Internationally Trained Immigrants and Ontario Colleges

by

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Abstract
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This study explored the responsiveness of two Ontario Colleges (called Eastern and Western for the purposes of this study) in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to internationally trained immigrant (ITI) students accessing college education for retraining purposes. Many highly educated immigrants are unable to have their credentials recognized because professional regulatory bodies and employers are reluctant to accept their previous education and work experience. Therefore, many ITIs access Ontario college education in the hope that, upon graduation, they will find skill-related employment that will contribute to their settlement in Canada. The purpose of this research was to examine how the two participating colleges address the ITI students’ occupation-specific needs in their current institutional policies and practices.

Qualitative research methods, interviews and document analysis, were utilized to examine the admission and program delivery practices at each of the study colleges. Interviews were conducted with 13 ITI student participants and 14 college personnel to provide an opportunity for them to voice their opinions about their college experiences. To provide direction for interpreting and analyzing the research findings, the single- and double-loop organizational learning framework developed by Argyris and Schon (1974,
1978) was used. The findings suggest that Eastern and Western Colleges have different approaches in valuing and placing importance in responding to ITI students’ retraining needs. The data indicated that ITI students at Eastern College were not perceived by college personnel as a unique group of students having specific retraining needs; rather, they were seen as part of the larger student constituency. On the other hand, Western College recognized the ITI students’ distinctive occupation-specific needs and made commitments towards improving its policies and practices to increase the College’s effectiveness in meeting the ITIs needs.

Although limited to only two Ontario colleges, the study findings have some important implications for theory and practice. The findings have contributed to increased awareness and a better understanding of challenges ITI students face in accessing Ontario college education, and it has offered recommendations for college efforts to respond to ITI students’ educational needs.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... ii  
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... iv  
List of Tables .................................................................................................................................... xi  
List of Figures ................................................................................................................................. xii  
Chapter One – Introduction and Background .................................................................................... 1  
  Introduction ..................................................................................................................................... 1  
  Background .................................................................................................................................... 3  
  My Personal Story .......................................................................................................................... 4  
  Purpose of Study ............................................................................................................................ 6  
  Research Question and Sub-Questions .......................................................................................... 6  
  Significance of This Study .............................................................................................................. 7  
  Outlining the Plan for the Thesis .................................................................................................... 7  
  Definitions of Terms ...................................................................................................................... 9  
Chapter Two – Literature Review ..................................................................................................... 13  
  Chapter Overview .......................................................................................................................... 13  
  Are the Barriers that Internationally Trained Immigrants Face Primarily Related to the Canadian Immigration Policy, Labour Market, and/or Professional Regulatory Bodies? ............................................................................................................. 14  
  How Do Immigration Policies and Regulatory Professional Accreditation Practices in Europe and Australia Differ from those Ones in Canada? ........................................................................................................... 18  
  How Do ITI Students Benefit from Higher Educational Institutions’ Approaches to Address the Changes in Student Diversity? ...................................................................................................................... 20  
  Ontario context: College-university collaborative partnerships ................................................. 21  
  Post-secondary context: Fast-track programs and fundamentals programs ............................ 22  
  Comprehensive context: “Campus Climate” and systemic approach .......................................... 22  
The Evolution of Ontario Colleges’ Responsiveness to Immigration Trends, Specifically to the Increased ITI Student Population ................................................................................................................... 25  
  Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project .............................................. 27  
  Bridge-training programs .............................................................................................................. 29  
  Occupation-specific language training ......................................................................................... 30
Support services.................................................................................................................. 75
Participation of ITI students in program and policy development. .................... 76
Lack of effort to accommodate ITI students............................................................. 77
Summary of College Personnel Interview Results.................................................. 79
Eastern College: ITI Student Demographics.......................................................... 80
Eastern College: ITI students’ Interview Results...................................................... 80
Admission practices....................................................................................................... 81
Admission requirements.............................................................................................. 83
Advising......................................................................................................................... 87
Credential recognition................................................................................................. 89
Program delivery........................................................................................................... 91
Customized programming ......................................................................................... 91
Participation of ITI students in program and policy development ...................... 93
Support services........................................................................................................... 94
Program evaluation.................................................................................................... 95
Summary of ITI Students’ Interview Results............................................................ 97
Comparative Analysis of ITI Students and College Personnel at Eastern College ...... 97
Admission practices..................................................................................................... 98
Program delivery........................................................................................................ 100
Summary ..................................................................................................................... 102
Chapter Five – Research Findings: Western College ................................................ 103
Chapter Overview ...................................................................................................... 103
Western College: Overview and Document Review .............................................. 103
Western College: College Personnel Demographics............................................ 105
Western College: College Personnel Interview Results........................................ 106
Admission practices.................................................................................................... 108
Enrolment of ITI students......................................................................................... 108
Admission requirements............................................................................................ 111
Advising......................................................................................................................... 115
Credential recognition............................................................................................... 117
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program delivery.</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customized programming.</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation of ITI students in program and policy development.</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services.</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program evaluations.</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of College Personnel Interview Results</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western College: ITI Student Demographics</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western College: ITI Students’ Interview Results</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission practices.</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission requirements.</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credential recognition</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program delivery.</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customized programming.</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation of ITI students in program and policy development.</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services.</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program evaluation.</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of ITI Students’ Interview Results</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Analysis of ITI Students and College Personnel at Western College.</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission practices.</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program delivery.</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six – Comparative Analysis between Eastern and Western Colleges</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Overview</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Domain for Single- and Double-Loop Learning</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program delivery.</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge-training programs</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentals/Foundational programs</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation-specific language training (OSLT)</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1  Analysis of Eastern College’s responsiveness to ITI students’ occupational-training needs – ITI Study Student Participants’ Perspectives .......................... 49

