



# WOMEN AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION IN CANADIAN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Written by Paula A. DeCoito  
Edited by Dorothy MacKeracher

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**WOMEN AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION IN CANADA:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY.**

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Edited by Dorothy MacKeracher**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Data from the 1981 census of Canada reveal that 24.1 percent of the out-of-school adult female population has less than grade nine education and that only 2.0 percent of these functionally illiterate women attend formal programs to improve their educational achievement. The data provided in this report indicate that women who attend adult basic education programs are not representative of the population of under-educated women in Canada.

This report contains the findings of a survey of adult basic education programs in Canada. The objective of the survey was to provide information which could be used to answer the question: To what extent do adult basic education programs in Canada address the learning and related needs of women?

The survey focused on two areas:

1. Four components of adult basic education programs
  - . program delivery (including supplementary services);
  - . Instructors;
  - . curriculum; and
  - . materials.
2. Learning and related needs of women in adult basic education programs
  - . needs that led to attendance in the program;
  - . learning and related needs during the program;
  - . barriers to regular attendance at the program;
  - . educational aspirations upon completion of the program; and
  - . job aspirations upon completion of the program.

Questionnaires were mailed to 360 adult basic education (ABE) programs across Canada; 106 completed questionnaires were returned. Personal interviews were conducted with thirty women students in ABE programs in three provinces - British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario. The major findings are summarized below.

### LEARNING AND RELATED NEEDS OF WOMEN

Both providers and women students identified the major needs of women, in order of importance, as educational, psychological and financial. Although lack of child care services was perceived as a major barrier to regular attendance, it was not mentioned as a major need of women students, suggesting that neither group perceived childcare as an educational need or an education-related issue.

More women students than providers felt that there was a difference between the learning needs of women and men in ABE programs. Women students prefer to learn in a one-to-one student-teacher relationship and in small groups.

## PROGRAM DELIVERY

Most ABE programs are delivered by community colleges and school boards -- institutions which are designed to meet the educational needs of young adults and children respectively. These institutions tend to provide most ABE programs within the same kind of time schedule developed for children in school and young adults in colleges, and fail to offer flexible programming geared to the needs of adult women. Many personal and financial responsibilities make it extremely difficult for adult women, especially those with young children, to pursue the upgrading of their education within rigid youth-oriented schedules.

Furthermore, these youth-oriented institutions do not provide adequate supplementary services to help women deal with the personal responsibilities which prevent them from regularly attending the programs. The services least likely to be provided is childcare, yet the lack of childcare is a major barrier to women's regular attendance in the programs. The second least provided service is transportation which, like childcare, is necessary to help women to physically get to the ABE programs.

Those supplementary services which are provided tend to be available mostly during the day. Consequently, women who work during the day and can only attend programs in the evening are deterred from so doing.

## INSTRUCTORS

Under-educated women need to learn to read, write, and do simple arithmetic. They also need to acquire knowledge in such areas as mathematics and science in order to have meaningful access to the technical, non-traditional occupations, for which there is growing economic demand. The majority of ABE instructors in the survey do not have a science degree. Many tend to have a degree in education or in the general arts at the bachelor level. This is a problem with respect to the teaching of science to under-educated women. ABE instructors need skills in teaching the science and mathematics education required by the women. It is this kind of education that the women urgently need if the range of occupations accessible to them is to be expanded.

## CURRICULUM

The under-educated women included in this survey described themselves as students and unemployed persons. As students they need and want to learn the three R's; as unemployed persons they need to acquire job-related skills such as knowing how to look for a job, how to fill out job application forms, how to read their pay slips, and so on. These, too, are basic educational needs of adults in society. Clearly, the three R's are not sufficient for under-educated adult women.

The major focus of ABE programs is reading and writing, followed by basic mathematics. This is compatible with the providers' definition of ABE as education which provides the

three R's. Yet, as has been pointed repeatedly in this report, under-educated women need more than this. They need to be aware of the declining demand for traditional female jobs and the growing demand for technical, non-traditional occupations. They need to be encouraged to enter these occupations, and to acquire basic training in science. No respondent mentioned a basic knowledge of science in her definition of ABE.

There is no ABE curriculum for women. One is needed. Data were provided in this report which support the position that adult basic education comprises both basic literacy and post-literacy or pre-occupational programs. Each type of program appears to require a somewhat different curriculum and both should incorporate support services -- childcare, transportation, and counselling -- as an integral part of the educational program and curriculum.

## MATERIALS

Most instructors use textbooks and workbooks. Few textbooks are designed to meet the educational needs of under-educated women. Many instructors reported that women were often portrayed in traditional roles in the materials. Many instructors also use materials that they have made themselves and "anything that I can find," even though materials development is not their official responsibility. As with program content, instructors have considerable control over the materials used in ABE programs. Few ABE programs use computers. However, many providers commented that the use of this technology should be increased in ABE programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The major recommendations of this report are:

### General

1. That a national policy to eradicate functional illiteracy among Canadian adults be instituted, that this policy address the specific learning and related needs of women, and that women's groups be consulted in the development of this policy.
2. That increased funding for adult basic education (ABE) be made available by both provincial and federal governments to support the following programs and services for women: development of a wide range of ABE programs; provision of support services; professional development for instructors of ABE programs; curriculum development; and materials development.
3. That communication links be established among providers of ABE programs for women, providers of support services, and those responsible for occupational training programs.
4. That ABE program directories for each province and both territories be compiled immediately and that these directories: be available to anyone in any part of Canada; be provided in an accessible format; and be updated on a regular basis.

### Program Delivery

1. School boards and community colleges should continue to provide ABE programs for women. The membership of committees charged with making decisions about such programs should include women adult educators and adult women students.
2. Alternatives to institutionally provided ABE programs should be encouraged. For example, literacy groups, community and voluntary organizations should be encouraged politically and assisted financially to provide programs for under-educated women.
3. It is extremely difficult for adult women with jobs and children to pursue their educational goals within a time schedule designed for children and young adults. Measures must be taken to provide flexible time scheduling of programs for women.

4. Appropriate financial support should be available to women who want to upgrade their education during a full-time program. For example, a guaranteed income and access to free or low-cost childcare could be made available to women who are upgrading their education on a full-time basis. Subsidies should be made available to those who want to attend part-time programs.
5. The provision of supplementary services to women in ABE programs must be developed, especially childcare, transportation and counselling services and support services necessary to assist women to enter training programs and the labour force. Supplementary services should be available not only during the day, but also during the evenings (and weekends, when necessary).



## Instructors

1. Professional development programs should be developed to help instructors of women in ABE programs become more aware of the differences between the learning needs of women and men, and to incorporate this awareness in the content and process of their curriculum.
2. More instructors with a science background should be recruited to teach women in ABE programs.
3. Professional development programs should be developed to help instructors learn to teach basic science to under-educated women.

## Curriculum

1. Curricula and teaching guidelines relevant to the learning needs of under-educated women should be developed by instructors in consultation with women students.
2. With respect to women, adult basic education should include introductory programs in elementary science to help them prepare for the academic upgrading necessary for entry into non-traditional training programs.
3. Women in ABE programs should be informed of the declining demand for traditional female jobs and of the opportunities available in both traditional and non-traditional training programs and occupations.
4. Women in ABE programs should be given opportunities to become aware of the support services appropriate for women in non-traditional occupations.

## Materials

1. There is an urgent need for materials specifically designed for instructors and women students in ABE programs.
2. Materials for use in one-to-one and small group teaching formats and for computer assisted learning should be developed for instructors and women students in ABE programs.
3. Instructors and women students in ABE programs should be involved in the development of materials.
4. Providers of ABE programs should provide women students with increased access to computers.

## Further Research

A number of recommendations are made for further research in the area of ABE programs for women and the participation of under-educated women in such programs.

## FOREWORD

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) is a national, non-profit and voluntary organization concerned with the provision of learning opportunities for women in Canada. CCLOW defines a learning opportunity as any formal or informal means through which women may develop personally, socially, economically and politically. The objectives of CCLOW are:

- to promote networking of individuals and organizations involved with learning opportunities for women;
- to identify barriers to learning and promote change;
- to support and encourage learning and training for women;
- to investigate unmet needs in adult education programs and services;
- to assess and promote innovative learning programs for women; and
- to publicize critical issues in women's learning through briefs and position papers.

This report is one of CCLOW's many writings on critical issues in women's learning in Canada. In the following pages, the focus is on functionally illiterate women and their urgent need for upgrading and job training programs. How adequate is the present provision of adult basic education programs for these women? This is the question underlying the report, its *raison d'être*. The information provided in the report sheds light on this question, and raises many more questions and issues which must be dealt with if learning opportunities for under-educated women are to improve.

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Paula DeCoito  
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Toronto, Ontario  
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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. THE NEED FOR THE REPORT

As an organization dedicated to improving learning opportunities for women in Canada, the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) is concerned about the extent of functional illiteracy among women (24.1 percent) and the very low school attendance (2.0 percent) of under-educated women. As individuals, these women need to improve their education in order to participate independently in the day-to-day activities of society, to obtain better paid employment, and to participate in the National Training Program. It is imperative, therefore, to ask the question: why is only 2 percent of the under-educated female adult population participating in educational programs? Two hypothetical but plausible answers to this question are suggested:

- the educational programs provided for under-educated adults are not meeting the needs of under-educated women; and
- certain factors are preventing the majority of under-educated women from attending the educational programs provided for them. These factors can be related to the women, the programs, the culture within which the women and programs are located (and so on).

Both of the above assumptions underlie CCLOW's decision to conduct a survey of adult basic education (ABE) programs in Canada. Also underlying this decision is the fact that no empirical study of ABE programs in Canada has addressed specifically the adequacy of such programs for women.

While there have been national and provincial surveys and studies of ABE programs in Canada (Thomas, 1983; CAAE, 1982; MacKeracher, 1979), only one of these surveys appears to have focused on the adequacy of the present provision of ABE in Canada for women (MacKeracher, 1979). Thomas (1983) addresses the extent of illiteracy in Canada and the provision of ABE programs. Her analysis focuses on the general adult population. Scant attention is paid to women in this study. The CAAE (1982) survey of adult education programs and adult learners' needs pays very little attention to ABE programs and women who require them.

MacKeracher's study, *Adult Basic Education and Women* (1979), addresses the question of the extent to which present provision of ABE programs in Canada meets the needs of under-educated women. MacKeracher provides an excellent description and analysis of the issues involved in the present provision of ABE as it relates to women. Her work is a qualitative one, based on her examination of the literature and various policy documents.

Three other studies provide additional information on the general educational needs of women. A thorough review of the literature on the learning needs of women and the barriers to their participation in formal education programs has been done by Davie et al

(1978). This review summarizes over forty international studies. Avedon *et al* (1979) conducted an empirical survey of the learning needs of women in the Waterloo region of Ontario. MacKeracher (1978) examined the learning needs of Canadian women in educational programs in general and the barriers to their participation in such programs.

## 1.2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present and discuss the empirical findings of an exploratory survey of Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs in Canada. This survey was conducted by CCLOW in the spring of 1984. The main objective of the survey was to provide information to answer the following question:

To what extent do Adult Basic Education Programs in Canada address the learning and related needs of women who require ABE?

The report provides information in two areas:

1. Selected Components of ABE Programs
  - program delivery (including supplementary services);
  - instructors;
  - curriculum; and
  - materials.
2. Learning and Related Needs of Women in ABE Programs
  - needs that led to attendance in programs;
  - learning and related needs during attendance in programs;
  - barriers to regular attendance in programs;
  - educational aspirations upon completion of programs; and
  - job aspirations upon completion of programs.

## 1.3. AUDIENCE

The report has been written primarily for instructors, administrators, community workers, policy makers and researchers, who are involved in the provision and study of ABE and/or services for under-educated women.

## 1.4. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS USED FREQUENTLY IN REPORT

### **1.4.1. Under-educated or Functionally Illiterate Adults**

In this report the terms "under-educated" and "functionally illiterate" are used interchangeably. The term "under-educated adult" is taken from Professor John Cairns' Introduction to Thomas (1983) in which he discusses functional illiteracy in Canada. Cairns uses the term primarily to refer to functionally illiterate adults. In his view, under-educated or functionally illiterate persons are not only those who cannot read or write; but also, those , who lack the ability to effectively utilize the communication system of a given society at a particular time, and to participate fully in the rights, responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. <sup>1</sup>

For this reason, debates about literacy and illiteracy which concentrate on levels of reading and writing are misleading; the real issue is whether people possess the education and skills necessary to participate fully and productively in the life of their society. This is what functionality is about.<sup>2</sup>

Cairns points out that while grade 8 is normally considered as the level necessary for functional literacy in western societies, "in Canada the attainment of grade 10 has become a pre-requisite for most skilled jobs".<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the choice of "less than grade 9 educational achievement" as an indicator of functional illiteracy is problematic and is more a choice of convenience than of fact. For example, there are many persons who have officially achieved less than grade 9 education but who have unofficially and informally improved their literacy skills to a grade 9 level or higher. On the other hand, there are those persons who have "officially" attained a grade 9 level of education but who, for all practical purposes, are truly functionally illiterate. These persons are not represented in the census data related to educational attainment.

In this report, the term "under-educated" will refer to those persons with less than grade 9 education, mainly because census data are more available on this population than on the adult population with less than grade 10 education.

### **1.4.2. Adult Basic Education**

The definition of ABE employed in the report is taken from Thomas (1983):

Adult Basic Education (ABE) is the generic name used to denote the provision of activities and programs for adults who have not completed elementary or high school education. Necessarily, therefore, it includes basic literacy and functional literacy skills.

By this definition, ABE programs include such learning opportunities as are provided in adult day schools, basic literacy, academic upgrading, right-to-read and life skills programs, and also manpower training programs which are preparatory to occupational skills training such as Basic Training for Skills Development (BTSD) and Basic Job Readiness Training (BJRT).

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<sup>1</sup>Professor John C. Cairns in the "Introduction" to Audrey Thomas Adult Illiteracy in Canada: A Challenge. Ottawa. Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 1983. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.2.

<sup>4</sup>Audrey Thomas. Adult Illiteracy in Canada: A Challenge. Ottawa, Canadian Commission for UNESCO. 1983, p.20.

<sup>5</sup> Taken from notes prepared by Brian Murphy for the 1984 Think Tank Meeting of the Canadian Movement for Literacy, Vancouver. B.C.

### 1.4.3. The Systemic Perspective of Functional Illiteracy

This report views functional illiteracy as a systemic problem rather than as an individual problem. At a 1984 "think camp" on illiteracy, sponsored by the Movement for Canadian Literacy, Brian Murphy made the following points about illiteracy:

Illiteracy is not primarily an educational problem, but rather a political problem, and a socio-economic problem, requiring not educational but political and socio-economic interventions;

Illiteracy is not primarily a technical problem, but a socio-cultural problem, requiring not technical interventions but socio-cultural interventions;

Illiteracy is not primarily an individual problem, but a social problem, requiring social and societal interventions;

Illiteracy is not a personal deficiency but a socio-economic deprivation, and rather than being a cause of poverty, illiteracy is one element in a syndrome of poverty which has structural causes and both an economic and socio-cultural (ideological) rationale.<sup>5</sup>

Murphy's view is a systemic one in which functional illiteracy is regarded as an output of the social system. From this perspective of social problems, the approach to solutions cannot be individualistic, that is, aimed at "helping" the individual person, but rather systemic, that is, aimed at changing the social system.

When the systemic view of functional illiteracy is adopted, definition of the problem and search for solutions necessarily require an examination of the interactions among economic, political, cultural and other systems at both national and international levels. This is so because, in the world today, each country is but one system linked economically and politically to other systems. To understand poverty in one country, one needs to be aware of that country's external economic and political affiliations.

It is difficult to adequately define the problem of functional illiteracy within the confines of this report. When one attempts to define this problem as it pertains to women, the task becomes even more difficult, Sexual discrimination against women in a patriarchal world must also be addressed because sexism, like illiteracy, is a problem of the economic, political, ideological and other social systems of the world at large, a fact well documented by feminist scholars (Cook, 1976; Davis, 1971; Gornick & Moran, 1971; de Beavoir, 1952).

## **1.5. ORGANIZATION OF REPORT**

Chapter 2 begins with a brief discussion of the complex nature of functional illiteracy among women as a social problem. It provides the reader with information about the extent of functional illiteracy within the female adult population and the school attendance of under-educated women in Canada. This information is discussed in relation to the income and skills-training needs of women and the need for skilled workers in Canadian industries. A strong case is made in this chapter for the inclusion of science and mathematics education in ABE programs for women and for increased provision of support services for women in such programs.

Chapter 3 is intended primarily for the reader interested in the research design and methodology underlying the ABE survey. Chapter 4 describes the learning and related needs of women who attend ABE programs. This description comes from two sources: the providers of ABE programs, and the women students in ABE programs. The findings, derived from the same sources, about the ABE programs included in the survey are described in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 focuses on information about program delivery and supplementary services provided by the programs. Chapter 6 provides information derived from the survey about three additional components of ABE programs -- instructors, curriculum, and materials.

