised a survey to be completed by these groups. I know this is a very busy time of the year for you but it would be greatly appreciated if you would take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and return to me in the enclosed self-addressed envelope, at your earliest convenience.

I wish to assure you that all information obtained from this survey will be strictly confidential and absolutely no attempt will be made at any time to identify any participant. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. You also have the right to refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit.

At the completion of the study, copies of the report will be available upon request. Should you require any further information or have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me (778-2635). If you wish to speak to a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean, Research and Development at Memorial University. Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra L. Evans

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Please circle the responses that most accurately reflect your opinion:

SA Strongly Agree	A Agree	U Undecided	D Disagree	SD Strongly Disagree	NA Not Applicable
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Part A: General (questions 1-7)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. People may learn (acquire knowledge and skills) from <u>life</u> experiences. | SA A U D SD |
| 2. People may learn from <u>work</u> experiences. | SA A U D SD |
| 3. Some <u>knowledge</u> gained from <u>life experiences</u> can be equivalent to that taught in college courses. | SA A U D SD |
| 4. Some <u>skills</u> gained from <u>life experiences</u> can be equivalent to those taught in college courses. | SA A U D SD |
| 5. Some <u>knowledge</u> gained from <u>work experiences</u> can be equivalent to that taught in college courses. | SA A U D SD |
| 6. Some <u>skills</u> gained from <u>work experiences</u> can be equivalent to those taught in college courses. | SA A U D SD |
| 7. Of the following list of non-college learning activities, which do you feel <u>can</u> result in some of the knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses? Please check the appropriate box(es). | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seminar | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conference | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation & Hobbies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Work Experience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence Course | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Life Experience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Work |

Part B: Methods of Assessment (questions 8-13)

B. Challenge Examinations

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| a. I have allowed a student to <u>write an examination</u> for possible exemption from a course, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills taught in the course. | YES NO NA |
| b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity to <u>write an examination</u> for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed and this type of assessment was suitable to the course. | SA A U D SD NA |
| <i>If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 9.</i> | |
| c. The <u>pass mark for the examination</u> should be: (Please check the appropriate box). | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> higher than the pass mark for the course | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the same as the pass mark for the course | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lower than the pass mark for the course | |

9. Essay Writing

- a. I have allowed a student to write an essay and provide documentation for possible exemption from a course, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity to write an essay and provide documentation for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed and this type of assessment was suitable to the course. SA A U D SD NA

If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 10.

- c. The pass mark for the essay should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
- higher than the pass mark for the course
- the same as the pass mark for the course
- lower than the pass mark for the course

10. Products of Assessment (Documentation)

- a. I have allowed a student to provide documentation for possible exemption from a course because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity to provide documentation for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed and this type of assessment was suitable to the course. SA A U D SD NA

If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 11.

- c. The pass mark for the documentation should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
- higher than the pass mark for the course
- the same as the pass mark for the course
- lower than the pass mark for the course

11. Performance Evaluation (Skills Assessment)

- a. I have allowed for an evaluation of a student's performance for possible exemption from a course, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity for an evaluation of his/her performance for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed and this type of assessment was suitable to the course. SA A U D SD NA

If you agree or strongly agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 12.

- c. The pass mark for the performance evaluation should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
- higher than the pass mark for the course
- the same as the pass mark for the course
- lower than the pass mark for the course

12. Simulated Performance

- a. I have allowed for an evaluation of a student's performance using a simulated situation for possible exemption from a course, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity for an evaluation of his/her performance using a simulated situation for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed and this type of assessment was suitable to the course. SA A U D SD NA

If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 13.

- c. The pass mark for the simulated performance should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
- higher than the pass mark for the course
 - the same as the pass mark for the course
 - lower than the pass mark for the course

13. Interview (Oral Examination)

- a. I have allowed a student to be interviewed for possible exemption from a course, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity to be interviewed for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed and this type of assessment was suitable to the course. SA A U D SD NA

If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 14.