Table 2  Analysis of Eastern College’s responsiveness to ITI students’ occupational-training needs – College Personnel Participants’ Perspectives .................... 49

Table 3  Comparative analysis between Eastern and Western Colleges based on single- and double-loop organizational learning ........................................ 50

Table 4  Profile of Study Participants – Eastern College Personnel .......................... 57

Table 5  Themes Arising from Interviews of College Personnel at Eastern College .... 59

Table 6  Overview of the ITI student participants* at the Eastern College ............ 82

Table 7  Themes Arising from Interviews of ITI Student Interviews at Eastern College .............................................................................................................. 84

Table 8  Profile of Participants – Western College Personnel ............................... 106

Table 9  Themes Arising from Interviews of College Personnel at Western College .............................................................................................................. 109

Table 10 Overview of the ITI student participants* at the Western College .......... 130

Table 11 Themes Arising from Interviews of ITI Students at Western College ....... 132

Table 12 First Criteria for Determining Single- and/or Double-Loop: What do the findings suggest about the nature of the learning process for ITI students? (Examples of Single- and Double-Loop Learning) ........................................................................ 152

Table 13 Second Criteria for Determining Single- and/or Double-Loop Learning: What do the findings suggest about the depth, salience, and spread of the resulting actions? (Examples of Single- and Double-Loop Learning) .... 155
List of Figures

Figure 1. Proportion of immigrants by province (2006)................................. 15
Figure 2. Levels of education of immigrants aged 15 years and older (1998, 2002, 2006). ................................................................. 17
Figure 3. Depicts the process of single-loop learning in relation to college practices as it relates to ITI students’ occupation-specific needs. ........................................... 33
Figure 4. Depicts the process of double-loop learning in relation to college practices as it relates to ITI students’ occupation-specific needs.............................. 35
List of Appendices