Chapter 7 outlines the conclusions and recommendations of the report and offers suggestions for further research in the field of ABE.

## **Chapter 2 DEFINING THE PROBLEM**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

Functional illiteracy among women in Canada is a complex problem requiring complex analyses and comprehensive solutions. It is a problem of the social system and has deep-rooted economic, political and ideological causes at the national and international levels. Women who are functionally illiterate are victims of economic oppression and (centuries old) sexual discrimination.

Efforts must be made to decrease the extent of functional illiteracy within the female population, and to increase the participation of functionally illiterate women in formal educational and job training programs. Such efforts will be ineffective if the support services necessary for women's participation in such programs are not adequate. Childcare services, transportation subsidies and counselling services are all essential for increased participation of women in educational and job training programs.

## **2.2. THE COMPLEXITY OF FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY WITHIN THE FEMALE POPULATION**

The human world is a world of symbols, symbols created by others to construct and preserve their experiences. To participate actively in this world of symbols, each human being must be able to encode and decode her experiences and those of others, using the symbols shared by other humans.

With very few exceptions in the world today, human societies use printed symbols. In economically advanced societies, particularly in the western hemisphere, complex electronic systems of communication, based on the logic of the printed word, have been and are being developed. The person who cannot effectively use the printed word and these complex communications systems is a person who is blocked from participating fully in society. The human rights argument calls for the eradication of functional illiteracy and regards literacy as a fundamental right of all human beings. From this stance comes the imperative that society must provide ample opportunities throughout life for all human beings to benefit from the basic education that would enable them to use the printed word and communication systems of their society in order to effectively participate in that society, and through this, to develop their human potential.

Functional illiteracy, however, is only one of the many barriers to full participation of individuals in society. Sexual discrimination against women is another. For centuries, women in male-dominated societies have been forced to limit their participation in society to the private sphere, the sphere of the family. Traditionally they have been economically dependent upon, and subservient to, men. Recently, in this century, when social and economic circumstances forced men to allow women to participate in the public sphere, this participation has been limited for the most part to low-paying job ghettos and token positions in public institutions (Armstrong, 1984).

The functionally illiterate woman, therefore, is doubly disenfranchised as a member of society. As a woman, she is systematically barred from participating in society on an equal basis with men. As a functionally illiterate person, she cannot make effective use of societal communication systems and is further barred from public participation in society. For example, a functionally illiterate woman would have difficulty participating in community decision-making, utilizing public information about health care, and being a critical consumer.

Because of the complexity of the issues involved, those who strive to eliminate functional illiteracy from among the female population must do battle against both the causes of functional illiteracy and of women's oppression in society. Progressive workers in the field of literacy education, in addition to teaching literacy skills to the disenfranchised, must also confront, ameliorate, and try to change prevailing structures, conditions, ideologies and practices that produce poverty and functional illiteracy. They must address the issues of economic exploitation of workers and of sexism, racism and ethnocentrism, to name but a few of the oppressive elements of the social system that contribute to the maintenance of functional illiteracy.

The balance of this chapter will focus on the extent of functional illiteracy among women in Canada and the participation of under-educated women in formal education programs. The information will be discussed in relation to the labour market context of working women in Canada. The reader should bear in mind that, while the various data are discussed separately, the combined effect supports the perspective that functional illiteracy is a problem created and maintained by interactions among the social, political, economic, cultural and educational systems.

## 2.3. EXTENT OF FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY WITHIN THE FEMALE ADULT POPULATION

### **2.3.1. The Total Adult Population**

In Canada, 3,731,305 adults of age 15 and older have completed less than nine years of schooling within a formal educational system. This figure comprises 20.1 percent of the total adult population in Canada (see [Table 2-1](#); all tables begin on page 18).

### **2.3.2. The Total Adult Population That Does Not Attend School**

The number of adults in Canada not attending school is 15,361,855. Of these, 3,641,315 have less than nine years of formal education. This number is 23.7 percent of the out-of-school adult population and is an indicator of the extent of functional illiteracy within Canada (see [Table 2-2](#)).



### **2.3.3. Distribution by Sex**

Table 2-2 shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the rates of functional illiteracy among women (24.1 percent) and men (23.3 percent). A discussion of differential experiences of functionally illiterate women and men is included in section 2.5 on the labour market context.

### **2.3.4. Distribution by Age**

The majority of under-educated adults is over 34 years (86.3 percent). The comparable figures for females and males are 87.1 percent and 86.3 percent respectively. The group of adults with the lowest rate of functional illiteracy is the 15-19 years group (2.4 percent). A slightly higher proportion of men (2.9 percent) than women (1.9 percent) in this category is functionally illiterate (see [Table 2-2](#)).

### **2.3.5. Distribution by Region**

The distribution of under-educated persons across Canada is uneven. For example, while the national rate of functional illiteracy is 23.7 percent, in Newfoundland it is 34.4 percent and in Alberta, 14.9 percent. At present, the rate of functional illiteracy tends to be slightly higher in the eastern provinces than in the western provinces (see [Table 2-3](#)).

The highest rate of functional illiteracy within the female adult population is found in the Northwest Territories (40.0 percent); followed by Quebec and Newfoundland with 33.3 and 32.6 percent respectively. The lowest rates of functional illiteracy within the female adult population are found in the Yukon Territory (10.9 percent) and Alberta (14.6 percent).

### **2.3.6. Urban/Rural Distribution**

The distribution of under-educated adults in rural and urban areas of Canada is also uneven. In urban Canada, 20.2 percent of the adult population is functionally illiterate; in rural Canada, 28.9 percent. With respect to sex, the rate of functional illiteracy among rural women is lower (27.0 percent) than that among rural men (30.8 percent). The reverse is true, however, in the urban areas where 21.4 percent of women are functionally illiterate compared to 18.9 percent of men (see [Table 2-4](#)).

## **2.4. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF THE FEMALE UNDER-EDUCATE POPULATION**

### **2.4.1. The Total Under-educated Adult Population**

Only 2.4 percent (or 66,545 persons) of the adult under-educated population attend formal educational programs: 1.8 percent in full-time programs and 0.63 percent in part-time programs. These figures are very low in comparison to those for the total adult population in which 17.4 percent attend formal education programs: 11.6 percent full-time and 5.8 percent part-time (see [Table 2-5](#)). However, in both groups, two-thirds of school attenders are in full-time programs.

### **2.4.2. Differences by Sex**

A higher proportion of under-educated men (2.2 percent) than under-educated women (1.4 percent) attend full-time education programs. Comparable figures within the total adult population are 12.4 percent for men and 11.0 percent for women (see [Table 2-5](#)).

Less than 0.6 percent of under-educated men and women participate in part-time programs compared to 5.6 percent of the men and 5.9 percent of the women in the total adult population (see [Table 2-5](#)).

### **2.4.3. Differences by Age**

Within the under-educated adult population, the majority of those who attend full-time programs are in the 15-19 year age group (83.3 percent), although this group represents only 6.3 percent of all functionally illiterate adults. The largest proportion of the functionally illiterate adult population is 35 years and over in age (86.0 percent); yet they represent only 10.9 percent of those attending full-time education programs. The situation is reversed, however, with respect to attendance in part-time programs. Of those who participate in such programs, 59.9 percent are adults 35 years and over, while only 10.9 percent are in the 15-19 year age group (see [Table 2-5](#)).

Among those who are 15-19 years and who are both under-educated and attending school full-time, 60.9 percent are men and 39.1 percent are women.; among those who attend part-time, 59.1 percent are men and 40.1 percent are women Among those who are 35 years and over and who are both under-educated and attending school full-time, 42.9 percent are men and 57.1 percent are women; among those who attend part-time, 21.7 percent are men and 32.8 percent are women (see [Table 2-5](#)).

#### **2.4.4. Differences by Region**

The lowest rate of full-time school attendance within the under-educated population is found in Quebec (1.4 percent). However, with respect to part-time attendance, Quebec has the highest rate (1.4 percent). The Northwest Territories, which have the highest functional illiteracy rate in Canada, also have the highest rate (5.6 percent) of full-time school attendance within their under-educated population ( [see Table 2-6](#)).

#### **2.4.5. Urban/Rural Differences**

Within both rural and urban populations, a slightly greater proportion of adult men attend full-time education programs than do adult women. In the rural areas, 2.2 percent of men with less than grade 9 education attend full-time programs, compared to 1.8 percent of rural women with the same level of education. In urban areas, the comparable figures are 2.1 percent for men and 1.3 percent for women ([see Table 2-7](#)).

Urban women, who have a higher rate of functional illiteracy than urban men, are less likely to attend school than their rural counterparts. Not coincidentally, perhaps, rural women have a lower functional illiteracy rate than rural men ([see Table 2-4](#)).

### **2.5. LABOUR MARKET CONTEXTS OF UNDER-EDUCATED WOMEN**

The fact that only 2.4 percent of the 3,731,305 functionally illiterate adults in Canada attend education programs is problematic. It is through such programs that they could upgrade their level of education. This problem is emphasized among functionally illiterate women, of whom only 2.0 percent attend education programs, compared to 2.8 percent of functionally illiterate men.

The low school attendance of functionally illiterate women is a problem for a variety of reasons. This problem can be defined from political, economic, psychological and moral perspectives, among others. In this chapter, an economic perspective is utilized.

#### **2.5.1. Labour Force Participation and Income of Under-educated Women**

Over half a million women with less than grade 9 education are in the labour force. These women represent 26.9 percent of the female adult under-educated population, and 10.4 percent of the total female labour force. Over one million men with less than grade 9 education are in the labour force. This number represents 63.3 percent of the male under-educated population and 15.2 percent of the total male labour force ([see Table 2.8](#)).

Under-educated persons are faced with a labour market in which the jobs requiring low levels of educational attainment also pay very low wages. The average employment income of women with less than grade 9 education is \$7,022. This is only 49.5 percent of the average employment income of males with the same level of education (see [Table 2.9](#)). The average employment income of all women who worked in 1980 was only \$8,863 or 52.9 percent of the average employment income of all men who worked in 1980 (see [Table 2-9](#)). The difference between the income of under-educated women and men is dramatic. While under. educated women and men have attained similar levels of education, men earn twice as much as their female counterparts.

The narrowing of the male-female income gap for higher levels of educational attainment is minimal. Women with more than grade 9 education earned, on average, only 62.5 percent of the average earnings of men with less than grade 9 education (see [Table 2-9](#)). Clearly, the debate about sex-linked income differences cannot be linked to lack of educational attainment but must be linked to sexual discrimination and lack of equal opportunity for women in the labour force.

Women who work outside the home experience more than low wages. They are faced with an essentially segregated labour market in which the demand for the type of work traditionally done by women in the labour force - clerical, sales and service-oriented work - is declining. This change is accompanying the application of micro-technology to the work place. Moreover, the employment growth rate in the service sector - the main locus of the female labour force -- is expected to decline in the late 1980's and throughout the 1990's. These phenomena have been well documented elsewhere (Dodge, 1981; Menzies, 1981).

Automotive technology is doing more than decreasing the demand for human labour in production and for traditionally female jobs. It is simultaneously "de-skilling" many jobs (i.e., simplifying jobs so that they require fewer skills on the part of the workers) and creating new types of jobs which require high levels of skills and knowledge, and concomitantly, higher levels of educational attainment. Workers in the de-skilled jobs are predominantly female and often experience a decline in their wages through reclassification, shorter work hours, and part-time work status. Current evidence suggests that under-educated women are most likely to be among those relegated to the de-skilled and low-paying jobs. The upgrading and retraining of women for entry into those occupations for which there will be a growing demand has become a critical concern. All of this is occurring at a time when "sixty percent of women work because they have to. They are either living alone, single parents, or married to someone who earns less than \$1 a year."<sup>7</sup>

Despite dramatically lower wages, the female labour force is increasing rapidly. The Dodge Report (1981) predicts that the overall growth in the labour force will slow down in the next decade due to a decline in skilled immigrants, the aging of Canada's skilled labour force and lower birth rates (see Table 2-10). Two-thirds of the people who will be added to the labour force will be women. Dodge also predicts that by 1990 over 75 percent of women between the age of 25 and 54 years will be in the labour force. Another source (Menzies, 1981) forecasts that the female labour force is likely to increase by at least 40 percent by 1990 -- an additional 1.8 million women. By the year 2000, the labour force participation rate of women is expected to approach that of men (Dodge, 1981; Economic Council of Canada, 1982).

The Economic Council of Canada (1982) has pointed out that while the proportion of women between 15 and 24 years in clerical occupations has declined continuously from 1975 onwards, the growth rate of this age group is also decreasing. The members of the 1950's and 1960's baby boom population have now entered or are entering the labour market and the number of women between 25 and 44 years of age is increasing within the labour force. Furthermore, "the occupational distribution of women aged 25-44 reveals a virtually constant proportion in clerical occupations."<sup>8</sup>

This has led the Economic Council of Canada to conclude that rapid increases in the labour force of women 25-44 years of age, in conjunction with declines among women 15-24 years of age, will lead to:

...an even greater concentration of women in clerical occupations over the projection period, reaching 80.5 percent in 1985. In other words, because of demographic factors, occupational segregation by sex is likely to get worse before it gets better.<sup>9</sup>

It is therefore imperative for women in the labour force to move away from traditional female, occupations and into those for which there is a growing demand. This imperative applies especially to women between 25 and 44 years. To make this shift, women must be retrained for entry into male-dominated occupations.

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<sup>6</sup>Automotive technology. is defined as self-activating. technology such as electronic computers, robots, automated offices, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Joan Brown, Hicks. "Brief to the Commission of Inquiry into Part-time Work". paper prepared for the Nova Scotia Committee of CLOW. Halifax. September 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Heather Menzies. Women and the Chip. Montreal. The institute for Research on Public Policy. 1981. p.76.

<sup>9</sup>Economic Council of Canada. In Short Supply: Jobs and Skills in the 1980's. Ottawa, Supply and Services Canada, 1982. P.35

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p.40

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

## **2.5.2. Skilled Labour Needs of Canadian Industries**

In the late 1970's, the Economic Council of Canada carried out a Human Resources Survey. One of the objectives of this survey was to outline the dimensions of skill shortages in Canada and to seek information from the companies surveyed about their efforts to provide the skills needed in both the present and future. An important finding of the survey was that when skill shortages were considered by industrial sector, shortages of skilled workers were most prevalent in mining and manufacturing. The Human Resources Survey found that, for five trades, shortages were cited more often than for any other occupation in the labour market. These five trades were: machinery mechanics, machinists, motor vehicle mechanics, welders, and tool and die makers.<sup>10</sup>

In 1979, the Machinery and Equipment Manufacturers Association of Canada reported that 86 percent of its member companies were experiencing difficulties in obtaining journeymen. "At the top of the list of trades in demand were machinists and fitters/millwrights. Seventy percent of the 'hard-to-fill' vacancies involved the electrical, millwright, heavy duty mechanic, welder, and diesel mechanic trades."<sup>11</sup>

When considered by occupation, the greatest shortage of skills was found to be in processing occupations and, to a lesser degree, in managerial and professional positions. Processing occupations are those which are involved with "machining, product fabricating, and repairing and a variety of other tasks associated with transforming raw materials into semi-finished and finished goods."<sup>12</sup> Within the processing occupations, the critical shortages are within the skilled manufacturing trades. Within the managerial and professional occupations, the skill shortages are most critical in the scientific and engineering fields (see [Table 2- 11](#)).

Both the Dodge Report (1981) and the Allmond Task Force Report (1981), background reports for the federal government's National Training Program, re-iterated the findings of the Human Resources Survey. The Allmond Report added nursing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy to its list of occupations with critical skill shortages.

At least three observations can be made from the above articulation of skill shortages in the Canadian economy. First, the majority of the occupations which are perceived as having a shortage of skilled workers are technical and, therefore, traditionally male-dominated occupations. Second, basic science skills, especially in mathematics and physics, are necessary for the acquisition of the specific skills in many of these technical occupations. Third, a (functional) prerequisite for the attainment of these basic science skills is the prior attainment of at least functional literacy skills.

Under-educated women, therefore, are triply disadvantaged with respect to entry into those non-traditional occupations for which demand is growing. First, as functionally illiterate persons, they lack the basic skills to understand the technical and scientific aspects of the jobs. Second, as women, they have been conditioned by the educational system to avoid traditionally male occupations. Third, they have often been discouraged from obtaining the scientific and mathematics education which is necessary for their entry into training programs for these occupations.

If the economic position of under-educated women is to improve, they must have access to a greater variety of occupational opportunities. To accomplish this, they need opportunities to be retrained for entry into non-traditional occupations for which there is growing demand. Prior to occupational retraining, women need to become functionally literate and to learn basic mathematics and science. Then they can be trained for the acquisition of job-specific skills for non-traditional occupations.

Women need to be informed about non-traditional jobs and about where such jobs can be found. They also need opportunities to increase their confidence in their ability to do these jobs. They need financial and childcare support services until they can enter the labour force. To accomplish this, the providers of educational programs need to offer appropriate support services.

### **2.5.3. The Federal Response to the Skills Training Needs of Women and of Canadian Industries**

Any National Training Program offered by the federal government should address the skill training needs of under-educated women. However, the existing National Training Program has been designed to meet the skilled labour needs of Canadian industries at the lowest cost.