- c. The pass mark for the interview should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
- higher than the pass mark for the course
 - the same as the pass mark for the course
 - lower than the pass mark for the course

Part C: Administrative Issues (questions 14-18)

14. The decision to award credit for prior, non-credit learning should be made by: (Please check one box only).
- the Dean of the Faculty/Division;
 - the faculty teaching the particular course, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty/Division;
 - the faculty teaching the particular course;
 - the faculty teaching the particular course, in consultation with a person who is knowledgeable about the practices and techniques of assessing non-credit learning;
 - other _____
15. If a student receives credit for a course, based on learning from non-credit sources, the transcript should record: (Please check one box only)
- E - exemption from course, no mark;
 - a numerical grade, eg 85%;
 - a letter grade, eg B+
 - C-PLA - credit for prior learning assessment, no mark;
 - C-PLA - credit for prior learning assessment, grading consistent with normal marking scheme for the particular course (eg. numerical grade, letter grade...)
 - other _____

16. a. The amount of credit awarded to a student for non-credit prior learning should be:
 (Please check the appropriate box)
- 0% of the courses in the program;
 - 1 - 25% of the courses in the program;
 - 26 - 50% of the courses in the program;
 - 51 - 75% of the courses in the program;
 - 76 - 100% of the courses in the program.

17. a. Prior Learning Assessment is beneficial to students at any post-secondary institution. SA A U D SD

b. If you strongly agree or agree, what do you see as benefits?

c. If you disagree or strongly disagree, why?

18. a. Prior Learning Assessment is beneficial for Cabot College. SA A U D SD

b. If you strongly agree or agree, what do you see as the benefits?

c. If you disagree or strongly disagree, why?

Part D: Background Information: This section is designed to provide background information which will help in the interpretation of the information you provide.

1. Age as of your last birthday.
 0-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+
2. Gender: male female
3. **VOID - no question for Academic Management here.**
4. What is your highest level of post-secondary education?
 Certificate Diploma Bachelors degree Masters Degree Doctorate
 Other _____
5. Number of years teaching at the post-secondary level. _____
6. Number of years experience as an administrator at the post-secondary level. _____

Please return this survey using
the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Appendix B

Faculty Questionnaire

May 30, 1994

Division of Continuing Education
Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology
and Continuing Education

Dear Colleague:

As part of the requirements for completion of a graduate program in Educational Administration at Memorial University, under the direction of Dr. G.A. Hickman, I have elected to pursue a thesis in the area of Prior Learning Assessment. As you may be aware, over the last two years, Cabot College has conducted extensive research and development in this area, specifically within a pilot project with the Early Childhood Education diploma program. It is the intent of the college to expand prior learning assessment into other courses/programs as appropriate information and training is provided. Therefore, this research will be beneficial to both my personal development as well as the ongoing development and implementation of prior learning assessment at Cabot College.

The aim of this study is to determine the perceptions, knowledge of and benefits of prior learning assessment as perceived by Academic Management and full-time faculty at Cabot College. To do this, I have devised a survey to be completed by these groups. I know this is a very busy time of the year for you but it would be greatly appreciated if you would take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and return to me in the enclosed self-addressed envelope, at your earliest convenience.

I wish to assure you that all information obtained from this survey will be strictly confidential and absolutely no attempt will be made at any time to identify any participant. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. You also have the right to refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit.

At the completion of the study, copies of the report will be available upon request. Should you require any further information or have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me (778-2635). If you wish to speak to a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean, Research and Development at Memorial University. Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra L. Evans

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Please circle the responses that most accurately reflect your opinion:

SA Strongly Agree **A** Agree **U** Undecided **D** Disagree **SD** Strongly Disagree **NA** Not Applicable

Part A: General (questions 1-7)

1. People may learn (acquire knowledge and skills) from life experiences. SA A U D SD
2. People may learn from work experiences. SA A U D SD
3. Some knowledge gained from life experiences can be equivalent to that taught in college courses. SA A U D SD
4. Some skills gained from life experiences can be equivalent to those taught in college courses. SA A U D SD
5. Some knowledge gained from work experiences can be equivalent to that taught in college courses. SA A U D SD
6. Some skills gained from work experiences can be equivalent to those taught in college courses. SA A U D SD
7. Of the following list of non-college learning activities, which do you feel can result in some of the knowledge and/or skills equivalent to that taught in college courses? Please check the appropriate box(es).