Appendix A  Interview guide for internationally trained immigrant students .......... 191
Appendix B  Interview guide for college staff .......................................................... 193
Appendix C  Information letter for internationally trained immigrant student who is currently enrolled in a college program ........................................... 195
Appendix D  Information letter for college personnel .................................................. 197
Appendix E  Consent form for internationally trained immigrant student to participate in the research study ................................................................. 199
Appendix F  Consent form for college personnel to participate in the research study . 200
Appendix G  Poster to recruit internationally trained immigrant students ................ 201
Appendix H  Examples of Collaborative and Joint Programs Offered at Ontario Colleges ........................................................................................................ 202
Appendix I  Examples of Fast-Track Programs offered at Ontario Colleges............ 203
Appendix J  Examples of Fundamental Programs offered at Ontario Colleges ........ 204
Appendix K  Examples of Bridge-Training Programs offered at Ontario Colleges ..... 205
Appendix L  Examples of Occupation-Specific Language Training (OSLT) Courses offered at Ontario Colleges ................................................................. 206
Chapter One – Introduction and Background

Introduction

This thesis examines the responsiveness of Ontario colleges in their current institutional practices to the internationally trained immigrant (ITI) students’ training needs. This study specifically focuses on two colleges in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), referred to as Eastern and Western for the purpose of this study, because many immigrants settle in the GTA (Statistics Canada, 2006) and access Ontario colleges for retraining purposes.

The system of Ontario colleges were established in 1965 “to work closely with local employers to devise courses that would train their students for employment” (Rae Report 2005, p. 5). They have a mandate to offer programs that are current and relevant to the labour market while meeting the educational needs of the student constituency.

Recently, student demographics have been shifting because of a large influx of internationally trained immigrants accessing Ontario college education as a direct result of the Canadian immigration policy that favours the acceptance of highly qualified professionals (Kelly, 2007). The reality is that Canada’s population continues to become more visibly diverse by the day as current immigration and local birth patterns change the face of the population…As the diversity of the general population has increased, so has the student population, particularly in the metropolitan areas. (Ryan, Pollock, and Antonelli, 2007, p. 2)

According to the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) (2004) project, more than 80,000 highly trained immigrants come to Ontario each year, but many experience barriers that delay or prevent their entry into the employment force.
Lum (2007) states that it has become obvious that “many recent immigrants have post-secondary education and work experience from their countries of origin, they continue to experience difficulties in accessing equivalent professional positions in the Ontario workforce” (p. 1).

Large proportions (40%) of ITIs settle in the Greater Toronto Area (Lewkowicz, 2008). Statistics Canada Census data for 2006 show that 51% of internationally trained immigrants (ITIs) between 2001 and 2006 had a university degree. This is more than twice the proportion of degree holders in the Canadian-born population (20%) overall and much higher than the 28% of immigrants with university degrees who arrived in Canada before 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2006). On the basis of current immigration policies, the Canadian government gives hope to ITIs that their educational and employment background are recognized. However, the reality shows that is not the case for many ITIs. In fact, ITIs face systemic barriers because their foreign credentials are not recognized by professional associations, who continue to impose rigid regulatory requirements that undervalue international work experience and education (Alboim & Cohl, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Lum, 2007; Reitz, 2006, 2007). “One of the major factors causing this trend is that their professional skills, qualifications and work experience are discounted, that is, unrecognized due to systemic barriers within the credentialing, educational and employment process” (Reitz, 2005, p.1). Moreover, many employers insist on Canadian work experience and occupation-specific language skills as an employment requirement (Lewkowicz, 2008; Alboim and Cohl, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Rasheed, 2009; Walters, 2006). The Canadian government, professional regulatory bodies, and the employers have not streamlined policies and practices for internationally
trained immigrants to provide seamless entry into their professions, and provide opportunities for successful settlement in Canada. Therefore, in order to find employment, many ITIs who permanently settle in Ontario consider post-secondary education, specifically in Ontario colleges, to make their foreign credentials more usable or to acquire new credentials (Alboim and the Maytree Association, 2002; Kelly, 2007). Based on the Ontario College Application Services (OCAS) (2003), “approximately 15,000 immigrants applied to college and 6,400 were registered as new students” (Kelly, 2007, p. 3). If the Ontario colleges are to serve their communities, then it is natural to assume that they are responding effectively to ITI student needs. This assumption is examined in this research by establishing how two Ontario colleges are responding to ITI students’ occupation-specific needs as perceived by the participating ITI students and college personnel. This study will not be examining the larger issue of marginalization faced by ITIs due to the current policies and practices of the Canadian immigration, accrediting professional associations, and/or the employers.