The major purpose of the federal government's National Training Program is, in the words of a ministerial press release of January 6, 1982, "to overcome skill shortages, accelerate economic growth and development, and facilitate industrial adjustment."<sup>13</sup> In a background report on the National Training Program prepared for CLOW, Heather Henderson (1982) shows that the National Training Program focuses primarily on meeting the skills needs of industry, and ignores, or rather neglects, the needs of the unemployed, women, and minority groups.

The approach of the new program seems to be very employer-oriented: it is designed to provide trained workers to meet the employment needs of industry - instead of addressing the employment/unemployment needs of the 1980's it addresses the problems of industrial employers and attempts to meet their skill requirements.<sup>14</sup>

The list of occupations in which the federal government foresees the greatest skill shortages are mainly technical occupations. Included in this list are technicians, electricians, machinists, tool and die makers, and workers in computer science. Clearly, the National Training Program is directed largely at skill shortages in those industrial occupations to which women have traditionally had least access. Notably missing from the government's list of occupations with critical skills shortage, are the (traditionally female) nursing and rehabilitation occupations, which are also in high demand.

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<sup>13</sup> A quoted in Heather Henderson, The National Training Act: A Background Paper. Toronto, Canada Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1982, p.1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.19.

<sup>15</sup> Heather Henderson. The National Training Act: Its Impact on Women. Toronto. Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women. 1984. p.36.

The federal government wants to produce skilled workers at the lowest cost. Consequently, its programs are aimed at those persons who can be trained immediately -- those who are already literate and those who possess basic science skills. Clearly, under-educated women are not preferred clients for the training programs (see [Tables 2-13 and 2-14](#)).

It is no coincidence, therefore, that the federal government is rapidly phasing out Basic Training for Skills Development (BTSD) programs below the grade seven level and that the number of trainees in these programs is decreasing (see [Table 2-12](#)). BTSD programs are basically upgrading and life skills programs which allow participants to complete those elementary and secondary school skills required for further occupational training. Substituting for the lower grade BTSD programs are Basic Job Readiness Training (BJRT) programs which are oriented more toward providing job search skills than academic skills.

It is also no coincidence that the number of women trainees funded under the National Training Program is declining. Moreover, the majority of the trainees in the general, non-job-specific training programs are women; and even in these programs, the number of women trainees is declining (see [Tables 2-13 and 2-14](#)).



One of the goals of the National Training Program is to increase the participation rate of female trainees to 42 percent overall and to 30 percent in non-traditional areas. Given the lack of emphasis on scientific training in the education of women and systemic sexual discrimination in all areas of society, these goals are not being met. Moreover, the number and proportion of women trainees have declined in all areas of institutional and industrial training. In institutional training programs, the participation rate for women trainees has declined from 29.2 percent in 1981/82 to 25.7 percent in 1982/83, and in the industrial training programs, from 27.1 percent in 1981/82 to 22.7 percent in 1982/83 (see Table 2-13). Furthermore, the number of women in WINTO (Women in Non-Traditional Occupations) programs declined in every province from 1981 to 1983. In 1981/82, there was a total of 2,192 trainees in the WINTO programs. By 1982/83, this figure had dropped to 1,226 ([see Table 2-14](#)).

In her examination of the National Training Program, Henderson (1984) found that:

...although women generally do not enter the National Training Program with less education than men, they generally tend to lack in those areas of expertise most needed to get a non-traditional job; e.g., maths and science credits for computer technology, or practical experience with simple mechanics, tools, etc.<sup>15</sup>

Henderson subsequently concluded that there is a need for "bridging" programs for women, particularly in the areas of pre-trades and pre-tech programs in which they could acquire at least some training in basic mathematics and sciences, particularly in physics.

To acquire the basic science skills necessary for participation in the technical training programs, persons must be at least functionally literate. Under-educated women, therefore, cannot take advantage of pre-tech or pre-trade training programs. Before they can enter these "bridging" programs, they must first become functionally literate.

It has been shown that 24.1 percent of the adult female population in Canada is functionally illiterate, and that only 2.0 percent of these under-educated women attend full-time education programs. It has also been shown that under-educated women need to attain not only functional literacy skills, but also technical literacy skills, particularly in mathematics and physics. This implies that education programs for under-educated women must include more than literacy, numeracy and life skills training. They must also include basic education in science. Most importantly, ABE programs for under-educated women should aim to inform women about non-traditional occupations and to give them the confidence to train for, and enter into, these occupations.

Job-oriented ABE programs would help to bridge the gap between under-educated women and the National Training Program, and indeed, any program through which they could acquire the skills for entry into non-traditional occupations. Without this bridge, under-educated women seem destined for a life of poverty and passive citizenship.

#### **2.5.4. Increasing Women's Participation in Educational and Job-Training Program**

The above discussion of the labour market and National Training Program contexts for functionally illiterate women show clearly that efforts must be made by government to increase the participation of women in educational and job-training programs. This increase refers not only to the number of women in these programs but also to the number of programs provided. Both must be increased. An indicator of the inadequacy of the current number of ABE programs available is the minute proportion of the educational budget that is allotted to adult education in general, an even smaller proportion of which goes to literacy (CAAE, 1982).

Another important ingredient in the process of increasing the participation of under-educated women in educational and job-training programs is a system of support services for them. The purposes of such a system are to attract women into the programs, to enable them to remain in the program until completion, and to provide them with information which they can use to identify and set goals and make plans for their future activities. Consequently, any support system for under-educated women attending programs outside their homes must address at least the questions discussed in the following sections.

1. How can under-educated women be informed about, and encouraged to participate in, educational programs developed for them?

This question requires extensive knowledge about the ways through which under-educated women acquire knowledge from their environment. For example, educators should be aware that the medium most often used by these women is their own knowledge networks: relatives, friends, social workers, offspring.

2. What do under-educated women - once informed about and willing to participate in educational programs -- need to physically enter the programs?

This question is one that requires practical, concrete answers and funding sources. Funds are needed for local transportation, fees (if the program is not offered free of charge), textbooks, and other learning materials. For women with children, attendance at educational programs demands that they secure childcare services for their children while they are away from home.

3. Once in the programs, what do under-educated women need to enable them to remain in the programs?

The third question is one of maintenance -- maintaining women's participation in the programs. To a large extent this maintenance is dependent upon the student-teacher relationship, the relevance of the curriculum to the student's life, the method of teaching, events in the student's personal or family life, among other things. Most important to maintaining women's participation in the programs is the women's perception of

themselves as learners and of their opportunities in society upon completion of their studies. In other words, their motivation to learn will be affected by their confidence in their ability to learn what is being taught and their perceptions about how their lives will improve as a result of their studies.

4. Upon completion of the programs, what do under-educated women need in order to apply what they have learned for the improvement of their lives?

This question is best answered by women students who are attending particular programs. Some of them may wish to continue their learning in other programs and will need information about other learning opportunities. Others may wish to go immediately into the labour force. For these women, career counselling is an essential service. They may need information about their rights as workers, about unions, about the variety of occupations now available to women, about job training programs. More concretely, they may need direct assistance in finding jobs .

In the foregoing discussion of support services for under-educated women in educational programs, suggestions about the types of services to be provided, how, by whom, and so on were not put forward. Instead, an analysis of some of the issues involved in developing a system of support services for under-educated women was offered. CCLOW has taken this position because it is not a direct service organization and does not have the expertise to provide concrete, practical suggestions for the development of such systems. Indeed, such suggestions must come from those directly involved in the provision of educational programs for functionally illiterate women -- students, instructors, counsellors and administrators. The views of some of these persons are presented later in this report.

## 2.6. CONCLUSION

Three points have been raised in this chapter which relate to functional illiteracy within the adult female population in Canada. First, the issue of functional illiteracy is an extremely complex one, involving economic, political and ideological causes at both the national and international levels. Consequently, the approach to the elimination of illiteracy among women must be comprehensive in perspective and global in scope. Second, in Canada, measures must be taken by government to increase the participation of under-educated women in education programs, These programs should aim to give women a basic education that provides more than skills in the three "R's", This basic education must also prepare women to take the science and mathematics courses which are required for admission into training programs in those technical occupations for which there is growing economic demand in Canada. Third, to facilitate an increase in the participation of under-educated women in educational programs, a system of support services must be developed for the women through which they can be enabled to enter and remain in the programs, and to have a sense of direction upon completion.

**Table 2.1:** Distribution of Total Population, 15 years and over, with less than Grade 9 Education, by Sex and Age.  
Canada 1981.

TOTAL POPULATION		POPULATION WITH LESS THAN GRADE 9			
Group	Number	Number	% of Group	Distribution in Group	Distribution within Total
<u>All Ages</u>					
Total	18,609,285	3,731,305	20.1 %		100.0%
Male	9,151,600	1,796,045	19.6%	48.1%	
Female	9,457,690	1,935,260	20.5%	51.9%	
<u>15-19 years</u>					
T	2,303,580	146,140	6.3%		3.9%
M	1,175,100	87,030	7.4%	59.5%	2.3%
F	1,128,480	59,110	5.2%	40.5%	1.6%
<u>20-24 years</u>					
T	2,334,420	106,640	4.5%		2.8%
M	1,166,870	59,630	5.1%	55.9%	1.6%
F	1,167,550	47,005	4.0%	44.1%	1.2%
<u>25-34 years</u>					
T	4,199,975	315,995	7.5%		8.4%
M	2,094,235	150,935	7.2%	47.7%	4.0%
F	2,105,145	165,060	7.8%	52.3%	4.4%
<u>35-44 years</u>					
T	2,956,785	519,865	17.6%		13.9%
M	1,489,645	252,885	16.9%	48.6%	6.8%
F	1,467,145	260,980	18.2%	51.4%	7.1%
<u>45-54 years</u>					
T	2,487,420	739,585	29.7%		19.8%
M	1,249,655	370,275	29.6%	50.1%	9.9%
F	1,237,770	369,315	29.8%	49.9%	9.9%
<u>55-64 years</u>					
T	2,142,485	795,930	37.1%		21.3%
M	1,021,430	378,820	37.1%	47.6%	10.1%
F	1,121,055	417,115	29.8%	52.4%	11.2%
<u>65 years and over</u>					
T	2,184,620	1,107,155	50.6%		29.6%
M	954,670	496,470	52.0%	44.8%	13.3%
F	1,229,950	610,680	49.6%	55.2%	16.3%

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 Census of Canada, Population Statistics. Catalogue 92-914. Volume 1, Table 3.

**Table 2-2:** Distribution of Out-of-school Population, 15 years and over, with less than Grade 9 Education, by Sex and Province. Canada 1981.

TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION WITH LESS THEN GRADE 9			
	Number	Number	% of Total Population	Male/Female Distribution
<u>Canada</u>				
Total	15,361,855	3,641,315	23.7%	
Male	7,505,740	1,745,910	23.3%	47.9%
Female	7,856,120	1,895,410	24.1%	52.1%
<u>Newfoundland</u>				
T	337,755	116,305	34.4%	
M	168,585	61,110	36.2%	52.5%
F	169,175	55,190	32.6%	47.50%
<u>Prince Edward Island</u>				
T	76,065	20,715	27.20%	
M	37,590	12,490	33.2%	60.0%
F	38,475	8,220	21.4%	40.0%
<u>Nova Scotia</u>				
T	541,890	124,485	22.9%	
M	263,840	68,535	25.9%	55.0%
F	278,050	55,955	20.1 %	45.0%
<u>New Brunswick</u>				
T	440,180	140,100	31.8%	
M	214,930	73,925	34.4%	52.8%
F	225,255	66,175	29.4%	47.2%
<u>Quebec</u>				
T	4,103,020	1,288,005	31.4%	
M	1,985,110	583,240	29.4%	45.30%
F	2,117,910	704,770	33.3%	54.7%
<u>Ontario</u>				
T	5,414,515	1,135,990	20.9%	
M	2,620,765	531,440	20.3%	46.8%
F	2,793,755	604,445	21.6%	53.2%
<u>Manitoba</u>				
T	656,430	165,320	25.2%	
M	319,070	82,495	25.8%	49.9%
F	337,360	82,820	24.5%	50. 1%
<u>Saskatchewan</u>				
T	607,215	160,155	26.4%	
M	304,090	85,170	28.0%	53.2%
F	303,125	74,980	24.5%	46.8%

<u>Alberta</u>				
T	1,385,670	206,775	14.9%	
M	701,505	106,720	15.2%	51.6%
F	684,165	100,055	14.6%	48.4%
<u>British Columbia</u>				
T	1,758,930	271,630	15.4%	
M	869,000	134,550	15.5%	49.5%
F	889,925	137,085	15.4%	50.5%
<u>Yukon Territory</u>				
T	14,385	1,990	13.8%	
M	7,620	1,165	15.3%	58.5%
F	6,765	735	10.9%	41.5%
<u>Northwest Territories</u>				
T	25,800	9,955	38.5%	50.9%
M	13,635	5,075	37.2%	49.1%
F	12,165	4,875	40.0%	

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 Census of Canada, Population Statistics. Catalogue 92-914, Volume 1, Table 8.

**Table 2-3:** Distribution of Out-of-school Population, 15 years and over, with less than Grade 9 Education, by Sex and Age. Canada 1981.

	TOTAL POPULATION		MALE		FEMALE	
<u>Canada</u>						
Total out. of-school population						
	15,361,855	100.0%	7,505,740	48.8%	7,856,120	51.2%
Total with less than Grade 9 Education						
	3,641,315	100.0%	1,745,910	47.9%	1,895,410	52.1%
<u>Age Groups</u>						
15-19 years	88,150	2.40%	51,715	2.9%	36,435	1.9%
20-24 years	102,815	2.8%	557,485	3.2%	45,335	2.3%
25-34 years	309,145	8.4%	147,760	8.4%	161,390	8.5%
35 years +	3,141,205	86.3%	1,488,955	85.2%	1,652,250	87.1%

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 Census of Canada, Population Statistics. Catalogue 92-914, Volume 1, Table 8. 4 .

**Table 2-4:** Rural-Urban Distribution of Population, 15 years and over, with less than Grade 9 Education, Not Attending School Full-time.  
Canada 1981.

TOTAL POPULATION		POPULATION WITH LESS THAN GRADE 9			
Group	Number	Number	% of Group	Distribution in Group	Distribution within Total
<u>Canada</u>					
Total	16,438,470	3,664,760	22.3%		100.0%
Male	8,021,300	1,757,135	21.9%	47.9%	
Female	8,417,165	1,907,625	22.6%	52.1%	
<u>Urban</u>					
T	12,607,940	2,554,090	20.2%		69.7%
M	6,035,695	1,144,890	18.9%	44.8%	31.2%
F	6,572,245	1,409,205	21.4%	55.2%	38.4%
<u>Rural</u>					
T	3,830,530	1,110,665	28.9%		30.3%
M	1,985,610	612,250	30.8%	55.1%	16.7%
F	1,844,925	498,425	27.0%	44.9%	13.6%

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 Census of Canada, Population Statistics. Catalogue 92-914, Volume 1, Table 1.

**Table 2- 5 : Distribution of In school Population, 15 years and over, with less than Grade 9 Education, by Sex and Type of School Attendance  
Canada 1981**

<u>TOTAL POPULATION</u>	<u>FULL-TIME SCHOOL ATTENDERS</u>				<u>PART-TIME SCHOOL ATTENDERS</u>					
	Group	Number	Number	% of Group	Distribution in Group	Distribution within Total	Number	% of Group	Distribution in Group	Distribution within Total
<hr/>										
<u>Total Population (all ages)</u>										
Total	18,609,285	2,170,820	11.6%	100.0%			1,076,610	5.8%	100.0%	
Male	9,151,600	1,130,300	12.4%	52.0%			515,560	5.06%	47.8%	
Female	9,457,690	1,040,520	11.0%	48.0%			561,050	5.9%	51.2%	
<u>Population with less than grade 9 education (all ages)</u>										
T	3,731,305	66,545	1.8%	100.0%			23,440	0.6%	100.0%	
M	1,796,045	38,910	2.2%	58.5%			11,230	0.6%	47.9%	
F	1,935,260	27,635	1.4%	41.5%			12,215	0.6%	52.1%	
<u>15-19 years</u>										
T	146,140	55,425	37.9%	100.0%	83.3%		2,570	1.7%	100.0%	10.9%
M	87,030	33,80	38.8%	60.9%	50.8%		1,520	1.7%	59.1%	6.5%
F	59,110	21,630	36.6%	39.10%	32.5%		1,045	1.8%	40.9%	44%
<u>20-24 years</u>										
T	106,640	1,705	1.6%	100.0%	2.5%		2,125	2.0%	100.0%	9.1%
M	59,60	995	1.7%	58.3%	1.5%		1,155	1.0%	54.3%	4.9%
F	47,05	700	1.5%	41.7%	1.0%		970	2.0%	45.7%	4.2%
<u>25-34 years</u>										
T	315,995	2,145	0.7%	100.0%	3.2%		4,710	1.5%	100.0%	20.1%
M	150,935	990	0.6%	46.1%	1.5%		2,190	1.4%	46.5%	9.3%
F	165,060	1,150	0.7%	53.9%	1.7%		2,525	1.5%	43.5%	10.8%
<u>35 years and over</u>										
T	3,162,535	7,290	0.2%	100.0%	10.9%		14,045	0.4%	100.0%	59.9%
M	1,498,450	3,130	0.2%	42.9%	4.7%		6,360	0.4%	45.3%	27.1%
F	1,664,090	4,160	0.2%	57.1%	6.2%		7,675	0.4%	54.7%	32.8%

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 Census of Canada, Population Statistics. Catalogue 92-914, volume 1, Table 8.