<input type="checkbox"/> Seminar	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent Projects
<input type="checkbox"/> Conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel
<input type="checkbox"/> Workshop	<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation & Hobbies
<input type="checkbox"/> Independent Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> Work Experience
<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence Course	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Life Experience
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Work

Part B: Methods of Assessment (questions 8-13)

8. Challenge Examinations
- a. I have allowed a student to write an examination for possible exemption from a course I teach, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills taught in the course. YES NO NA
 - b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity to write an examination for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed. SA A U D SD NA
- If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 9.*
- c. The pass mark for the examination should be: (Please check the appropriate box).

<input type="checkbox"/> higher than the pass mark for the course
<input type="checkbox"/> the same as the pass mark for the course
<input type="checkbox"/> lower than the pass mark for the course

9. Essay Writing

- a. I have allowed a student to write an essay and provide documentation for possible exemption from a course I teach, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity to write an essay and provide documentation for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed. SA A U D SD NA
- If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 10.*
- c. The pass mark for the essay should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
 higher than the pass mark for the course
 the same as the pass mark for the course
 lower than the pass mark for the course

10. Products of Assessment (Documentation)

- a. I have allowed a student to provide documentation for possible exemption from a course I teach because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity to provide documentation for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed. SA A U D SD NA
- If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 11.*
- c. The pass mark for the documentation should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
 higher than the pass mark for the course
 the same as the pass mark for the course
 lower than the pass mark for the course

11. Performance Evaluation (Skills Assessment)

- a. I have allowed for an evaluation of a student's performance for possible exemption from a course I teach, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity for an evaluation of his/her performance for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed. SA A U D SD NA
- If you agree or strongly agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 12.*
- c. The pass mark for the performance evaluation should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
 higher than the pass mark for the course
 the same as the pass mark for the course
 lower than the pass mark for the course

12. Simulated Performance

- a. I have allowed for an evaluation of a student's performance using a simulated situation for possible exemption from a course I teach, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity for an evaluation of his/her performance using a simulated situation for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed. SA A U D SD NA

If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 13.

- c. The pass mark for the simulated performance should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
- higher than the pass mark for the course
 - the same as the pass mark for the course
 - lower than the pass mark for the course

13. Interview (Oral Examination)

- a. I have allowed a student to be interviewed for possible exemption from a course I teach, because the student felt he/she possessed the knowledge and/or skills in the course. YES NO NA
- b. If a student claimed to possess the knowledge and/or skills taught in a course, the student should be given the opportunity to be interviewed for possible exemption from the course, if such a college policy existed. SA A U D SD NA

If you strongly agree or agree with part b, proceed to part c, otherwise proceed to question 14.

- c. The pass mark for the interview should be: (Please check the appropriate box).
- higher than the pass mark for the course
 - the same as the pass mark for the course
 - lower than the pass mark for the course

Part C: Administrative Issues (questions 14-18)

14. The decision to award credit for prior, non-credit learning should be made by: (Please check one box only).
- the Dean of the Faculty/Division;
 - the faculty teaching the particular course, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty/Division;
 - the faculty teaching the particular course;
 - the faculty teaching the particular course, in consultation with a person who is knowledgeable about the practices and techniques of assessing non-credit learning;
 - other _____
15. If a student receives credit for a course, based on learning from non-credit sources, the transcript should record: (Please check one box only)
- E - exemption from course, no mark;
 - a numerical grade, eg 85%;
 - a letter grade, eg B+
 - C-PLA - credit for prior learning assessment, no mark;
 - C-PLA - credit for prior learning assessment, grading consistent with normal marking scheme for the particular course (eg. numerical grade, letter grade...)
 - other _____

16. a. The amount of credit awarded to a student for non-credit prior learning should be:
 (Please check the appropriate box)
- 0% of the courses in the program;
 - 1 - 25% of the courses in the program;
 - 26 - 50% of the courses in the program;
 - 51 - 75% of the courses in the program;
 - 76 - 100% of the courses in the program.
17. a. Prior Learning Assessment is beneficial to students at any post-secondary institution. SA A U D SD
- b. If you strongly agree or agree, what do you see as benefits?
-
-
18. a. Prior Learning Assessment is beneficial for Cabot College. SA A U D SD
- b. If you strongly agree or agree, what do you see as the benefits?
-
-

Part D: Background Information: This section is designed to provide background information which will help in the interpretation of the information you provide.