**Background**

My interest in this study originates from my personal and professional experiences. It is through my parents’ experience that I realized how significant this study is for me on a personal level. As a daughter, I witnessed the failure of the Canadian education system to acknowledge the credentials of my parents 28 years ago. They were both highly qualified professionals from Sri Lanka who were not able to obtain recognition of their qualifications from the Canadian education, professional certification or employment sectors. The lack of recognition of their credentials forced my parents to seek menial jobs, which impacted them psychologically, emotionally, and financially.
My Personal Story

I was born and raised in Sri Lanka. My parents were both well-educated. Their status and education afforded their children many privileges, which included attending a private school. As a close-knit group, family was never far away, and my sister and I grew up surrounded by our loved ones. That all changed in a matter of hours.

If ever there was a day that has been burned into my memory, it is July 24, 1983. It is a day that changed my life forever. What was once a peaceful existence became the shocking depression of our lives. How does it feel to have your freedom stripped away from you before your very eyes? At the age of nine, how do you even begin to process what lack of freedom even means? I can tell you I know it quite clearly, and it started with the riots in Sri Lanka that left thousands homeless, parentless, childless and alone. The riots were caused by the political upheaval between Tamils and Singhalese in which Tamils demanded their independence. During this time, for many, home became refugee camps, food became a scarce commodity, and family became those who had no choice but to band. What could we do? My parents fled to Canada with the hope of leaving behind the tragedy of their country and beginning a new life filled with hope.

My family arrived in Canada as refugees on December 9, 1983. I remember being scared and not knowing what to expect. Here we were in a brand new country, with new faces and a new way of life. We arrived in Montreal. My parents struggled to find jobs in their professions. They worked in factories for minimum wages. Four years later, my parents decided to move to Toronto, hoping that their credentials would be recognized in an English-speaking province. But, it was not to be. The professional credentialing
bodies did not recognize my parents’ education and work experience from Sri Lanka. They advised my parents to enrol in a post-secondary institution to acquire Canadian qualifications. When my parents approached the post-secondary institutions in Toronto, they were met with much scepticism. There was no acknowledgment or credit for the expertise they had earned in Sri Lanka. Simply stated, it translated into nothing of value in Canada and in Toronto neither from the professional regulatory bodies nor the educational institutions. My parents were told to enrol in educational programs from the beginning. The beginning? How do you deny someone the right to recognition of their skills and education simply because it was not obtained here? What value do you see of an education and experience from another country if the response in Toronto is to “start over”? My parents could not do it. They needed to look after their family and, as such, they became factory workers for the rest of their lives in a country that promised them a good life.

As an administrator in one of Ontario’s colleges, reflecting on my parents’ experience and in observing the struggle of ITI students accessing the Ontario college education system today, I have become interested in exploring the responsiveness of Ontario colleges to ITI students’ retraining needs. Many ITIs reach out to these colleges and enrol in programs which allow them to obtain a recognized certificate or diploma that opens doors to suitable employment. I am hopeful that this study will identify areas that colleges are currently addressing or not addressing in meeting the educational and employment goals of their ITI students. Hence, the findings of this research should contribute to a deeper understanding of relevant practices currently implemented at the study colleges, and will provide critical information on key factors, issues, strategies,
and processes which would support leaders and educators to strengthen their position to implement changes that will enhance the value of the ITI student experience.