**Table 2- 6:** School Attendance for Population, 15 years and over, with less than Grade 9 Education, by Sex and Province. Canada 1981.

Group	TOTAL POPULATION WITH LESS THAN GRADE 9 EDUCATION Number	SCHOOL ATTENDERS			
		FULL-TIME Number	% of Group	PART-TIME Number	% of Group
<u>Canada</u>					
Total	3,731,305	66,545	1.8%	23,440	0.6%
Male	1,796,045	2,235	38,910	11,230	0.6%
Female	1,935,260	27,635	1.4%	12,215	0.6%
<u>Newfoundland</u>					
T	120,755	4,090	3.4%	365	0.3%
M	63,875	2,515	3.9%	245	0.4%
F	56,880	1,575	2.7%	115	0.2%
<u>Prince Edward Island</u>					
T	21,370	580	2.7%	80	0.3%
M	12,950	405	3.1%	55	0.4%
F	8,425	175	2.1%	25	0.3%
<u>Nova-Scotia</u>					
T	130,340	5,470	4.2%	390	0.3%
M	71,190	3,185	4.4%	190	0.3%
F	58,440	2,285	3.9%	195	0.3%
<u>New Brunswick</u>					
T	143,955	3,310	2.3%	550	0.4%
M	76,480	2,235	2.9%	320	0.4%
F	67,475	1,065	1.6%	225	0.4%
<u>Quebec</u>					
T	1,315,520	18,615	1.4%	8,895	1.4%
M	597,560	10,210	1.7%	4,110	0.7%
F	717,960	8,405	1.2%	4,780	0.7%
<u>Ontario</u>					
T	1,160,335	17,580	1.5%	6,865	0.6%
M	544,860	10,370	1.9%	3,050	0.5%
F	615,470	7,205	1.2%	3,820	0.6%

<u>Manitoba</u>						
T	169,360	3,335	1.9%	710	0.4%	
M	84,835	1,970	2.3%	370	0.4%	
F	84,520	1,360	1.6%	335	0.4%	
<u>Saskatchewan</u>						
T	164,615	3,485	2.1%	975	0.6%	
M	87,835	2,080	2.3%	580	0.6%	
F	76,775	1,405	1.8%	390	0.5%	
<u>Alberta</u>						
T	212,645	4,415	2.1%	1,460	0.7%	
M	110,130	2,615	2.4%	795	0.7%	
F	102,515	1,800	1.8%	665	0.6%	
<u>British Columbia</u>						
T	279,655	4,965	1.7%	3,055	1.1%	
M	138,930	2,940	2.1%	1,435	1.1%	
F	140,725	2,025	1.4%	1,615	1.1%	
<u>Yukon Territory</u>						
T	2,125	105	4.9%	25	1.2%	
M	1,260	80	6.3%	20	1.6%	
F	860	25	2.9%	***	****	
<u>Northwest Territories</u>						
T	10,630	595	5.6%	65	0.6%	
M	5,415	300	5.5%	25	0.5%	
F	5,220	300	5.7%	45	0.9%	

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Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 Census of Canada, Population Statistics. Catalogue 92-914, Volume 1, Table 8.

Table 2-7 Distribution of Population 15 years and over, by School Attendance, Sex and Level of Schooling  
Canada 1976 and 1981

1976

**TOTAL POPULATION**      **LESS THAN GRADE 9**      **RATE OF ILLITERACY**  
Number                      %                      Number                      %                      %

<b><u>All Canada</u></b>							
<b><i>Not attending</i></b>	F	7,868,690	90.8%	2,191,165	99.1%	27.8%	
<b><i>full-time</i></b>	M	7,533,340	89.4%	2,185,485	98.7%	29.0%	
<b><i>Attending</i></b>	F	798,220	9.2%	19,620	0.9%	2.5%	
<b><i>full-time</i></b>	M	896,185	10.6%	29,095	1.3%	3.2%	
<b><i>Total</i></b>	F	8,666,910	100%	2,210,790	100%	25.5%	
<b><i>All Canada</i></b>	M	8,429,525	100%	2,214,580	100%	26.3%	

<b><u>Urban Canada</u></b>							
<b><i>Not attending</i></b>	F	6,142,940	90.7%	1,613,770	99.2%	26.3%	
<b><i>full-time</i></b>	M	5,648,660	88.7%	1,435,455	98.7%	25.4%	
<b><i>Attending</i></b>	F	631,330	9.3%	13,630	0.8%	2.2%	
<b><i>full-time</i></b>	M	719,920	11.3%	19,475	1.3%	2.7%	
<b><i>Total</i></b>	F	6,774,270	100%	1,627,395	100%	24.0%	
<b><i>Urban</i></b>	M	6,368,580	100%	1,454,930	100%	22.8%	

<b><u>Rural Canada</u></b>							
<b><i>Not attending</i></b>	F	1,725,755	91.2%	577,405	99.0%	33.5%	
<b><i>full-time</i></b>	M	1,884,675	91.4%	750,030	98.7%	39.8%	
<b><i>Attending</i></b>	F	166,890	8.8%	5,985	1.0%	3.6%	
<b><i>full-time</i></b>	M	176,120	8.6%	9,620	1.3%	5.5%	
<b><i>Total</i></b>	F	1,892,640	100%	583,395	100%	30.8%	
<b><i>Rural Canada</i></b>	M	2,060,945	100%	759,645	100%	36.9%	

1981

**TOTAL POPULATION      LESS THAN GRADE 9      RATE OF ILLITERACY**  
Number                      %                      Number                      %                      %

<b><u>All Canada</u></b>							
<b><i>Not attending</i></b>	F	8,417,165	88.9%	1,907,625	98.6%	22.6%	
<b><i>full-time</i></b>	M	8,021,300	87.6%	1,757,135	97.8%	21.9%	
<b><i>Attending</i></b>	F	1,040,525	11.1%	27,635	1.5%	2.6%	
<b><i>full-time</i></b>	M	1,130,295	12.4%	38,915	2.2%	3.4%	
<b><i>Total</i></b>	F	9,457,690	100%	1,935,260	100%	20.5%	

<b>All Canada</b>	M	9,151,595	100%	1,796,045	100%	19.6%	
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<b>Urban Canada</b>							
<b>Not attending</b>	F	6,572,245	89.0%	1,409,205	98.7%	21.4%	
<b>full-time</b>	M	6,035,695	87.2%	1,144,890	97.9%	18.9%	
<b>Attending</b>	F	812,195	11.6%	18,550	1.3%	2.3%	
<b>full-time</b>	M	887,800	12.8%	25,010	2.1%	2.8%	
<b>Total</b>	F	7,384,440	100%	1,427,760	100%	16.3%	
<b>Urban Canada</b>	M	6,923,495	100%	1,169,900	100%	16.9%	

<b>Rural Canada</b>							
<b>Not attending</b>	F	1,844,925	88.9%	498,425	98.2%	27.0%	
<b>full-time</b>	M	1,985,610	89.1%	612,250	97.8%	30.8%	
<b>Attending</b>	F	228,325	11.1%	9,085	1.8%	4.0%	
<b>full-time</b>	M	242,495	10.9%	13,905	2.2%	5.4%	
<b>Total</b>	F	2,073,255	100%	507,505	100%	24.4%	
<b>Rural Canada</b>	M	2,228,105	100%	626,150	100%	28.1%	

**Table 2- 8:** Distribution of Labour Force with less than Grade 9 Education, by Sex, Canada 1981.

CANADIAN LABOUR FORCE	LABOUR FORCE WITH LESS THAN GRADE 9 EDUCATION			
	Total Labour Force Number	Number with Less Than Grade 9	% of Total Labour Force	Participation Rate of Under-educated
<u>Canada</u>				
Total	12,054,150	1,597,960	13.2%	43.8%
Male	7,155,260	1,087,965	15.2%	62.3%
Female	4,898,890	509,995	10.4%	26.9%

Source: Statistics Canada 1981 Census of Canada, Population Statistics, Catalogue 92-921, Volume 1. Table 4.

**Table 2.9:** Average Earnings of those with less than Grade 9 Education, who worked in 1980, by Sex and Age. Canada 1981.

	CANADA		EARNINGS OF THOSE WITH LESS THAN GRADE 9	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<u>Average Earnings for Total Population</u>				
	\$16,863	\$8,863	\$14,179	\$7,022
<u>By Age Groups</u>				
15-24 years	7,668	5,628	6,700	4,273
25-34 years	17,727	10,233	13,024	6,364
35-44 years	22,331	10,476	15,917	7,260
45-54 years	22,091	10,301	16,140	7,580
55-64 years	19,371	9,781	14,405	7,490
65 years +	11,914	7,015	9,006	5,852

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 Census of Canada, Population Statistics. Catalogue 92-931, Volume 1, Table 1.

**Table 2-10:** Labour Force Growth Rates, by Age-Sex Group,  
Canada 1975-76 to 1980-81 (Actual) and  
1981-82 to 1984-85 (Projected).

	<u>15 - 24 years</u>		<u>25 - 44 years</u>		<u>45 - 64 years</u>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1975-76	0.9%	2.2%	2.8%	5.5%	-0.1%	5.9%
1976-77	3.3%	2.7%	2.4%	6.0%	1.0%	2.4%
1977-78	2.8%	3.7%	2.6%	8.7%	1.3%	3.9%
1978-79	3.5%	4.2%	2.7%	4.9%	0.4%	3.1%
1979-80	1.3%	2.7%	2.6%	6.9%	0.4%	2.7%
1980-81	0.4%	0.4%	3.1%	7.8%	0.4%	2.5%
1981-82	0.3%	-0.1%	3.2%	3.0%	0.7%	4.2%
1982-83	0.9%	-1.4%	3.4%	5.8%	0.8%	3.0%
1983-84	-1.0%	-0.9%	3.1%	6.0%	0.9%	2.9%
1984-85	-1.3%	-1.2%	2.3%	5.6%	0.7%	2.8%
	<u>65 years +</u>		Male	<u>Total</u>		
	Male	Female		Female	Both Sexes	
1975-76	-10.7%	-12.0%	1.2%	4.3%	2.3%	
1976-77	----	6.8%	2.1%	4.1%	2.9%	
1977-78	----	8.5%	2.2%	6.0%	3.7%	
1978-79	3.8%	-3.9%	2.2%	4.2%	3.0%	
1979-80	-0.7%	6.1%	1.6%	4.7%	2.8%	
1980-81	-2.2%	5.8%	1.6%	4.3%	2.7%	
1981-82	4.3%	1.4%	1.9%	2.3%	2.1%	
1982-83	0.5%	3.4%	1.6%	3.1%	2.2%	
1983-84	0.4%	2.6%	1.5%	3.4%	2.3%	
1984-85	0.3%	1.8%	1.0%	3.2%	1.9%	

Source: Data from Statistics Canada and calculations from Economic Council of Canada, "base case" solution of the CANDIDE 2.0 model, September 1981.

**Table 2-11:** Distribution of Job Vacancies by Occupation, Canada, 1977-79 and 1980-84.

	1977-79	1980-84
Managerial and Professional	16.8%	20.2%
Clerical	5.4%	6.6%
Sales	6.0%	5.1%
Service	7.6%	4.8%
Primary	8.8%	13.4%
Processing	42.1 %	40.5%
Construction Trades	5.2%	4.7%
Other Trades, Crafts	5.2%	4.7%

Source: Economic Council of Canada. *In Short Supply: Jobs and Skills in the 1980s*. Ottawa: Economic Council of Canada, 1982, p.39.

**Table 2-12:** Number of Trainees in Basic Training for Skills Development (BTSD) Basic Job Readiness Training (BJRT) and Work Adjustment Training (WAT), 1972-79 and 1981-83.

Year	Trainees
1972-73	55,671
1973-74	52,684
1974-75	47,791
1975-76	45,889
1976-77	44,910
1977-78	43,960
1978-79	39,995
1981-82	28,972
1982-83	28,153

Source: A. Thomas, *Adult Illiteracy in Canada*. 1983.

H. Henderson. *The National Training Act: Its Impact on Women*. 1984



**Table 2-13: Institutional Training - Trainees Started by Training Type and Sex.**

1981-82	Male	Female	Total	% Female
Skills	36,614	23,018	59,632	38.6%
Language	5,662	5,168	10,790	47.9%
BTSD	10,609	10,482	21,091	49.7%
BJRT	3,115	3,686	6,801	54.2%
WAT	634	446	1,080	41.3%
Occupational Orientation	429	2,473	2,902	85.2%
Apprenticeship	58,297	2,052	60,349	3.4%
TOTAL	115,320	47,325	162,645	29.1%

  

1982-83	Male	Female	Total	% Female
Skills	42,980	20,666	63,646	32.5%
Language	7,210	5,959	13,169	45.3%
BTSD	11,161	9,059	20,220	44.8%
BJRT	3,148	3,626	6,774	53.5%
WAT	687	472	1,159	40.7%
Occupational Orientation	587	2,925	3,512	83.3%
Apprenticeship	63,739	2,203	65,942	3.3%
TOTAL	129,512	44,910	174,422	25.7%

  

April/83-Aug/83	Male	Female	Total	% Female
Skills	9,530	3,874	13,404	28.9%
Language	2,570	2,046	4,616	44.3%
BTSD	2,231	1,321	3,552	37.2%
BJRT	688	589	1,277	46.1%
WAT	266	216	482	44.8%
Occupational Orientation	152	708	860	82.3%
Apprenticeship	11,323	626	11,949	5.2%
TOTAL	26,760	9,380	36,140	26.0%

Source: Henderson, 1984.

**Table 2-14: Industrial Training - Trainees Started by Category and Sex.**

1981-82	Male	Female	Total	% Female	W.I.N.T.O. <sup>1</sup>
Special Needs	3,519*	1,618*	5,137	31.5%	149
Unemployed	17,335*	9,090*	26,425	34.4%	1,212
Employment Threatened	258	97	355	27.3%	9
Employed	28,305*	7,524*	35,829	21.0%	822
TOTAL	49,417*	18,329*	67,746	27.1%	2,192

  

1982-83	Male	Female	Total	% Female	W.I.N.T.O. <sup>1</sup>
Special Needs	2,130	1,165	3,475	33.5%	114
Unemployed	10,953	4,067	15,020	27.1%	756
Employment Threatened	1,535	435	1,970	22.1 %	63
Employed	8,868	1,298	10,166	12.8%	293
TOT A L	23,666	6,965	30,631	22.7%	1,226

  

April/83-Aug/83	Male	Female	Total	% Female	W.I.N.T.O. <sup>1</sup>
Special Needs	1,001	428	1,429	30.0%	
Unemployed	3,768	1,352	5,120	26.4%	
Employment Threatened	410	192	602	31.9%	
Employed	2,295	255	2,550	10.0%	
TOTAL	7,474	2,227	9,701	23.0%	

<sup>1</sup>W.I.N.T.O. - Women in Non-Traditional Occupations

\*Estimates only

Source: Henderson, 1984.

# Chapter 3

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of the research was twofold.

1. To Obtain Descriptive Information on the Following Components of ABE Programs in Canada
  - program delivery (including supplementary services);
  - instructors;
  - curriculum; and
  - materials.
2. To Describe the Learning and Related Needs of Women Who Attend ABE programs-As Perceived by the Providers of these Programs and the Women Students of these Programs
  - needs that led to attendance in programs;
  - learning and related needs during program;
  - barriers to regular attendance in program;
  - educational aspirations upon completion of program; and
  - job aspirations upon completion of program.

### 3.2. TYPE OF RESEARCH

Because there has been no previous empirical survey of ABE programs in Canada which addressed itself specifically to the relevance of these programs for women, the present research had to be of the exploratory type. The main objective of the research was to collect information on specific variables and, where possible, to explore for possible relationships among these variables. This type of research does not test hypotheses; but rather, provides information which can be used to develop hypotheses. It gives rise to ideas for further research on the subject under study. Consequently, the information provided in this report is more descriptive than explanatory.

### 3.3. SAMPLE

Two samples were selected:

- Sample of ABE programs in Canada (N =360); and
- Sample of women students in ABE programs in Canada (N =30).

#### 3.3.1. Population

The sample of ABE programs was selected from a population of ABE programs in each province and in the Yukon and Northwest Territories which had two or more of the following characteristics:

- offered to both men and women;
- offered to women only;
- provide education for the acquisition of basic literacy and/or numeracy skills;
- provide education for academic upgrading; and/or
- provide education for life skills training.

Excluded from the sample were English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and programs for handicapped persons.