1. Age as of your last birthday.
 0-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+
2. Gender: male female
3. In which Faculty/Division of Cabot College do you work/teach?
 Business Community Education Engineering Technology
 Medical Sciences Student Services
4. What is your highest level of post-secondary education?
 Certificate Diploma Bachelors degree Masters Degree Doctorate
 Other

5. Number of years teaching at the post-secondary level. _____

Please return this survey using
the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Appendix C
Correspondence

May 20, 1994

P.O. Box 23131
St. John's, NF A1B 4J9

Dr. Edna Turpin-Downey, President
Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology
and Continuing Education
P.O. Box 1693, St. John's, NF A1C 5P7

Dear Dr. Turpin-Downey:

As part of the requirements for completion of a graduate program in Educational Administration at Memorial University, under the direction of Dr. G. A. Hickman, I have elected to pursue a thesis in the area of Prior Learning Assessment. The research proposes to study the knowledge, perceptions and benefits of prior learning assessment as perceived by management and faculty at Cabot College. This letter seeks your permission to undertake this research at Cabot College. This study will survey all Academic Management and full-time faculty in the following five areas of the college: Business and Applied Arts, Community Education, Engineering Technology, Medical Sciences and Student Services.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the survey instrument. With your agreement, the study will commence with a "pretest" on a representative sample of 16 faculty at the college. A final questionnaire will be constructed and ready for distribution to all full-time faculty and Academic Management. It is my intent to also approach the Deans of the College to seek their assistance in the distribution of the survey, which I anticipate will be late May, 1994.

As the study has been reviewed and approved by the "Ethics Review Committee" of the Faculty of Education, all guidelines established by that committee will be strictly adhered to and the information gained through this research will be strictly confidential; there will be no attempt made to try to identify any of the respondents. Participation will be strictly voluntary and the respondent may opt out of the research at any time. At the completion of the study, a copy of the report will be submitted to you and will be available to any employees of Cabot College who are interested in the findings.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation in this matter. Should you require any further information or have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me (ext. 635) or at home: 895-3109. If you wish to speak to a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean, Research and Development at Memorial University. I would appreciate a reply at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra L. Evans

Consent Form

I, Edna Turpin-Downey, Ed.D., President of Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology and Continuing Education, hereby give permission for the full-time faculty and Management at Cabot College to take part in a study on the knowledge, perceptions and benefits of prior learning assessment for awarding college credit at Cabot College; this study being conducted by Sandra Evans, graduate student in Educational Administration at Memorial University. I also understand that participation of each subject is entirely voluntary and that he/she can withdraw at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

Date

Signature

May 20, 1994

P.O. Box 23131
St. John's, NF A1B 4J9

Dear Colleague:

As part of the requirements for completion of a graduate program in Educational Administration at Memorial University, under the direction of Dr. G. A. Hickman, I have elected to pursue a thesis in the area of Prior Learning Assessment. Through my research I propose to study the knowledge, perceptions and benefits of prior learning assessment as perceived by Academic Management and full-time faculty of five areas of Cabot College: Business and Applied Arts, Community Education, Engineering Technology, Medical Sciences and Student Services. This research will be beneficial to the ongoing development of prior learning assessment at Cabot College.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the "draft" survey instrument. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in helping validate this questionnaire. I would like you to look for:

- 1) ambiguous questions or statements;
- 2) items which should be deleted or added (if any);
- 3) clarity, interpretation of items;
- 4) any obvious gaps.

Feel free to write any comments directly on the questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire **today if possible, or no later than noon on Tuesday, May 24**. Once necessary revisions have been made, a final questionnaire will be constructed and ready for distribution to all full-time faculty.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation in this matter. Should you require any further information or have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me (778-2635) or at home: 895-3109.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra L. Evans

May 24, 1994

P.O. Box 23131
St. John's, NF A1B 4J9

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your recent participation in the "pretest" survey for my research in prior learning assessment. The feedback from each and everyone of you was excellent, and as a result I have made a number of revisions to the survey. Because of this, I am obligated to "pretest" the instrument a second time, therefore again I am asking for your assistance.

Enclosed you will find a copy of another "draft" survey; I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in helping validate this survey. Again, I would like you to look for:

- 1) ambiguous questions or statements;
- 2) items which should be deleted or added (if any);
- 3) clarity, interpretation of items;
- 4) any obvious gaps.