**Purpose of Study**

The overarching purpose of this thesis is to explore how responsive the two Ontario colleges in Greater Toronto Area (GTA) are to the changing employment needs of internationally trained immigrant (ITI) students. In order to understand how responsive Ontario colleges have been to changes in the ITI student constituency, this research focuses on exploring the perceptions of ITI students and college personnel regarding their experiences with the topic of interest.

**Research Question and Sub-Questions**

The research question and sub-questions that drove this study are:

How responsive are the two participating GTA Ontario Colleges to ITI students’ occupation-specific needs?

1. Based on their experience and satisfaction, how do participating ITI students perceive the value of what the College provides for them?

2. Based on their experience and their college’s policies and practices, how do participating college personnel perceive the value of what the College provides for the ITI students?

3. What successful policies and practices do the study colleges have in place to respond to the ITI students’ occupational training needs?
Significance of This Study

A large portion of literature and government reports focus on barriers encountered by ITIs as they try to access the Canadian labour force. Only a small number of studies examine how Ontario colleges respond to ITIs’ occupational-training needs as they engage in education in the Ontario colleges (CIITE, 2004; 2007; 2008; 2009; Alboim and Cohl, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Lum, 2007). This study is central to our gaining a fuller understanding of this phenomenon because many of the ITI students accessing Ontario colleges to develop skills and training necessary to successfully secure employment in Canada, are encountering difficulties in doing so. It is my personal experience from working in this area in an Ontario college for some 10 years, that the colleges also experience challenges in responding to the retraining needs of ITI students. It is my hope that the findings of this research study will increase awareness of many stakeholders regarding the challenges faced by ITI students in the Ontario colleges. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will be of interest to government officials, college leaders, faculty and staff as they review some of the colleges’ existing policies and practices and implement new initiatives to enhance their effectiveness in this area. In addition, the enhanced knowledge gained through this study allows me to improve my own leadership practices, particularly in reviewing and developing programs for the internationally trained immigrants.

Outlining the Plan for the Thesis

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter One has provided an introduction to this study, information on the researcher’s intent and purpose of this
study, and an outline of the research problem. It also identifies the research question and sub-questions and provides an overview of the significance of study.

In Chapter Two, the literature review discusses the history and context of internationally trained immigrant settlement in Canada, issues of ITI work-related skills in Canada and other countries, approaches of post-secondary institutions to address the changes in student demographics and their responsiveness to recent changes in increased internationally trained immigrant student populations. In addition, the theoretical and conceptual framework for this study is described.

The third chapter examines the methodology and data collection instruments which have been used in this study. A qualitative research design was chosen for the purpose of this research. Also, this chapter describes the site and participant selection, data collection process and recording, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapters Four and Five provide detailed accounts of Eastern and Western Colleges. The data collected from the interviews with participating college personnel and ITI students at each of the two study colleges are analyzed. The major themes that emerged from these interviews are presented in these chapters.

Chapter Six presents the comparative analysis of the two GTA colleges as it relates to the research question, sub-questions and conceptual framework of the study. The analysis is presented in the form of a summary which relates to the literature in the area of Ontario colleges and internationally trained immigrants.

The final chapter provides a summary of the study along with the implications for practice, theory, and further research.
**Definitions of Terms**

In this study, the following definitions are used:

**Bridge-Training Programs:** Ontario bridge-training programs are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and are designed specifically for internationally trained immigrants to acquire occupation-specific training (MCI, 2011). These programs bridge the gap between internationally trained immigrant’s knowledge and skills in their profession to Canadian labour market expectations.

**Collaborative Programs:** Collaborative programs allow students to pursue both a diploma and a degree concurrently. These programs offer students a combination of hands-on learning fostered by the Ontario colleges along with the academic approach of university education (Collaborative and Joint Degree Programs, 2012).

**Emic View:** “The inside perspective of ethnographers, who strive to describe a particular culture in its own terms” (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999, p.1).