The student sample was selected from a population of women students, 15 years or older, in those ABE programs selected for the program sample (described above). This sample included women who were attending both full-time and part-time programs. While attempts were made to select both French and English-speaking students for the sample, only English-speaking students were included. No response was received from providers of programs for Francophone with respect to information about particular students who would be willing to be involved in the survey.

### 3.4. METHOD OF SAMPLE SELECTION

Neither the ABE program nor the student samples were selected on a random basis. The most recently updated central directory of ABE programs in Canada was published in 1978, and ABE program directories do not exist in all provinces. Therefore, it was difficult to select random samples. In lieu of ABE directories, the members and affiliates of CLOW, and others on the CLOW mailing list, were asked to identify ABE programs in their areas and, when appropriate, to provide CLOW with sample copies of teacher and student materials and curriculum guides. Where directories were available (in Ontario), programs were selected randomly. A sample of 360 ABE programs was selected (see [Appendix B](#) for the distribution of these programs by province). Responses were received from 106 programs; only 98 of these were used in the study.

The student sample was obtained through written requests to instructors and administrators of ABE programs in the program sample. They were asked to provide the ABE project staff with names, addresses and telephone numbers of those women students who would be willing to be interviewed about their experiences in, and perception of, the programs. Instructors and/or administrators from a total of 55 programs were asked for such information. Responses were received from only seven programs.

Thirty-three women students were identified as willing to take part in the survey. These students were telephoned by the ABE project staff to make arrangements for the interviews. Interviews were conducted with 30 of the 33 students.

### 3.5. DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected on four components of ABE programs and on the learning and related needs of women who attend these programs.

#### **3.5.1. Data on ABE Programs**

Data were gathered to obtain descriptive information on four components of ABE programs in Canada: program delivery, instructors, curriculum, and materials.

#### **Program Delivery (including supplementary services)**

"Program delivery" refers to the way in which the programs are provided. Are they provided, full-time or part-time? When may students enter -- once a year, twice a year? Do they provide support services such as childcare, career counselling, and so on? These are some of the questions that can be asked about the delivery of ABE programs. ( [See Sections A and B](#) of the questionnaire.)

#### **Instructors of ABE programs**

It is not enough to inquire about the way in which programs are provided. One must also seek information about those who directly provide the programs - the instructors, although one might argue that instructors are part of the program delivery model. Given the fact that 52 percent of the under-educated populations are women and that 87 percent of under-educated women are 35 years and over, it was deemed appropriate to ask questions about the sex and age of instructors, and about their training and experience in teaching adults. For example, it was argued in Chapter 1 that under-educated women need to be taught basic science skills. How many ABE teachers have a background in science education?

## **Curriculum**

Curriculum is a term with a variety of meanings; educators are divided with respect to a common definition. For the purposes of this research, "curriculum" was used to refer mainly to the content and focus of the program and to the format in which the content is taught. It also refers to pre-set curriculum such as Laubach, BLADE, LINC, and so on.

## **Materials**

Although it can be argued that the materials used in the provision of an educational program are part of the curriculum, for the purposes of this research, a distinction was made. "Materials" in this study refers mainly to the print and electronic media used by both teachers and students. ( See Section F in the questionnaire.)

### **3.5.2. Data on Learning: and Related Needs of Women in ABE Programs**

Data were gathered to describe the learning and related needs of women who attend ABE programs as perceived by both providers and women students in such programs.

Questions related to:

- needs that led to attendance in program;
- learning and related needs during program;
- barriers to regular attendance in program;
- educational aspirations upon completion of program; and
- job aspirations upon completion of program.

Learning and related needs have been defined as follows:

- Learning needs: requirements, conditions, wants, interests, and/or concerns about which women can secure information, gain experience, develop understanding and/or acquire skills.
- Learning-related Needs: those factors which women require in order to obtain access to, and stay in, learning programs. These can be personal (e.g., self-confidence), social (e.g., transportation, childcare), economic (e.g., fees subsidy), or institutional (e.g., flexible entrance requirements, absence of sexual discrimination).

(See the Interview Schedule in Appendix E for the questions asked of women students about their learning and related needs.)

## **3.6. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS**

Two techniques were employed and, correspondingly, two data collection instruments were used.

<u>Technique</u>	<u>Instrument</u>
Questionnaire administration by mail (to providers of ABE programs)	Partially-closed Questionnaire
Personal interviews (women students of ABE programs)	Interview Schedule

Questionnaires were mailed to 360 providers of ABE programs across Canada (see [Appendix B](#)). Completed questionnaires were returned by 106 providers, a response rate of 29 percent. Of these, 98 were used in the data analysis. The remaining 8 were received too late for inclusion in the analysis.

Personal interviews were conducted with 30 women students, registered in different ABE programs included in the survey sample (see [Appendix C](#)). They were asked questions about their experience in the programs, their learning and related needs, and their view of the extent to which the programs were meeting their needs. The students were interviewed by different persons. Those in Vancouver, British Columbia, and The Pas, Manitoba were interviewed by one staff member of the ABE project. Those in Ontario were interviewed by another staff member of the ABE project. Students in Trail, British Columbia, were interviewed by an affiliate of CCLOW. All of the interviewers had previous training and experience in interviewing. (See Appendix D for a copy of the interview schedule.)

Both the questionnaire and interview schedule were pre-tested with a small group of ABE teachers and students in Toronto.

## Chapter 4

### LEARNING AND RELATED NEEDS OF WOMEN IN ABE PROGRAMS

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the information reported was obtained from providers and women students of ABE programs, about the learning and related needs of women in such programs.

For the purposes of this chapter, the term "providers", which is often used, is defined as:

- those who are directly involved in delivering ABE programs to under-educated individuals (e.g., instructors, counsellors);

- those who are directly involved in administering ABE programs (e.g., administrators, coordinators)

Occasionally in the text, providers are called respondents since they are the ones who responded to the questionnaire.

## 4.2. FINDINGS FROM STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Personal interviews were conducted with 30 women students of ABE programs in British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario. The following is a summary of the information provided by these women about themselves and their learning and related needs.

### 4.2.1. General Information

The data provided in [Table 4-1](#) show that the majority of the women in the sample were white (n= 191, Canadian born (n= 25), married (n= 16), under the age of thirty (n= 17), and had received their childhood education in urban areas (n= 18). The data presented in [Chapter 2](#) show that most functionally illiterate women are over 34 years of age (87.1 percent) and that the rate of functional illiteracy is higher among rural women (27.0 percent) than urban women (21.4 percent).

The majority of the women (n= 19) attended programs on a full-time basis and 24 of the 28 had plans to continue their education. Fourteen of 29 women learned about the program from their informal information network of family and friends, and 13 from persons representative of a formal or institutional information network. The least utilized source of information about ABE programs for the women was advertisements whether written or oral.

Educational attainment among the women ranged from less than grade 5 to grade 12. Of the 25 women who answered questions on educational attainment, 8 reported they had completed grade 8, and 8 reported they had completed grade 9 or higher. The definition of functional illiteracy being used in this report is "less than grade 9 education" ([see Chapter 1](#)). One-third of the sample, therefore, could not be defined as under-educated and a further one-third is part of a borderline group.

**Table 4-1: General Information and Educational Background**

<u>Age</u> (n=30)		
Under 30	16	(53%)
30-40	9	(30%)
40-50	5	
<u>Ethnic Background</u> (n = 29)		
Caucasian	18	



Native	8
Other	3

Birth Place (n=30)

Canada	25
Europe	2
Caribbean Islands	2
Asia	1

Marital Status (n = 30)

Married	15
Single	10
Divorced/Separated	3
Widowed	2

Location of Schooling during Childhood (n =28)

Urban	18
Rural	10

Highest Grade Attained (n=25)

Less than Grade 5	1	
Five	1	
Six	4	
Seven	3	
Eight	8	
Nine	5	
Ten	2	
Twelve	1	("They just passed me all through.")

Student Status (n = 30)

Full-time	19	
Part-time	11	(Day - 3 Evening - 8)

Future Plans for Education (n=28)

Yes	24	(77%)
No	3	
Undecided	1	

Learned About Program (n = 29)

Friend	11
Family	3
Counsellor/Case Worker	8
CEIC	5
Advertisement	2

Two conclusions are possible: either the sample of women students is not representative of women in ABE programs; or the sample is representative of women in ABE programs, but such women are not representative of under-educated women. Data provided in Section 2.4 of Chapter 2 and in Section 4.3 of this chapter support the second conclusion.

Table 4-4 indicates that most students enrolled in the ABE program for "upgrading" and "to obtain better jobs". In Chapter 6, data are reported on the definitions used by providers to describe literacy and ABE programs. The reasons for enrolment expressed by the women interviewed seem to correspond most closely to the definition of ABE programs as post-literacy and pre-occupational (see Table 6-10). However, in Table 4-5, the women describe what they would like to be learning as "reading/writing" and "mathematics". These current needs seem to correspond more closely to the definition of literacy programs as basic educational skills, (see Table 6-10). skills which are prerequisites for upgrading to the level required for national training programs and for the training programs themselves.

Further, the needs expressed by the women interviewed for education in reading, writing and mathematics does not seem congruent with the educational attainment levels reported by the women. The expression, "they just passed me through" (see Table 4-1), may explain why so many of the women who were interviewed, in spite of their reported educational attainment, still felt the need for the basic skills which make up the school curriculum up to grade 8. The combination of these data provides further evidence for the unreliability of grade attainment as an accurate measure of functional literacy, and suggest that ABE programs are of two types in which the first, basic education or literacy, is preparatory to the second, post-literacy and pre-occupational, which prepares women for entry to the job market. This point will be discussed in later chapters.

#### **4.2.2. Childcare Responsibilities**

With respect to children, most of the women (n=21) had at least one child, and seventeen had children under twelve years of age (see table 4-2). Only one of these women had a child placed in an institutional childcare facility. Many of the women relied on family members -- frequently a younger sister -- to take care of their children. Native women expressed uneasiness about leaving their children in predominantly non-native childcare facilities. Even those who wished to leave their children in such facilities did not have this opportunity: none of the 5 programs in which students were interviewed had an on-campus or affiliated childcare facility.

#### **4.2.3. Previous and Intended Occupations of Women in ABE Program.**

The past or usual occupations reported by the women could all be classified as semi-skilled or unskilled jobs (see Table 4-3). Of those who had future plans for their education (n=24), 15 planned to enter careers in traditional female occupations (clerical, service-oriented); and 7 to enter careers in non-traditional occupations. Only one student reported any knowledge of the non-traditional training seats available for women in the National Training Program.

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**Table 4.2: Childcare Responsibilities**

<u>Children (n = 30)</u>		
None	9	
Have Children	21	
Children Under Age 12	17	(57%)
<u>Who Cares for Children during School Hours (n = 17)</u>		
Family member	7	
In School	5	
Baby-sitter	2	
Day Care Centre	1	
No Answer	2	

---

#### **4.2.4. Major Needs of Students**

Students identified their most important needs, in order of priority, as educational, self-improvement and job training (see Table 4-4). When asked what prompted them to enroll in the ABE programs, education for upgrading and job training were mentioned as the top two reasons. Self-improvement was the third most frequently cited reason. Most students expressed the opinion that the ABE program which they attended was helping them meet these needs.

In terms of barriers to regular attendance, transportation must be seen as a concern for at least 16 of the women who live more than 15 minutes from the program location. Nine of the 30 women described themselves as "regular tenders". The illness of children was the most frequently cited reason for not attending regularly.

Three-quarters of the women students perceived the needs of women in ABE programs as different from those of men in these programs. This figure should be compared to the responses of providers to the same question (see section 4.3.8).

#### **4.2.5. Students' Perceptions of the Adequacy of the Programs**

Reading, writing and mathematics were the subjects in which most students wished to be taught (see Table 4-5). Throughout the interviews, students frequently mentioned that personal life skills training (assertiveness, independence, confidence training) should be part of ABE programs, particularly for women.

With respect to the way in which they prefer to learn, students expressed a wish for small group and one-to-one teaching formats. The classroom format was among the least preferred. No student mentioned distance education in any form (correspondence, radio or television) as a preferred format. Some students did mention, however, that certain learning formats were more appropriate for particular subjects or activities than other formats.

Many of the women who attended the programs on a full-time basis expressed the wish that study time be offered as part of the school day. The rationale given for this was that family workloads made it difficult for them to find quiet study time in their homes. Twenty-four of the thirty students said that they were learning what they wanted to learn in the programs. They were extremely pleased with the instructors; with the fact that they were treated as adults; and with the self-determined learning pace.

With respect to what they liked least about the programs, two observations are worth noting. First, no student mentioned the absence of child-care facilities on the site of the programs as a problem for them. This may imply that they regard themselves as responsible for securing their own childcare arrangements and/or are satisfied with the arrangements that they have managed to secure. Second, even though 18 of these students were attending the programs full-time and consequently could not work full-time, receive welfare or unemployment insurance benefits, none expressed dissatisfaction with the financial cost of attending the programs. This could be due to the fact that the fees of all but 2 of the students were subsidized by government agencies. When queried for information about their financial situation, however, all but 4 of the students expressed grave concern about these subsidies. The British Columbia students were particularly apprehensive about losing their sponsorship prior to satisfactory completion of their programs.

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**Table 4.3:** Previous and Intended Occupations of Women in ABE Programs

<u>Present Occupation (n = 28)</u>	
Student	19
Homemaker	6
Domestic	2
Chambermaid	2
<u>Past or Usual Occupation (n= 10)</u>	
Retail Clerk	7
Nurse's Aide	4
Kitchen	3
Carwash	2
Office	1
Seamstress	1
Barmaid	1
<u>Future Occupational Plans (n = 24)</u>	
<i>Traditional: 18 of 24(75%)</i>	
Beautician/hairdresser	4
Bookkeeping	3
Office/Steno	2
Journalism	2
Nursing	1
RNA	1
Cook	1
Teacher's Aid	1
Lab	1
Technician	1
Handicapped Helper	1
Other	1
<i>Non-traditional: 6 of 24 (25%)</i>	
Criminology	1
Computer	1
Maintenance	1
Science	1
Electronics	1
Carpentry	1

---

**Table 4- 4: Major Needs of Students**

<u>Distance to School (n=28)</u>	
Less than 15 minutes	12
Half hour - hour	12
More than one hour	4
<u>Attend on a Regular Basis (n = 10)</u>	
Yes	9
No	1
<u>What Prevents Student from Attending (n = 8)</u>	
Child's Illness	3
Illness Self	2
Money	2
Alcohol	1
<u>Why Student Enrolled(multiple answer permitted)</u>	
Upgrading	17
Obtain Better Jobs	9
Improve Life	6
Life Skills	3
Meet People	2
Learn English	2
Math Improvement	1
(Negative grade and high school experience reported by 7)	
<u>Most Important Needs Now (multiple answer permitted)</u>	
Education	21
Self-improvement	9
Job Training	7
Money	5
Family	5
Relationships	2
Support/Security	1
Learning English	1
"Getting Rid of that Stuck Feeling"	1
<u>Is program Helping? (n = 29)</u>	
Yes	27
"Sort Of"	2
<u>Are Needs of Women and Men Different? (n =30)</u>	
Yes	18
No	6
No Answer	6

**Table 4.5: Students' Perceptions of ABE Programs**

What Student Would Like To Be Learning (multiple answer permitted)

Reading/writing	16	Speaking	3
Math	13	History	2
ABE	7	Confidence	2
Civics	6	Typing	1
Study Skills	6	Computers	1
Science	5	Budgeting	1
Economics	3	Life Skills	---

Are You Learning These? (n = 28)

Yes	24	No	4
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Preferred Learning Format (multiple answer permitted)

Small Group	17	
One-to-one	15	(Many students felt that certain
Classroom	8	(formats were more appropriate
All of the above	2	(for certain subject matter.

What Do You Like Best About Program (multiple answer permitted)

Instructors	16	Stimulation	4
Treated As Adult	8	Meet People	2
Pace of Program	10	Math	1
Confidence Improving	6	Science	1
People	4	No Opinion	1

Like Least About Program (multiple answer permitted)

Transportation Poor	3	Prejudice	1
Grammar	2	Spelling	1
Physical Education	2	Age Barrier	1
Fear of Tests	2	Far From Home	1
Math	2	Instructor Inaccessible	1
Lack of Childcare	2	Speaking	1
		Nothing	8

What Should Program Do for Women? (multiple answer permitted)

Confidence	7	Funding/Money	2
Childcare	6	Study Skills	1
Independence	5	Speaking Skills	1
Lessen Isolation	5	Counselling	1
Assertiveness	4	Start Women's Group	1
Inspiration	2	Should Do Nothing	7
Transportation	2	No Real Opinion	7
Prepare for Non-Traditional Occupation			2

What Should Be Taught to Women in ABE? (multiple answer permitted)

Assertiveness	8	Self-defence	2
Independence	5	Math & Science	2
Life Skills	3	Law	1
Job Skills	3	ABE	1
Budgeting	3	No Change Needed	5
Re-entry Skills	2	No Answer	6

### 4.3. FINDINGS FROM PROVIDERS' RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRES

#### 4.3.1. Participation of Women in ABE Programs

There seems to be no significant difference between the participation of women and men in ABE programs. Most providers described programs as having fewer than 30 students (see Table 4-6).