As before, feel free to write any comments directly on the questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire **by noon on Friday, May 27** to my office on Prince Philip Drive (Rm B-211) or FAX (778-2602). Unfortunately, I will be out of the province from May 25-29. I return noon on Sunday, May 29, at which time I intend to make any final revisions. If all is well, I will be able to process everything and begin distribution by Monday, May 30.

Should you require further information or have any questions, you can contact my colleague, Mary Gosse-Prowse (778-2633). Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra L. Evans

Division of Continuing Education
Cabot College of Applied Arts,
Technology and Continuing Education

May 24, 1994

Mr. Bruce Baker, Dean
Faculty of Business
Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology
and Continuing Education

Dear Mr. Baker:

As part of the requirements for completion of a graduate program in Educational Administration at Memorial University, under the direction of Dr. G. A. Hickman, I have elected to pursue a thesis in the area of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). Through my research I propose to study the knowledge, perceptions and benefits of PLA as perceived by management and faculty at Cabot College. This research will be beneficial to both my personal development as well as the ongoing development and implementation of PLA at Cabot College.

This research will be conducted through the administration of a survey in early June, to Academic Management and all full-time faculty in the following faculties/divisions: Business, Community Education and Applied Arts, Engineering Technology, Medical Sciences and Student Services. The purpose of this letter is to:

1. inform you that I will be seeking the assistance of a support personnel on each of the campuses to facilitate immediate distribution of the survey and any follow-up letters; and
2. seek your assistance in encouraging the faculty to complete the survey.

Information gained through this research will be strictly confidential and there will be no attempt made to try to identify any of the respondents. Participation will be strictly voluntary and the respondents may opt out at any time. This research has received the permission of Dr. Edna Turpin-Downey, President of Cabot College. At the completion of the study, a copy of the report will be submitted to the President and will be available to any employees of Cabot College who are interested in the findings.

Dr. Turpin-Downey has been provided with detailed information regarding ethical considerations involved in the study should you wish to review them. Should you require any further information or have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me (778-2635) or at home: 895-3109. I hope you will participate in this research; thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra L. Evans

Division of Continuing Education
Rm. B-211, Prince Philip Drive Campus

May 30, 1994

Dear _____ :

As per our recent telephone conversation please find enclosed, the surveys for full-time faculty at your campus. As we discussed, the immediate distribution of these letters will greatly facilitate my research at Cabot College.

In a few days, a second letter will be sent to all of the participants, reminding them to complete and return their survey. In approximately one week, a third and final mail-out will occur; this will involve fewer letters, as they will be sent only to those participants who have not returned a completed survey at that time. Again, I appreciate your cooperation in the immediate distribution of these letters.

If any of the above correspondence is not picked up by the appropriate faculty after a week or so, please return it to me at the above address. Again, my sincere thanks to you for your assistance and cooperation. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to call me at 778-2635 or at home, 895-3109.

Sincerely,

Sandra Evans
Prior Learning Assessment Coordinator

Enclosures

June 2, 1994

Room B211, Prince Philip Drive Campus
Division of Continuing Education
Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology
and Continuing Education

Dear Colleague:

A few days ago, I asked you to complete a questionnaire dealing with Prior Learning Assessment at Cabot College. This survey is part of the requirements for completion of a graduate program in Educational Administration at Memorial University. It is important that I get a good response rate to maintain reliability of the study and it will also benefit the ongoing development of prior learning assessment at Cabot College.

If you have already returned you completed questionnaire, please accept my sincere thanks. If you have not, I would be most grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it to me at your earliest convenience. (If you have not received the survey, please contact me at 778-2635). Once again, I wish to assure you that all information obtained from this survey will be strictly confidential and absolutely no attempt will be made at any time to identify any participant. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. You also have the right to refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit.

I trust you will support me in this worthwhile endeavour and I thank you sincerely for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra L. Evans

June 13, 1994

Dear Colleague:

Recently it was brought to my attention that none of the full-time faculty at Seal Cove received a Prior Learning Assessment survey which was sent to them (through the Cabot internal mail) two weeks ago. I understand this caused some confusion when you all **did** receive the "reminder letter" that I sent to you last week. Please accept my apology for this mix-up

Enclosed you will find another copy of the survey (which I have arranged personal delivery to ensure arrival!) with the cover letter and return envelope. I would be most grateful if you could take a few minutes over the next few days (or before you finish for summer vacation) to complete and return it to me. Again please accept my sincere apology and thank you for taking the time to assist me in my research.