**Etic View:** “The outsider perspective…who attempts to describe differences across cultures in term of a general and extended standard” (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999, p.1).

**Fast-Track Programs:** Fast-track programs are designed in Ontario colleges for those students who have already completed a post-secondary degree or diploma, in recognition that relevant content has been learned. It allows students to complete their program in a shorter than normal length of time than normal.

**Fundamentals/ Foundational Programs:** The fundamentals programs are upgrading certificate programs for students whose English and mathematics skills do not meet the
college entry requirements. They are generally one year in length and provide foundations for students to enhance their English, mathematics, and specific program skill areas.

**Immigration:** Immigrants entering Canada are categorized into three broad areas by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC):

- *Economic:* This category consists of skilled workers, business immigrants, live-in caregivers, and provincial/territorial nominees.

- *Family:* This category includes spouses, parents/grandparents, and other relatives of Canadian citizens and permanent residents over the age of 18.

- *Refugee:* This category consists of government-assisted refugees, privately-sponsored refugees, refugees landed in Canada, and dependents (of a refugee landed in Canada) who live abroad (Statistics Canada, 2008, p.5).

**International English Language Testing System (IELTS):** Internationally standardized English proficiency test which is administered and accepted globally.

**Internationally Trained Immigrant (ITI):** For the purpose of this study, an internationally trained immigrant is an immigrant who has attained post-secondary education and gained employment experience in countries outside of Canada.

**Labour Force:** As per Statistics Canada, the term labour force is applied to “the civilian, non-institutional population aged 15 and older who were employed or unemployed” (Statistics Canada, 2007, p. 10).

**Key Performance Indicators (KPI):** “Since 1998, colleges have been mandated by the Ontario government to collect and report performance data in five areas – graduate
satisfaction, student satisfaction, employer satisfaction, employment rate, and graduation rate” (Colleges, Ontario, 2012, p.1).

**Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR):** According to the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment project (2004), “prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) refers to particular practices and policies in Ontario Colleges to identify, assess, and recognize skills that cannot be reflected in formal credentials. Through PLAR, individuals are able to specify and challenge individual courses within a college program where they believe they have already achieved and surpassed the course outcomes. The purpose of PLAR is to grant academic credit for a particular course in a college program” (p. 3) for prior learning.

**Occupation-specific Language Training (OSLT):** Occupation-Specific Language Training programs are also funded through Citizenship and Immigration Canada and are designed to enhance ITI students’ industry related English communication skills and their understanding of Canadian workplace culture (Colleges Ontario, 2011, p.1).

**Professional (accrediting) Association:** Professional (accrediting) Association is “a body of persons engaged in the same profession, formed usually to control entry into the profession, maintain standards, and represent the profession in discussions with other bodies” (Collins Dictionary, 2012, p.1).

**Recent immigrants:** Individuals who have lived in Canada for 1-10 years (Statistics Canada, 2007).
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): Internationally accepted and administered English proficiency assessment test.

Transfer Credit: Transfer credit is “granted when a college considers previous academic work to be equivalent in content or objective to a corresponding course of study” (CIITE, 2004, p. 10).
Chapter Two – Literature Review

Chapter Overview

There is extensive research available on barriers to attaining successful employment for Internationally Trained Immigrants (ITIs). The literature that I reviewed demonstrated the need for regulatory bodies to work with ITIs and employers to recognize their foreign credentials and, in turn, secure their employment. However, only a few research studies - the CIITE project (2004; 2007; 2008; 2009); Alboim and Cohl (2007); Kelly (2007); and Lum (2007) - have investigated how Ontario colleges respond to ITI students’ occupational-training needs. In addition, Kilbride and D’Arcangelo (2002) identified an absence of scholarly research on immigrant community college students in general.