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**Table 4-6:** Distribution of Students in ABE Programs by Number and Sex (N=87)

Number of Students	Female	Male
1 - 10	26.4%	28.7%
11- 20	25.3%	19.5%
21-30	16.1%	18.3%
31- 40	5.7%	6.9%
41-50	5.7%	3.4%
51 or more	20.6%	18.4%

---

#### 4.3.2. Age of Women in ABE Programs

Providers reported that more young men than young women attend ABE programs, while more older women than older men attend (see Table 4-7). This finding supports the information in Chapter 2 in which it was shown that the rate of functional illiteracy is lower among older women than among older men (see Table 2-1).

Fewer women in the 20 to 24 year age group seem to be participants in ABE programs. This is not surprising given the fact that women in this age group are the most likely to have infant children. In the 31 to 40 age group, more women than men participate in ABE programs. Women of this age are more likely to have school-age children and to have more time in which to upgrade their education.



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**Table 4-7:** Distribution of Students within ABE Programs by Age and Sex

Age of Students	Distribution of Female Students (85 programs)	Distribution of Male Students (78 programs)
1 -19 years	-----	1.3%
20 - 24 years	29.4%	37.1 %
25 - 30 years	32.9%	34.6%
31 - 40 years	32.9%	21.8%
41 years +	4.7%	5.1%

---

#### **4.3.3. Occupations of Students in ABE Programs**

Multiple responses (174) were given to the question about the occupations of students in ABE programs. Unemployed status among students was prominent with more men unemployed than women. The major occupations of women students were identified as homemaker and service worker (see Table 4-8).

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**Table 4-8:** Distribution of Students in ABE Programs by Occupation and Sex as reported by Providers

Occupation	Female	Male	Total
Clerical	5.3%	1.2%	3.4%
Service	11.8%	8.6%	10.3%
Homemaker	42.0%	-----	22.4%
Factory Worker	2.1%	16.0%	8.6%
Labourer	1.0%	20.9%	10.3%
Farming	----	1.2%	0.6%
Fishing	----	1.2%	0.6%
Unemployed	37.6%	50.6%	43.7%

---

The fact that 80 percent of the responses about women's occupational status described women as not employed in the labour market (homemakers and unemployed students) suggests that the majority of women in ABE programs tend to be economically dependent upon government payments and /or the men in their lives. Both sources of support represent the patriarchal aspects of our society. If psychological dependence is a corollary of economic dependence (Cole Jr., 1975), then it is very probable that women in ABE programs have two distinct needs. First, they need to acquire skills for paid employment. Second, they need to become self-confident, to learn assertiveness, to become self-reliant, and to become their own persons. Related to their need for economic and psychological independence is the need to become aware of the variety of roles and opportunities for women in society, and of their right to these.

#### **4.3.4. Major Needs of Women in ABE Programs**

Providers were asked to identify the major needs of women in ABE programs. Multiple responses (168) were received. Educational and psychological needs received the highest number of responses, followed by financial needs (see [Table 4-4](#)).

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**Table 4-9:** Distribution of Responses about Major Needs of Women in ABE Programs (N = 168)

Major Needs	% of Responses
Educational	32.0%
Psychological	29.0%
Financial	14.0%
More choices	8.0%
Life planning	8.0%
Childcare	5.0%
Domestic	2.0%
Other	2.0%

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Given the economic and psychological dependence of women, it is not surprising that educational and psychological needs are perceived as the most major for them. By placing financial needs below these two, providers have implied that educational and psychological needs are more important than financial needs.

Providers have placed women's needs. for awareness of more choices in their lives ahead of their need for childcare. This perception suggests that providers are concerned mainly with increasing the knowledge base of their students and with improving their competence in managing their lives in society. Providers do not appear as concerned about the personal responsibilities of individuals (such as caring for children in the home). Yet, as shown in Table 4-9, these responsibilities can interfere with women's regular attendance in programs, and hence, with their access to the knowledge provided by the ABE programs.

#### **4.3.5. Barriers to Women's Regular Attendance in ABE Programs**

Providers were asked to identify the factors which were most often responsible for women not being able to attend the programs on a regular basis. Multiple responses (161) were given. The greatest number of responses referred to lack of childcare arrangements as the major factor (see Table 4-10). This is surprising given the fact that only 5 percent of the responses about the needs of women reported childcare arrangements as the major need of women in ABE programs. Only 2 out of 73 respondents said that there were no women in the programs with children under 12 years old; while 39 (53.4 percent) identified one to ten such women in each program as having children under age 12, and 32 (43.8 percent) identified 11 or more such women in each program (see Table 4-11)

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**Table 4.10: Barriers to Women's Regular Attendance at ABE Programs (N = 161)**

Barriers	% of Responses
Lack of childcare	26.0%
Lack of money	17.0%
Domestic problems	16.0%
Illness - children	14.0%
Illness - women	13.0%
Personal	8.0%
Job hunting	4.0%
Bureaucracy	1.0%
Lack of interest	1.00%

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**Table 4-11:** Distribution of ABE Programs by Number of Women with Children under 12 years IN (=73)

Number of Women with Children under 12	% of Programs
None	2.7%
1-10	53.4%
11-20	19.2%
21-30	10.9%
31 or more	13.7%

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This finding supports the position that those who are responsible for providing educational opportunities for women must address the personal needs of women in a tangible way, if the programs are to be truly accessible to women.

Over one-quarter of providers identified illness among women students and/or their children as a barrier to regular attendance in the programs. To help women deal with their family concerns, ABE programs could include classes in nutrition, hygiene, and health care.

The need for personal counselling is clear; 24 percent of the responses given reported women as having domestic and personal problems. It is extremely difficult for women who are economically and psychologically dependent on men in their homes to stand up for themselves. Very often, they have few alternatives but to stay and take the ill treatment given them in their homes. Counselling facilities should be made available to women through which they can learn of their rights and alternatives.

#### **4.3.6. Difference Between the Learning Needs of Women and Men in ABE Programs**

Providers were almost equally divided on the question of whether or not there is a difference between the learning needs of women and men in ABE programs 51 % replied that there was a difference, 49% replied that there was not.

One can still make the argument that the learning needs of women in ABE programs are different from those of men. The earlier discussion of the occupational status of students in ABE programs noted that 42 percent of women in ABE programs were identified as homemakers. Some of these homemakers will be entering the labour force for the first time; others are re-entering after a long period of absence. Clearly, these women need to learn about the labour market; that is, about what jobs are available, what skills are required, what a union is and is not. And, most important, they need to know about their rights as workers and to be confident enough to demand and defend these rights. They need to know how to look for a job, how to prepare a resume, how to present themselves in a job interview situation.

#### **4.3.7. Separate ABE Programs for Women and Men**

Providers were almost unanimous in their opinion about whether or not there should be separate ABE programs for women and men. Of 79 responses received, only 8 responded that there should be separate programs.

Two perspectives can be interpreted from these responses. On the one hand, separate programs would allow women to discuss their psychological and domestic problems within a supportive women's group. It may be recalled that when asked about the needs of women in ABE programs, the providers identified the major ones as educational and psychological needs. They also reported that two of the major barriers to women's regular attendance in the programs were personal and domestic problems. On the other hand, it may be functional for under-educated women to participate in some components of education on an equal basis with men as preparation for the workplace. The women students interviewed in this study clearly provide support for the first perspective (see [Table 4-4](#)).

#### **4.3.8. Do ABE Programs Address the Needs of Women?**

Only 14 percent of the respondents gave a definite "no" to the question: To what extent do you think your program addresses the needs of women?! Thirty-seven percent replied "yes -- a lot" and 49 percent replied "yes -- to some extent."

This question and its answer will be discussed at the end of the report.

#### 4.4. CONCLUSIONS

When analyzed in relation to the learning and related needs of women (as perceived by ABE providers), the information from the student interviews reveals many similarities and several major differences.

Both students and providers seem to agree that the major needs of women are educational, psychological and financial. An interesting similarity between the two sets of answers pertains to the perceptions of childcare services. Few providers mentioned access to childcare services as a major need of women in ABE programs. Yet many mentioned the lack of childcare services as a major barrier to women's regular attendance in a program. Similarly, no student mentioned access to childcare services as a major need in regard to a program; but the lack of access to childcare was seen as a major barrier to regular attendance.

The fact that both women students and ABE providers do not regard childcare as a major need for women in the programs, but as a barrier to regular attendance, suggests very strongly that neither party perceives childcare as an educational or education-related issue. This service seems to be omitted from their perception of what constitutes an educational program. Such an omission can be understood as a product of a male-oriented educational system which is not designed to meet the learning and related needs of women. Practically speaking, men in society are not responsible for the care of children. Thus, it is not surprising that those within the male-oriented educational system - both the producers and the consumers -- do not regard childcare as an education-related issue.

Women students have already secured such services prior to entry to educational programs. However, if for some reason this service becomes unavailable, they have no alternative source for such services. If a child becomes sick, emergency childcare services are unavailable. The solution to this problem lies in redefining and redesigning childcare services to help under-educated women maintain regular attendance in ABE programs.

Another important difference can be found in the differing perceptions of the major occupation of students. Providers described the majority of women students as "homemakers". Only 6 percent of the 30 students described themselves as such. If providers are interacting with women students as if they were homemakers, and only homemakers, then a communication problem may exist. With respect to the perceived learning needs of women in comparison with men, students and providers expressed different opinions. Almost 50 percent of providers perceive no difference between women and men students. However, 75 percent of students who answered the question felt that there was a difference. Noteworthy is the lack of interest in mathematics and science subjects among the students. Results to be reported in Chapter 5 indicate that few providers have a background for teaching science and none mentioned basic science education as a component of their definition of ABE.

## Chapter 5 ABE PROGRAM DELIVERY

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

Two sets of information about ABE programs are provided in this chapter. The first set consists of basic or general information about the programs, their location, who delivers them, whether they are full-time or part-time, and so on. The second set describes the supplementary services provided by the ABE programs. Not all respondents replied to all questions; the number of responses in each category has been specified in the appropriate table.

### 5.2. GENERAL INFORMATION

#### 5.2.1. Type of Programs

The programs described in the returned questionnaires had a wide variety of names, giving the impression that they were very different from each other. Upon closer scrutiny, those with similar names were often found to be quite dissimilar, while those with different names often had similar objectives. Because it was so difficult to organize the programs into types on the basis of their names, the type of a program was determined through an examination of its name, its objectives when stated, and other pertinent clues (see Table 5-1).

#### 5.2.2. Location

Seventy-one percent of the programs are provided in urban areas and 29 percent in rural areas. In urban areas, where more business and industries and government ministries are located, the economic need for functional literacy is greater than in the rural areas. Yet, as was shown in Chapter 2, a lesser proportion of under-educated urban women attend educational programs than do rural under-educated women.

#### 5.2.3. Age of Programs

Only 13 percent of the programs in the sample existed prior to 1970. As many as 32.8 percent have been created since 1981 (see Table 5-2).

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**Table 5-1: Distribution of ABE Programs by Type (N =91)**

Type of Program	% of Programs
Upgrading	22.0%
Reading and Writing Only	20.9%
BJRT, BTSD, Other job training	15.4%
Adult Day School	12.1 %
Reading, Writing and Arithmetic	7.7%
Life Skills	7.7%
ABE (grades 6 - 12)	5.5%
High School Completion	3.3%
ABE (grades 0 - 5)	1.1%
Mathematics only	1.1 %
Career Planning	1.1%
Other	1.1%

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**Table 5-2: Distribution of ABE Programs by Year Program Started (N = 52)**

Year Started	% of Programs
Before 1970	13.0%
1970-1975	17%
1976-1980	36.8%
1981-1984	32.8%

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#### **5.2.4. Who Delivers ABTE Programs**

The majority of the programs in the sample are provided by the public sector (see Table 5-3). The majority of programs in the sample are delivered by community colleges and school boards. These sectors are designed primarily to meet the educational needs of young adults and children respectively. It should be recalled that 87.1 percent of functionally illiterate women are over 34 years of age. Private non-profit organizations are the next most prominent delivery agency for ABE programs in this sample (see Table 5-4).



**Table 5-3: Distribution of ABE Programs by Sector Providing Program (N = 87)**

Sector	% of Programs
Public Sector	77.0%
Private Non-profit	21.8%
Private Profit	1.2%

**Table 5-4: Distribution of ABE Programs by Type of Institution Directly Providing Program (N =83)**

Institution	% of Programs
Community Colleges	52.0%
School Boards	19.3%
Private Non-profit Organizations	22.8%
Libraries	2.4%
Ministries of Education	1.2%
Private Profit Organizations	1.2%
Indian Band Councils	1.2%

### **5.2.5. Duration of Program and Time Offered**

Respondents described the majority of programs as full-time, beginning in the fall and lasting for 10-12 months (see Tables 5-5 and 5-6). The institutions which most frequently provide ABE services to women are organized to offer programs full-time during the day, the same schedule designed to meet the needs of children in elementary-secondary education programs and young adults pursuing post-secondary education programs.

Under-educated women are adults with urgent economic needs and responsibilities. Many of them need to work. It is difficult for them to work full-time (or even part-time), take care of their children, and go to full-time or part-time school for 10-12 months. To say it is difficult is an understatement. Under-educated women should not be asked to fit themselves into schedules designed for young adults and, at the same time, to carry out their responsibilities as (poor) adults. Children have parents who provide for them while they are in school. Those who go to colleges and universities have access to student loans, scholarships, and the like. These support services are not available to under-educated women.

If women are to attend these 10-12 month programs, they must be guaranteed an income to cover their expenses for the period, and also, adequate childcare facilities and subsidies.

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**Table 5-5: Distribution of ABE Programs by Time Offered (N = 92)**

Time Program Offered	% of Programs
Full-time	34.8%
Part-time: both day & evening	29.8%
Full-time and Part-time	20.9%
Part-time: day	5.5%
At convenience of students	4.4%
Part-time: evening	3.3%
Other	1.1%

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**Table 5-6: Distribution of ABE Programs by Duration (N =73)**

Duration of Program	% of Programs
2 - 3 months	5.6%
4 - 6 months	8.4%
7 - 9 months	15.4%
10 - 12 months	57.5%
Longer than 1 year	1.4%
Depends on needs of student	13.6%

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Given the fact that this kind of assistance is not available to under-educated women, it is no coincidence that only 1.4 percent of them attend full-time programs, and as little as 0.6 percent attend part-time programs for which there is rarely any financial assistance available.

#### **5.2.6. Cost of Tuition and Textbooks**

The majority of providers reported that tuition was free or subsidized. A similar report was given for textbooks and other student materials.

#### **5.2.7. Entry Requirements**

Few respondents gave any information about educational entry requirements. Many or them said such general things as "anyone who is willing to learn." However, the definition of "adult" appeared to mean anyone over 15 years of age (see [Table 5-7](#)).

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**Table 5-7: Distribution of ABE Programs by Minimum Entry Age**

Minimum Entry Age	% of Programs
15 years	4.3%
16 years	7.6%
17 years	15.2%
18 years	17.4%
19 years	2.2%
20 years	1.1%
21 years	----
Any age	52.2%

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### **5.2.8. Method of Student Recruitment**

Providers were asked to describe how their programs recruit students. Multiple responses (253) were given. The most frequently used method is through a network of community agencies (see Table 5-8). The interorganizational relations involved are not specified nor is the congruence between the values of the referring agencies and those of the ABE providers.

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**Table 5-8: Distribution of Responses about Methods of Student Recruitment (N=253)**

Method of Recruitment	% of Programs
Agency Referrals	26.1 %
Newspapers	21.7%
Word-of-mouth	13.0%
Catalogue/Program Calendar	11.1 %
Flyers	11.1%
Television	10.3%
Radio	4.0%
All of the above	1.2%
No active recruitment	1.6%

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Over forty-three percent of the providers described the major recruitment method as being in the print mode: newspapers (21.7%), program calendar (11.1%) and flyers (11.1%) Providers should study this aspect of ABE programs in relation to the low attendance rate of under-educated adults in Canada (2.4%). Clearly, their major recruitment method, with its heavy reliance on the skill of reading and the use of print materials, is ineffective.

Student responses about how they learned of the program (see Chapter 4) indicate that interpersonal connections and referrals from social and government agencies are the most important sources of information.

### 5.3. SUPPLEMENTARY SERVICES

Providers were asked for information about non-educational services provided for students of the ABE programs. For many women these services are essential for them to physically enter the programs and stay in them for the duration of the program (see Tables 5-9 and 5-10).