Sincerely,

Sandra Evans

June 22, 1994

Room B211, Prince Philip Drive Campus
Division of Continuing Education
Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology
and Continuing Education

Dear Colleague:

A short time ago, I asked you to complete a questionnaire dealing with Prior Learning Assessment at Cabot College. This survey is part of the requirements for completion of a graduate program in Educational Administration at Memorial University. It is important that I get a good response rate to maintain reliability of the study and it will also benefit the ongoing development of prior learning assessment at Cabot College.

As of yet, I have not received your completed questionnaire. If you have already sent it, thank you and please accept my apologies. If you still intend to participate in the survey, for your convenience I have enclosed another copy of the questionnaire. I wish to remind you that all information obtained from this survey will be strictly confidential and absolutely no attempt will be made at any time to identify any participant. Also, your participation is strictly voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. You also have the right to refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit.

I trust you will support me in this worthwhile endeavour and I would be most grateful if you could find a few minutes to complete and return the survey to me by June 30, 1994. I thank you sincerely for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra L. Evans

Appendix D

Benefits of PLA as Quoted by Respondents

Student benefits according to Faculty:

Number of Respondents:

- 39 Time could be spent more beneficially not having to repeat skills already acquired, thus applying energies where best needed
- 9 increased confidence/self-esteem for the student
- 8 accelerates the process of obtaining certification
- 6 reduces student's work load
- 4 helps maintain motivation as the student is not bored in the classroom with redundant work
- 3 saves the institution money and materials
- 3 saves money for the student
- 3 student can begin advancement immediately
- 2 the student is able to concentrate on new learning experiences
- 2 the students can share their knowledge and skills with other students
- 2 "recognizes the value of experience"
"positive message that one's experiences and prior learning is recognized and valuable"

1 for each of the following;

"saving of faculty time"

"faculty will not have a class whose prior knowledge ranges from none to competency"

"slower pace - especially for older students"

"determines needs, characteristics and values of the incoming student"

"encourages mature students to continue education in a formal setting"

"students can direct more effort to those new areas to be learned"

"smooth access or completion of further post secondary studies"

"stronger linkages with industry"

"faster assimilation of new skills to new programs"

"gain useful exemptions"

"mature students always seem to do well, they know their objectives and are prepared to work"

"due to the increasing lack of employment, students are training in several areas and they're taking advantage of work in any field. They need encouragement - give them credit"

"very beneficial to older students to prove they can learn because they were already learning and may not have realized it"

"suitability and demonstrates ability"

"able to utilize the knowledge students already have"

"the value of the feedback for evaluating what is required to pursue a program"

"less of a drop-out rate"

"experience is valuable in clinical oriented courses"

"less stress on students to perform in something they (he/she) is qualified to do"

"promotes concept/validity of life-long learning"

"illustrates institution's value of student's time"

"gives the individual student a basic knowledge of his/her level of achievement/knowledge per subject. Round pegs with square holes!!"

"attitude and commitment much higher. More focused student"

"why should a student repeat courses, while having done an equivalent course or material - all students should be assessed upon entry"

"allows the student to be a role model for other students"

Student benefits according to Management:

- 4 better use of student's time
- 3 recognition for past experiences
- 3 avoids repetition of material already learned
- 3 motivates student - satisfaction of having a post secondary institution recognize their past experiences for credit purposes
- 2 shorter training period

1 of each of the following:

"transferability of careers"

"mobility in workforce"

reduction in negative reaction to change acceptance of continuous improvement, life long learning"

"saved academic space for use by other students"

"increased accessibility for adult learners"

"the student may enter a course with an advance standing"

"saves money"

"validates current knowledge and skills"

"change in acquiring education and training is upon us! We must drop our barriers and accept all ,learning!"