This literature review is divided into four parts. The first section explores the barriers faced by internationally trained immigrants, related primarily to a function of the Canadian immigration policy, labour market, and/or the professional regulatory bodies. The second area focuses on how Canada and other countries address issues of ITI work-related skills. Particularly, the literature describes how policies and practices in Europe and Australia differ from those in Canada. The third component examines how ITIs benefit from post-secondary institutions’ approaches to address the changes in student demographics. The final section focuses on how Ontario colleges are responding to the recent changes in the internationally trained immigrant student population which continues to increase. Also, this chapter presents how GTA Ontario colleges respond to the emerging trend of internationally trained immigrant students.
using the selected conceptual framework for this study, that is, single- and double-loop, organizational learning perspectives (Argyris and Schon, 1974, 1978).

**Are the Barriers that Internationally Trained Immigrants Face Primarily Related to the Canadian Immigration Policy, Labour Market, and/or Professional Regulatory Bodies?**

Canada is one of the countries that continues to be successful in accepting immigrants. A sizeable number of immigrants choose to settle in Canada’s three largest cities: Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. These cities are characterized as ‘gateway cities’ as they have high levels of foreign-born populations and large influxes of immigrants (Lewkowicz, 2008). The Statistics Canada (2008) report states that “almost 40% of all immigrants who came to Canada in 2006 chose to live in Toronto” (p. 3). Figure 1 presents the proportion of immigrants by province and demonstrates that a large percentage of immigrants choose to settle in Ontario. By 2011, immigration will account for 100% of all the net growth in the Canadian labour force due to the aging Canadian population and low fertility rates (Figure #1 depicts proportion of immigrants by province, 2006).
This trend has caused the ethno-cultural composition of these cities to become more diverse and greater in population size. The shift in the immigration pattern from European to non-European countries took place in 1967 with the introduction of the economic-class immigration category which admits immigrants based on the point system (Adamyti-Trache & Sweet, 2007; Alboim & Cohl, 2007; Bihendi, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Lewkowicz, 2008; Li, 2000; Lum, 2007; Papillon, 2002; Reitz, 2006, 2007). The point system encouraged immigration from non-European countries (Joshee and Johnson, 2005) in which immigrants are selected on the basis of education, work experience, knowledge of official language, and other factors that contribute towards employment success.

For Canada, with its goal of mass immigration, the point system responds to the desire to make large-scale immigration contribute to the development of the Canadian economy. Simply stated, skilled workers are needed in the kind of knowledge economy Canada aspires to develop. (Reitz, 2006, p. 6)
Prior to the implementation of the new policy, the previous immigration policy intended to create and reinforce a European settler society; however, after World War II, economic realities shifted the policy to one of attracting immigrants skilled in the manufacturing and construction sectors. This was the beginning of the policy taking on an explicitly economic emphasis. (Lewkowicz, 2008, p. 15)

However, it is only since 1987, that Canada’s immigration policy has emphasized the elimination of racial bias and selection of immigrants with high levels of post-secondary education and extensive work experience in their field.

Canada’s objectives for granting immigration to ITIs could be described as both intentional and unintended. It is intentional and strategic because the aim is to reduce socio-economic costs of educating professionals and increase social and cultural diversity (Conference Board of Canada, 2007). However, the reality is not what Canada anticipated because ITIs face significant barriers when accessing the Canadian labour market in which they are denied employment. Even though economic-class immigrants are more educated, they are under-employed and make less money than Canadians in general (CEP News, 2009).

One of the greatest challenges faced by ITIs is gaining recognition from the professional regulatory bodies that assess their previous education and work experience. Alboim, Finnie, and Meng (2005) stress that professional associations struggle to evaluate “what, for example, is an engineering degree from, say, the University of
Bangalore worth, as compared to one obtained in Canada?” (p. 14). They suggest that various levels of government should work collaboratively to intervene, provide resources, and request professional regulatory bodies to find ways to equitably evaluate foreign credentials. Brouwer (1999) argues that the credential recognition process should be transparent to internationally trained immigrants before they decide to immigrate to Canada. This would allow them to make informed decisions about immigration. Otherwise, immigrants are not aware of the professional regulatory association requirements for recognizing their educational and employment credentials as it relates to the Canadian labour force. Figure #2 depicts the level of education of immigrants to Canada.