**Table 5-9:** Distribution of ABE Programs by Services Provided and Time of Provision (N =98)

Time Offered	Services				
	Childcare	Career Counselling	Personal Counselling	Travel	Orientation
Day	13.2%	36.7%	35.7%	14.3%	28.6%
Evening	----	1.0%	----	1.0%	----
Day & Evening	1.0%	22.4%	18.3%	----	9.2%
Provided: (No time specified)	----	3.1%	3.6%	3.1%	6.1%
Not provided	85.7%	36.7%	42.8%	81.6%	51.1%

**Table 5-10:** Providers Perceptions of the Adequacy of Supplementary Services Provided and Not provided in ABE Programs

Services		<u>Adequate</u>		<u>Inadequate</u>	
		Number	%	Number	%
Childcare	(N=76)	31	40.7%	45	59.3%
Career Counselling	(N=75)	39	52.0%	36	48.0%
personal Counselling	(N=76)	39	51.1%	37	48.7%
Transportation	(N = 75)	35	46.6%	40	53.4%
Orientation to Resources in Community	(N=76)	36	47.4%	40	52.6%

### 5.3.1. Childcare

Only 14 of the 98 respondents reported that childcare services were available. Thirteen of these 14 providers stated that the service was provided during the day (see Table 5-9), With respect to cost, 8 of the 14 said it was free. The main funders of childcare service to students in ABE programs were described as provincial and federal non-educational government agencies (see Table 5-11). Half of those who reported that their programs provided childcare described this provision as inadequate. Of the 84 who did not report the provision of childcare as part of their programs, as many as 38 said that this situation was inadequate for women.

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**Table 5-11:** Distribution of ABE Programs Which Provide Childcare by Funders of Child care

Funders	Number	%
School Board	6	42.8%
Provincial Government (non. Education ministry)	5	35.7%
Federal Government	4	28.5%
Community College	4	28.5%

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### 5.3.2. Transportation

Only 18 providers reported that transportation (travel) services were provided to students. Fourteen of these described this service as available during the day (see Table 5-9). Only one provider described the cost of the service as not free for students. The major funders of this service were provincial, non-educational, government ministries. One-third of those who reported the availability of this service as part of their programs, described it as inadequate for women. Of those who did not report this service as being part of their program, 42.5 percent described this situation as inadequate for women.

### 5.3.3. Career Counselling

As many as 62 providers reported that career counselling services were available to students, mainly during the day (see Table 5-9) The major funders of this service are community colleges, ministries of education, and federal government agencies. Of those who reported availability of the service, 38.7 percent described the service as inadequate for women.

#### 5.3.4. Personal Counselling

Fifty-six providers reported that their programs provided personal counselling to students primarily in the day time (see Table 5-9). All of the 56 providers described this service as being of no financial cost to students. The main funders of this service are community colleges and federal government agencies. With respect to the adequacy of the provision of this service for women, 44.6 percent of those who reported its availability, described it as inadequate. Of those providers whose programs do not offer this service, 29 percent described this situation as inadequate for women in the programs.

#### 5.3.5. Orientation to Social Services in Local and Larger Communities

Forty-three providers reported that students receive an orientation to the social services in the local and larger communities. This service, like those described above, is available mainly in the day time (see Table 5-9). There is no cost to students. The major funders of this service are community colleges. Of those providers whose programs offer this orientation, 39.5 percent are not satisfied with the adequacy of the service for women in the programs.

##### 5.3.5.1. Discussion

Several observations can be made about the provision of supplementary services in ABE programs. The least provided service is that of childcare; the second least provided is that of transportation. Providers are most dissatisfied with the present provision of these services. The most provided services are career counselling and personal counselling. These are the services with which the providers are least dissatisfied.

The urgent need for childcare services has already been discussed in Chapter 4. Childcare and transportation services have at least two things in common: they assist individuals in carrying out their personal responsibilities and they enable individuals to physically enter the program. Within the present structure of our society, caring for children is still regarded as the personal responsibility of women. Physically getting to work or school or a meeting (and so on) is also regarded as a personal responsibility of adults. The fact that childcare and transportation services are the least provided services in ABE programs implies that the educational system is not concerning itself with assisting individuals to carry out their personal responsibilities. Yet, as has been shown in Chapter 4, these personal responsibilities tend to prevent women from attending the programs. The second common factor is that these services assist individuals to physically enter the programs. Very good ABE programs may exist and recruitment techniques may be excellent, but if women cannot physically come to the programs, the purpose of the programs cannot be achieved.

Over 62 percent of the providers reported that students have to travel between 16 and 60 minutes to reach the program site. Under-educated women whose incomes are very low cannot be expected to have their own cars or to always have bus fares. In some parts of the country, the cost of a bus ride one-way is almost enough to buy a litter of milk. Poor, under-educated women may have to make a choice between these two items, and the choice is most likely to be slanted toward the purchase of food if they have children.

The fact that career and personal counselling are more likely to be provided than childcare and transportation services suggests at least two points. First, those who design and administer ABE programs appear to have developed supplementary services which are supportive of those individuals who are able to gain access to the programs through their own resources. Second, the emphasis on counselling suggests that the purpose of ABE programs is not so much to reduce the rate of functional illiteracy or to upgrade the skills of the under- educated; but rather to help those who come to the programs to develop behaviour appropriate to their future career aspirations. Women do need access to counselling services. However financial and childcare services also need to be provided. Survival and security needs must be provided both at the time of entry and throughout the program if a woman is to maintain regular attendance. When survival and security needs are not met, the provision of personal and career counselling becomes pointless.

Another observation which can be made about the supplementary services provided as part of ABE programs concerns the time when these services are offered. Most are offered during the day. Only one provider reported childcare and transportation services being offered in the evening. Yet, counselling services are available during both day and evening hours. Childcare services which are offered only during the day are not helpful to women who work full-time and attend evening classes.

A third observation about the provision of supplementary services pertains to the funders of these services. In general, childcare and transportation services tend to be funded by provincial and federal non-educational agencies. On the other hand, personal and career counselling (both psychological and labour-related work) are funded mainly by ministries of education. There may be a lack of coordination in the provision of these supplementary services to meet two quite different types of needs. Both are necessary, but not at the expense of each other.

## **5.4. CONCLUSIONS**

One could argue that the inadequacy of the provision of supplementary services for women in ABE programs is, in large part, a function of the institutions which deliver these programs. In terms of the sample, these institutions are mainly community colleges and school boards. Community colleges are designed primarily for young adults with a minimum of personal responsibilities such as homemaking and caring for children. School boards are mainly concerned with the education of children and adolescents. It is no coincidence, therefore, that personal and career counselling services are provided more than childcare and transportation in ABE programs; that supplementary services are offered mainly during the day; and that funding for them comes mainly from non-educational agencies.

In the sample, private non-profit organizations, which include Literacy Councils, were the next type of agency mostly frequently providing ABE programs. Such agencies often do not have the financial means to provide support services.

These observations do not imply that school boards and community colleges should not continue to provide educational programs for under-educated women, but rather that decision-making about program delivery and supplementary services should take into account the alternative needs of women with both personal and employment responsibilities. Committees responsible for making such decisions should include adult educators who are sensitive to the need for flexibility in programming and service delivery and women who can accurately represent the needs of under-educated women.

## Chapter 6 ABE INSTRUCTORS, CURRICULA, AND MATERIALS

### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

Who are the people who teach in ABE programs? What kinds of academic background do they have? Are they specifically trained to teach in ABE programs? What do they teach? How? What materials do they use to teach their students? These are some of the questions to which answers are provided in this chapter. Special attention is given to the instructors' academic background in relation to women's need for basic training in science.

### **6.2. INSTRUCTOR PROFILE**

#### **6.2.1. Sex and Age**

The majority of instructors of ABE programs in the survey are female. Most of the instructors are in the 30-40 age group (see Tables [6-1](#) and [6-2](#)).



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**Table 6-1** Distribution of ABE Programs by Sex of Instructors (N = 98)

Sex	Number	%
Female	61	69.0%
Male	27	31.0%

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### **6.2.2. Academic Background and Degree**

The majority of instructors were described as having degrees in education. Most of them obtained an arts degrees at the bachelor's level. More male than female instructors had degrees at the master's level (see Tables 6-3 and 6-4).

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**Table 6-2:** Distribution of ABE Programs by Age of Instructors (N =81)

Age	Number	%
21- 29 years	7	8.6%
30 - 40 years	42	51.9%
41 - 50 years	22	27.2%
51 years and over	10	12.3%

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**Table 6-3:** Distribution of ABE Programs by Highest Degree Attained by Instructor

Highest Degree Attained	Female (N =60)	Male (N =27)	Total (N =87)
Doctorate	1.6%	3.7%	2.3%
Master's	16.6%	44.4%	25.3%
Bachelor's	58.3%	44.4%	54.0%
College Diploma	8.3%	----	5.7%
High School	10.0%	3.7%	8%
Other Diploma	3.3%	3.7%	3.4%

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**Table 6-4: Distribution of ABE Programs by Sex and Academic Background of Instructor**

Academic Background	Female (N=54)	Male (N=24)	Total (N.=78)
Education	45.2%	50.0%	46.1%
Arts	38.8%	29.2%	35.9%
Social Work	9.2%	8.3%	8.9%
Science	7.4%	8.3%	7.7%
Physical Education	-----	4.1 %	1.3%

### **6.2.3. Training and Experience of in Teaching Adult Basic Education**

The instructors in ABE programs are themselves well-educated; 76.5 percent of the female instructors and 92.5 percent of the male instructors reported having earned a university degree (see Table 6-3). About half of the instructors reported that their background was in the area of education and one-third in arts. A further 8.3 percent of the female instructors held a college diploma, most likely in the field of education. No question was asked about the professional development of instructors in the area of basic literacy, adult education, or curriculum development. However, 40 percent of the instructors had six or more years of teaching experience in the field of ABE (see Table 6-5). If one assumes that a background in the field of education and experience in teaching is the most appropriate training for ABE instructors, then the majority of instructors in the sample can be described as being well-prepared to teach ABE (60 percent).

No questions were asked about the current professional development activities of the instructors nor about the opportunities available to them for such activities.

**Table 6-5: Distribution of ABE Programs by Years of Instructor's Teaching Experience (N = 83)**

Years of Experience	% of Programs
Less than 1 year	13.0%
2 years	8.0%
3 years	16.0%
4 years	10.0%
5 years	13.0%
6 years and more	40.0%

The point was made in Chapter 2 that under-educated women need to learn more than reading and writing at a functional level. They also need to acquire basic skills in science and mathematics to prepare them for entry into technical, non-traditional occupations. If women are to receive such training, ABE instructors must be prepared to include the relevant knowledge and skills in the program. Only 7.7 percent of the instructors in the sample described themselves as having academic science backgrounds. No questions were asked about the instructors' perceptions of their preparedness to teach mathematics and science to women in ABE programs.

In introducing science and mathematics to women students in ABE programs, it is essential that the instructors be aware of the potential problems involved. Women's lack of self-confidence in learning mathematics and science has been documented elsewhere (Science Council of Canada, 1984). On the erroneous assumption that science is a male domain, the educational system has often neglected to provide women with an adequate scientific training. Teaching basic science to under-educated women who have had little or no previous science education, therefore, is difficult. Professional development activities could be designed to help ABE instructors learn more about teaching basic science to adult women. This task must be accomplished, with the appropriate commitment of financial resources, if under-educated women are to have a real opportunity to improve their access to non-traditional occupations and, thereby, to better incomes.

In the past there has been little need for science education for the under-educated population. The emphasis was on reading and writing. The increasing demand for technical knowledge in many occupational sectors means that basic science training must be seen as an important component of basic literacy.

#### **6.2.4. Employment Status and Salary**

In the sample, 53 percent of ABE instructors were employed full-time. Of those who work full-time, 49 percent earn between \$31,000 and 140,000 per year (see Tables 6-6 and 6-7).

**Table 6- 6:** Distribution of ABE Programs by Employment Status of Instruction (N = 84)

Employment Status	% of Programs
Full-time	53.0%
Part-time	32.0%
Volunteer	15.0%

**Table 6-7:** Distribution of ABE Programs by Salary of Full-time Instructors (N =41)

Salary Range	% of Programs
\$1,000 - 10,000	-----
\$11,000-15,000	-----
\$16,000-20,000	12.0%
\$21,000-25,000	10.0%
\$26,000-30,000	27.0%
\$31,000-35,000	17.0%
\$36,000-40,000	32.0%
\$41,000 and over	2.0%

### **6.2.5. Official Responsibilities.**

Providers were asked to describe their official responsibilities in the ABE programs. Multiple responses (167) were given. Many providers identified teaching (42 percent) as their major responsibility. The second largest response was administration (26 percent), and the third was counselling (14 percent) (see Table 6-8).

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**Table 6- 8:** Distribution of Responses about Official Responsibilities of Instructors (N = 167)

Responsibilities	% of Programs
Teaching	42.0%
Administration	26.0%
Counselling	14.0%
Staff Training	8.0%
Materials Development	7. 0%
Community Work	3.0%

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## 6.3. CURRICULUM

### 6.3.1. Major Focus of ABE Programs

Literacy education was the major focus of ABE programs in the sample; numeracy education was second. Job skills and life skills were listed as being a minor focus (see Table 6-9).

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**Table 6- 9:** Distribution of Responses about Major Focus of ABE Programs (N=184)

Major Focus	Number	%
Literacy	78	42.4%
Numeracy	58	31.5%
Life Skills	18	9.8%
Job Skills	15	8.1%
Other	15	8.1%

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### 6.3.2. Instructors' Definition of Literacy and Adult Basic Education

Providers were asked to describe their understanding of the terms "literacy" and "adult basic education." The majority of them said that "literacy" meant the ability to read and write; and that "adult basic education," meant the three R's (see Table 6-10).

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**Table 6-10:** Distribution of ABE Programs by Instructor's Definition of Literacy and ABE

Definitions	Literacy (N=85)	ABE (N=81)
Ability to read and write	60.0%	5.0%
Three R's	28.0%	42.0%
Preparation for employment	-----	14.0%
Life Skills	6.0%	21.0%
Political Awareness	-----	1.0%
Upgrading	-----	6.0%
Other	5.0%	11.0%

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An important difference between the definitions of literacy and ABE was observed. No provider defined literacy in terms of jobs. However, 14 percent of them included "preparation for employment" in their definitions of ABE. Few felt that ABE should be more job-oriented than academic-oriented. A job-orientation in ABE programs would need to include the type of preparation required for entry into non-traditional occupations. However, notably absent from the definitions given of ABE were references to upgrading in the sciences.

A second observation about the difference in providers' definitions of literacy education and ABE pertains to the fact that, where as 60 percent regarded literacy education as involving reading and writing skills, only 5 percent saw this need as applicable to ABE programs. This suggests that ABE providers are assuming that prospective students already have basic reading and writing skills; and that ABE programs, therefore, are post-literacy and pre-occupational programs. A conclusion which might be drawn from these definitions is that ABE programs are targeted, not at those with less than grade 9 education - the functionally illiterate; but rather at that segment of the population which is already literate and which can be easily prepared for occupational training. The data

provided in [Chapters 2 and 4](#) tend to support this conclusion.

### **6.3.3. Pre-set Curriculum**

Almost all of the 98 providers answered the question about curriculum employed in ABE programs, more than any other question in the questionnaire. Nearly one-third reported they did not use a pre-set curriculum. Of those who reported using a pre-set curriculum, an equal number use ministry of education curriculum guides and the Laubach curriculum (see Table 6-11 ).

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**Table 6-11:** Distribution of ABE Programs by Type or Source of Curriculum

Type of Curriculum	Number	%
No pre-set curriculum	29	31.0%
Ministry of Education guides	21	22.0%
Laubach/Literacy of Canada	20	21.0%
Program guides of institution providing program	10	11.0%
Pre-set curriculum (not specified)	6	6.0%
Other	6	6.0%

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Respondents were asked to report on whether they had knowledge of or used any curriculum specifically designed for women. The majority reported they had no knowledge of such a curriculum. Many of them expressed a desire for information about such a curriculum if it existed.

In [chapter 4 \(section 4.2.1\)](#), the point was raised that adult basic education appears to encompass two types of programs: basic literacy and post-literacy or pre-occupational programs. If two different types of programs do exist, then it seems logical to assume that basic literacy programs address educational goals and issues which are different from those of post-literacy programs. Therefore, the curriculum of each should vary accordingly. While both might focus on reading, writing, mathematics and science, basic literacy would need to focus on helping students develop basic skills while post literacy programs would need to focus on helping students to use these skills to reach the academic level required for admission to occupational training programs and to find and hold jobs.

In [chapter 4 \(section 4.4\)](#), it was noted that the providers of adult basic education programs do not appear to view support services such as childcare, transportation, and counselling as part of an educational service. A curriculum which is appropriate for under-educated women should view support services as integral components of the curriculum rather than as ancillary services to be provided by someone else.

The development of curricula to meet the varying needs of under-educated women in basic literacy, post-literacy and pre-occupational programs is an issue which should concern both administrators and instructors.

#### **6.3.4. Teaching Format**

The teaching format most used by instructors involves one-to-one teacher student interactions. With the exception of education by correspondence, the least employed format is that of large class teaching ([see Table 6-12](#)). The latter is also one of the least preferred by students.

Two observations can be made from [Table 6-12](#). First, although instructors use the one-to-one format more than the small group format, many of them prefer the latter to the former.