College benefits according to Faculty:

- 8 time could be spent more beneficially not having to repeat skills already acquired
- 5 better utilization of college resources
- 5 saving of money and materials by the college
- 5 fosters completion of a program
- 4 encourages more applicants
- 4 increase the number of people served
- 3 saving of faculty time
- 3 student can begin advancement immediately
- 3 increased success rate may decrease attrition
- 3 provides for a better motivated student
- 2 happier students and probably more productive
- 2 student gains useful exemptions
- 2 allows for flexible enrolments/faster graduation schedules
- 2 smaller class sizes - "may allow for more instructor/student time"

1 for each of the following:

"frees up classroom space and instructor time for students who need it"

"opportunity for mature focused individuals to come to our programs"

"allows the college to provide more cost-effective courses and design courses more applicable to the students needs"

"shows Cabot's recognition of value for adults experiences. Respect for its learners"

"efficient use of awarding credit"

"saves administration and teaching costs"

"enhances progressive image of the college"

"makes us more receptive to the variety of backgrounds and experiences our older students are bringing with them - our student population is becoming increasingly older"

"money and energy will be focused in the right direction - eg developing an individualized program plan that will ensure that students will not have to repeat any areas of study they have already attained"

"improved public image"

"reduced work load"

"better use of instructional personnel"

"enhances students' self-esteem"

"faculty will not have a class whose prior knowledge ranges from none to competency"

"less variety of learners (eg academic background) in a course, improved student results"

"students can fill empty spaces in senior years so resources not wasted"

"to determine the needs, characteristics and value of incoming students"

"will accelerate applicants through the system and provide space for new applicants"

"encourages mature students to continue education in a formal setting"

"has potential to counter attrition effect"

"instructor can better pace class if all have similar backgrounds"

"reduces student boredom with rehashing old material"

"smooth access or completion of further post secondary studies"

"stronger linkages with industry"

"faster assimilation of new skills to new programs"

"non-duplication of skills training"

"elimination of duplication of learning/teaching"

"makes Cabot a leader in the implementation of PLA"

"demonstrates leadership/models for other post secondary institutions"

"puts students previous experiences/learning in proper light (instead of just marketing/filling Cabot programs"

"based on the varied background of those who seek education in post secondary institutions this area is in need of consideration as the older student often has through experience, gained a knowledge/skill/attitude"

"attracts experiences students"

"streamline"

"suitability, demonstrates ability"

"it will be another example of the student coming first. It will enhance Cabot's profile as an institute that cares about its students more so than its tuition dollars"

"it could improve the quality of the graduate and give more priority to other issues and better time management"

"clear waiting list a little faster"

"concentrate on those with need to learn"

"better quality graduate"

"higher quality of learning facilitation"

"to determine the strengths and weaknesses of students and to establish some sense of measuring the norm of standard or capacity with which to begin the teaching/learning process"

"it allows us to reach out and recognize the learning of adults"

"gives students positive recognition of past skills, etc..."

"greater student benefit"

"PLA will help you to lead the students in the direction you feel most suited to his/her knowledge"

"experience is valuable in clinical oriented courses"

"college seen as more flexible - more in tune with industry"

"shows the college as flexible and forward looking"

"enables faculty to obtain another qualification or a higher qualification"

"keeps everybody happier in the long and short term"

"from the students perspective, it provides recognition of valuable knowledge or skills already achieved"

"promotes concept/validity of life long learning"

"gives the individual student a basic knowledge of his/her level of achievement/knowledge per subject. Round pegs with square holes!!"

"more responsive to community needs"

"we cannot afford to slow our learners down"

allows student to be a role model for other students"

"we don't force students to be in an environment that doesn't suit their learning needs. Adults value time - we have to respect this"

Cabot benefits according to Management

"better utilization of faculty"

"better utilization of facilities"

"improves Cabot image/reputation with respect to meeting adult learners needs"

"instructor/course/program renewal which comes from the in-depth review of content necessary to the PLA process"

"open access to all who deserve accreditation"

"potential enhancement of instructor's exposure to knowledge"

"maturity in the system"

"responsiveness to our students"

"challenges us to separate 'nice to know' from 'need to know"

"the college could be seen as a forerunner in these ideas in the province and that the college recognizes life and work skills obtained prior to college is valid and important"

"motivated students"

"flexibility in program offerings"

"assists individualized participation"

"more security of funds as more students return for retraining"

"better student satisfaction"

"enrichment of programs by enrolment of experienced students"

"increased opportunities for a variety of persons"

"this would be beneficial especially as the new articulation/harmonization of trade and technical courses is completed which will give credit for previous courses"

"better student access to full-time and part-time programs"

"may be revenue generating for the college"