Second, they do not consider distance education (including correspondence education) appropriate for ABE students. If the instructors are equating distance education with correspondence education, then this opinion probably reflects the reliance of correspondence education on reading and writing skills. However, distance education also includes the use of radio, television, telephone, and computer-mediated interactions between instructor and students. The opinion expressed that distance education is inappropriate for under-educated adults may reflect the instructors' lack of knowledge and experience in using various forms of media to interact with learners. Further, any instructional technique which introduces under-educated women to the use of computers in the classroom will have a long-term benefit in helping them prepare for technological occupations. This is a point that should be taken into consideration by those who are developing educational resources for use in ABE programs. On the other hand, given the women students' earlier emphasis on their psychological needs (self-confidence, assertiveness training), distance education may be too impersonal for them.



**Table 6-12: Distribution of Responses about Major Teaching Format Used and Instructor's Preference in ABE Programs**

Teaching Format	Used (N = 134)		Preferred (N = 148)	
	Number	% of Responses	Number	% of Responses
One-to-one	74	55.2%	54	36.5%
Small Group	31	23.1%	59	39.8%
Classroom	23	17.1%	25	16.9%
Correspondence or Distance Education	5	3.7%	7	4.7%
Other	1	0.7%	3	2.0%

### **6.3.5. Criteria for Program Content and Control of Program Content**

Providers reported that the major criteria used to decide what should be taught in ABE programs are the type and level of students' skills, as well as their personal needs when they enter the program (see [Table 6-13](#)).

This approach is not congruent with the use of a pre-set curriculum, one more reason why ABE providers and instructors need to attend to the development of special curricula for under-educated women. Many pre-set curricula or pre-packaged teaching modules are not designed to permit instructors to deviate extensively from the materials provided so as to take into consideration the personal needs of students. Further, a curriculum approach which focuses first on student skills and needs implies that instructors and students should have the major control in decision-making about program content. Thirty-four percent of the respondents described instructors as having the most control over program content, and 27 percent identified both instructors and students as having this responsibility (see [Table 6-14](#)).

**Table 6-13:** Distribution of Responses about Criteria Used to Determine Program Content

Criteria for Content	Number	% of Responses
Student's skills	37	25.0%
Student's personal needs	28	19.0%
Institutional guidelines	19	13.0%
Ministry of Education guides	18	12.0%
Instructor's experience	13	9.0%
Program philosophy	11	8.0%
Requirements for entry to higher education programs	10	7.0%
Community needs	5	3.0%
Public school curriculum	2	2.0%
Time available	2	2.0%

**Table 6-14:** Distribution of Responses about Control of Program Content

Decision Maker	Number	% of Responses
Instructor	50	34.0%
Instructor and Students	39	27.0%
Program Sponsor	19	13.0%
Program Funders	12	8.0%
Special Committee	10	7.0%
Students	9	6.0%
Other	7	5.0%

## 6.4. MATERIALS

### 6.4. 1. Materials Used in ABE Programs

Providers were asked to identify the kinds of materials used in the programs. Twenty-six of them reported using textbooks and workbooks (see Table 6-15). The second most used type of materials was any I can find and teacher-made. The third most popular sources were Laubach literature, newspaper and magazines. Only 3 percent reported using materials provided by the ministries of education.

Instructors tend to use textbooks more than any other kind of materials. By and large, textbooks are not written for under-educated adults, much less under-educated women. Textbooks aimed at persons with less than functional literacy skills are usually targeted at young children and adolescents, and are not adequate for under-educated women. It is no coincidence, perhaps, that the second most widely used materials fall into the categories of "anything I can find" and teacher-made materials. Yet, few providers described materials development as part of their official job description or responsibilities (see [Table 6.8](#))

**Table 6-15:** Distribution of Responses about the Type of Materials Used in ABE Programs

Type of Resources	Number	% of Responses
Textbooks and workbooks	50	26.0%
"Anything I can find"	21	11.0%
Teacher-made materials	21	11.0%
Laubach literature	19	10.0%
Newspapers and magazines	19	10.0%
Materials developed by institution offering program	9	5.0%
Popular readers	9	5.0%
Packaged teaching materials	8	4.0%
Speakers	6	3.0%
Ministry of Education materials	5	3.0%
Games	3	1.0%
Civic and medical pamphlets	3	1.0%
Frontier College materials	2	1.0%
Other	12	7.0%

#### **6.4.2. Portrayal of Women in ABE Materials**

Fifty-eight responses were given to this question. Most respondents said that women were portrayed in existing ABE materials in traditional female roles (see Table 6-16).

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**Table 6-16:** Distribution of ABE Programs by Portrayal of Women in Materials

Portrayal of Women	Number	% of Responses
Traditional	21	36.2%
Nontraditional	18	31.0%
Both	19	32.7%

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If under-educated women are to be encouraged to learn basic science in order to enter non-traditional occupations, the materials used in programs offered to them must reflect this.

#### **6.4.3. Materials Preferred by ABE Providers**

When asked for their opinions about the kinds of materials most relevant to women in ABE programs, providers emphasized materials aimed at the individual learner over those aimed at a group of learners (see Table 6-17). This is compatible with the earlier finding which shows that the one-to-one teaching format is widely used by instructors (see Tables 6-12). Only 6 percent of the providers' responses referred to career-oriented materials as most relevant to women in ABE programs. It should be recalled that career counselling is one of the supplementary services most often provided in ABE programs.

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**Table 6-17:** Distribution of Responses about Materials Most Relevant to Women in ABE Programs

Type of Material	Number	% of Responses
Individual learning	16	20.5%
Non-sexist non-traditional	13	16.6%
Everyday experience	12	15.4%
Academic	7	8.9%
Career-oriented	6	7.7%
Life skills	6	7.7%
Assertiveness training	6	7.7%
Shopping lists/recipes	3	3.8%
Other	9	11.5%

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#### **6.4.4. Materials Criteria and Control**

The most widely used criteria for the selection of materials are those pertaining to the skill levels of students and to their personal needs (42 percent). Only 6 percent reported using guidelines provided by the institutions offering the programs; and 2 percent, those set by ministries of education.

With respect to control over materials selection, the instructors exert most control (44 percent; 16 percent of the responses identified both instructors and students as having control over the selection of materials (see Table 6-18).

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**Table 6-18:** Distribution of Responses about Control of Material Selection

Source of Control	Number	% of Responses
Instructors	60	44.0%
Instructors and students	22	16.0%
Special committee	19	14.0%
Funders	12	9.0%
Sponsors	11	8.0%
Other	11	8.0%

---

#### **6.4.5. Non-Print Materials and Resources**

##### Use of Computers in ABE Programs

In the majority of ABE programs no use of computers is made (64.1 percent). However, of those who did choose to comment on the lack of computers in their programs, 94 percent said there should be computers in ABE programs. The responses do not indicate how computers would be used in classrooms.

In contrast to their use of computers, providers make extensive use of films and other audio-visual resources and hardware (77 percent). Many of them arrange field trips for their students (55 percent).

#### **6.5. CONCLUSION**

There is a need for more ABE instructors with a science background. Those with such a background need to be trained to teach basic science to adult women.

With respect to curriculum, there seems to be a need for at least some guidelines for developing program content for women in ABE programs. The major participants in the development of such guidelines should be the instructors in consultation with women students.

A similar conclusion can be drawn with respect to materials. There is a definite need for more ABE materials of relevance to the skills level and personal and social needs of under-educated women. Since instructors have already taken the initiative to produce some of this kind of material, they would be invaluable in future development of the same.

ABE instructors were not given the opportunity to report on the nature and extent of professional development activities available to them. Data reported in this chapter suggest that such activities could be developed in relation to: working with under-educated adult women, the development of curriculum materials, teaching basic science and mathematics skills, and the use of computers in ABE programs.

## Chapter 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Illiteracy is one of the many barriers to the full participation of individuals in society. Sexual discrimination is another barrier faced by women. Over 24 percent of adult women not attending school in Canada are functionally illiterate. These women comprise the majority of the total functionally illiterate population (52.1 percent). Yet, as few as 2 percent of them attend educational programs to improve their low level of education, and those who do attend adult basic education programs do not appear to be representative of the population of under-educated women.

Under-educated women need to participate in educational programs if they are to improve their employment income and to have access to non-traditional occupations. These programs, in turn, must be designed to address the learning and related needs of women. It is the conclusion of this report that the ABE programs in CLOW's survey are not adequately addressing these needs. The major findings of the survey illustrate this conclusion.

### **7.1. LEARNING AND RELATED NEEDS OF WOMEN**

Both providers and women students identified the major needs of women, in order of importance, as educational, psychological and financial. Although lack of childcare services was perceived as a major barrier to regular attendance, it was not mentioned as a major need of women students, suggesting that neither group perceived childcare as an educational need or an education-related issue.

More women students than providers felt that there was a difference between the learning needs of women and men in ABE programs. Women students prefer to learn in a one-to-one student-teacher relationship and in small groups.

## **7.2. PROGRAM DELIVERY**

Most ABE programs are delivered by community colleges and school boards - institutions which are designed to meet the educational needs of young adults and children respectively. These institutions tend to provide most ABE programs within the same kind of time schedule developed for children in school and young adults in colleges, and fail to offer flexible programming geared to the needs of adult women. Many personal and financial responsibilities make it extremely difficult for adult women, especially those with young children, to pursue the upgrading of their education within rigid youth-oriented schedules.

Furthermore, these youth-oriented institutions do not provide adequate supplementary services to help women deal with the personal responsibilities which prevent them from regularly attending the programs. The services least likely to be provided is childcare, yet the lack of childcare is a major barrier to women's regular attendance in the programs. The second least provided service is transportation which, like childcare, is necessary to help women to physically get to the ABE programs.

Those supplementary services which are provided tend to be available mostly during the day. Consequently, women who work during the day and can only attend programs in the evening are deterred from so doing.

## **7.3. INSTRUCTORS**

Under-educated women need to learn to read, write, and do simple arithmetic. They also need to acquire knowledge in such areas as mathematics and science in order to have meaningful access to the technical, non-traditional occupations, for which there is growing economic demand. The majority of ABE instructors in the survey do not have a science degree. Many tend to have a degree in education or in the general arts at the bachelor level. This is a problem with respect to the teaching of science to under-educated women. ABE instructors need skills in teaching the science and mathematics education required by the women. It is this kind of education that the women urgently need if the range of occupations accessible to them is to be expanded.

## **7.4. CURRICULUM**

The under-educated women included in this survey described themselves as students and unemployed persons. As students they need and want to learn the three R's; as unemployed persons they need to acquire job-related skills such as knowing how to look for a job, how to fill out job application forms, how to read their pay slips, and so on. These, too, are basic educational needs of adults in society. Clearly, the three R's are not sufficient for under-educated adult women.

The major focus of ABE programs is reading and writing, followed by basic mathematics. This is compatible with the providers' definition of ABE as education which provides the three R's. Yet, as has been pointed repeatedly in this report, under-educated women need

more than this. They need to be aware of the declining demand for traditional female jobs and the growing demand for technical, non-traditional occupations. They need to be encouraged to enter these occupations, and to acquire basic training in science. No respondent mentioned a basic knowledge of science in her definition of ABE.

There is no ABE curriculum for women. One is needed. Data were provided in this report which support the position that adult basic education comprises both basic literacy and post-literacy or pre-occupational programs. Each type of program appears to require a somewhat different curriculum and both should incorporate support services -- childcare, transportation, and counselling -- as an integral part of the educational program and curriculum.

## 7.5. MATERIALS

Most instructors use textbooks and workbooks. Few textbooks are designed to meet the educational needs of under-educated women. Many instructors reported that women were often portrayed in traditional roles in the materials. Many instructors also use materials that they have made themselves and "anything that I can find," even though materials development is not their official responsibility. As with program content, instructors have considerable control over the materials used in ABE programs. Few ABE programs use computers. However, many providers commented that the use of this technology should be increased in ABE programs.

## 7.6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.6.1. General

1. That a national policy to eradicate functional illiteracy among Canadian adults be instituted, that this policy address the specific learning and related needs of women, and that women's groups be consulted in the development of this policy.
2. That increased funding for adult basic education (ABE) be made available by both provincial and federal governments to support the following programs and services for women:
  - development of a wide range of ABE programs;
  - provision of support services;
  - professional development for instructors of ABE programs;
  - curriculum development; and
  - materials development.



3. That communication links be established among providers of ABE programs for women, providers of support services, and those responsible for occupational training programs.
4. That ABE program directories for each province and both territories be compiled immediately and that these directories:
  - be available to anyone in any part of Canada.
  - be provided in an accessible format, and
  - be updated on a regular basis.

### **7.6.2. Program Delivery**

1. School boards and community colleges should continue to provide ABE programs for women. The membership of committees charged with making decisions about such programs should include women adult educators and adult women students.
2. Alternatives to institutionally provided ABE programs should be encouraged. For example, literacy groups, community and voluntary organizations should be encouraged politically and assisted financially to provide programs for under-educated women.
3. It is extremely difficult for adult women with jobs and children to pursue their educational goals within a time schedule designed for children and young adults. Measures must be taken to provide flexible time scheduling of programs for women.
4. Appropriate financial support should be available to women who want to upgrade their education during a full-time program. For example, a guaranteed income and access to free or low-cost childcare could be made available to women who are upgrading their education on a full-time basis. Subsidies should be made available to those who want to attend part-time programs.
5. The provision of supplementary services to women in ABE programs must be developed especially childcare, transportation and counselling services and support services necessary to assist women to enter training programs and the labour force. Supplementary services should be available not only during the day, but also during the evenings (and weekends, when necessary).

### 7.6.3. Instructors

1. Professional development programs should be developed to help instructors of women in ABE programs become more aware of the differences between the learning needs of women and men, and to incorporate this awareness in the content and process of their curriculum.
2. More instructors with a science background should be recruited to teach women in ABE programs.
3. Professional development programs should be developed to help instructors learn to teach basic science to under-educated women.

### 7.6.4. Curriculum

1. Curricula and teaching guidelines relevant to the learning needs of under-educated women should be developed by instructors in consultation with women students.
2. With respect to women, adult basic education should include introductory programs in elementary science to help them prepare for the academic upgrading necessary for entry into non-traditional training programs.
3. Women in ABE programs should be informed of the declining demand for traditional female jobs and of the opportunities available in both traditional and non-traditional training programs and occupations.
4. Women in ABE programs should be given opportunities to become aware of the support services appropriate for women in non-traditional occupations.

### 7.6.5. Materials

1. There is an urgent need for materials specifically designed for instructors and women students in ABE programs.
2. Materials for use in one-to-one and small group teaching formats and for computer assisted learning should be developed for instructors and women students in ABE programs.
3. Instructors and women students in ABE programs should be involved in the development of materials.
4. Providers of ABE programs should provide women students with increased access to computers.

## 7.7. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### 7.7.1. General

1. A study of the non-participation of under-educated women in ABE programs.
2. Longitudinal studies of women who participate in full and part-time ABE programs.
3. Description of the inter-organizational relationships between ABE programs and community service programs.

#### **7.7.2. ABE and Science Education**

1. Attitudes of under-educated women to science and science education.
2. Perceptions of ABE providers about teaching basic science to under-educated women.
3. Development of guidelines for teaching basic science to under-educated women.
4. Development of materials suitable for women in ABE programs, especially those which provide basic science education.
5. Evaluation research: a pilot program designed to provide the following for under-educated women.
  - education for the attainment of functional literacy skills; and
  - basic science education

#### **7.7.3. Program Delivery**

1. Differences between ABE programs offered by formal educational institutions and those offered by non-governmental, community-based organizations.
2. Follow-up studies of women who attended full-time and part-time ABE programs.

#### **7.7.4. Instructors**

1. Professional development and related needs of ABE teachers who work with women.
2. Extent and nature of training opportunities for ABE teachers in each province.

#### **7.7.5. Curriculum**

1. Exploration of curricula developed for under-educated women in Canada and abroad.

#### **7.7.6. Materials**

1. Examination of materials developed for use by under-educated women in Canada and abroad.
2. Exploration of ways and means to develop materials for use by ABE instructors and under-educated women in Canada.

# Appendix A

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Appendix B  
Distribution of ABE Programs  
in Sample by Province

Province	Number of Programs Included in Mailing (N = 360)	Number of Completed Questionnaires Used in Analysis (N = 98)
Alberta	17	6
British Columbia	55	24
Manitoba	19	5
New Brunswick	28	8
Newfoundland	10	--
Nova Scotia	11	5
Ontario	150	34
Prince Edward Island	4	--
Quebec	19	3
Saskatchewan	37	12
Yukon Territory	4	--
Northwest Territories	6	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>98</b>

**\*106 questionnaire. were returned. Only 98 were analyzed. The remaining 8 arrived after coding and analyze. had been completed.**

Appendix C  
Distribution of Student Sample by Province

<b><u>British Columbia</u></b>	
Rural	9
Urban	11
<b><u>Manitoba</u></b>	
Rural	5
<b><u>Ontario</u></b>	
Rural	5

## **Appendix F**

### **Members of the ABE Advisory Committee**

Ethel Anderson	Ontario Ministry of Education
Elaine Gaber-Katz	East End Literacy (Toronto)
Jennifer Horsman	Participatory Research Group (Ontario)
Dorothy MacKeracher	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
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