The literature suggests that there is a disconnect between Canadian immigration policy, the labour market, and the accrediting regulatory bodies, which continues to impede the settlement process for internationally trained immigrants.
How Do Immigration Policies and Regulatory Professional Accreditation Practices in Europe and Australia Differ from those in Canada?

This section describes the immigration practices for ITIs within Europe and Australia, which may be considered to be exemplary in comparison to the immigration policies and practices in Canada. The European Union has adopted an approach to foreign credential recognition with standardized policies and practices. Before immigrating to a European Union country, ITIs must apply to a centralized institution which has affiliations with professional associations. This credential assessment process helps ITIs to make informed decisions about immigration (CIITE, 2008).

The European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and the network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) are mandated to work together “to provide a forum for the development of Europe-wide policies regarding the assessment of international credentials and to promote the efficient and fair recognition of international qualifications at national and Europe-wide levels” (CIITE, 2008, Appendix 6). Based on the recommendations of the ENIC and NARIC, a standardized portable document, Europass, provides potential employers with an understanding of ITIs’ education and experiences wherever they were obtained internationally. The Europass is recognized in European Union countries; ITIs are able to apply and use it for employment purposes (UK National Europass Centre, 2010; UNESCO & Council of Europe, 2004). For example, many ITIs settle in the United Kingdom (UK) and apply to the UK NARIC to have their credential assessed (CIITE, 2008). In addition, the UK National Reference Point for Vocational Qualifications (UK NRP) provides vocational and trade workers with an evaluation of their credentials for those who choose to work in the UK and other
European countries. These standardized credential recognition services provide opportunities for ITIs to find employment in their profession. However, it is not clear from the literature I reviewed whether these policies and practices are sufficient in helping ITIs achieve employment in their professions.

Australia also gives preference to ITIs who meet Australian certification standards in obtaining permanent residency (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008). Many individuals immigrate to Australia on the General Skilled Migration Program (GSM) or Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS) (CIITE, 2008). The Australian Education International National Office of Overseas Skill Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) provides evaluation of international qualifications. In addition, VETASSESS provides assessment of vocational education and training in which it assesses international credentials for GSM and ENS and provides competency assessments (CIITE, 2008). The Canadian Council on Learning (2008) notes that “the Australian approach appears to be successful: immigrants to Australia enjoy higher earnings than immigrants to Canada relative to native-born workers” (p. 6). 80% of immigrants to Australia find work in their skill areas within six months of arrival (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008).

In contrast to Europe and Australia, Canada lacks established policies related to credential recognition. Moreover, many ITIs are required to apply to specific professional regulatory and licensing bodies upon arrival in Canada. Canadian professional and licensing institutions have been given powers of self-regulation through provincial acts, statues, and regulations giving them relative autonomy of determining the process for entry into the profession.
In order to practice as a member of a regulated profession it is usually necessary, both for Canadian and international professionals, to obtain a license from the respective regulatory/licensing body. (Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (AIPSO) & Ontario Network for Access to Professional and Trades (ONAPT), 2000, p.2)

The decision making autonomy of Canadian professional regulatory bodies presents significant challenges to ITIs in having their credentials recognized. There are “instances of regulating bodies setting requirements that are virtually impossible for a newly arrived professional to meet” (AIPSO & ONAPT, 2000, p. 2). The barriers to employment faced by ITIs are similar across Canada (Adamowicz, 2004; AIPSO & ONAPT, 2000; The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Age (AMSSA), 2000; Davis and Wihak, 2006).

How Do ITI Students Benefit from Higher Educational Institutions’ Approaches to Address the Changes in Student Diversity?

There is not much current literature on how higher educational institutions address changes in the student population. The literature available for review could be considered erratic and inconsistent. Several diversity frameworks emerged in post-secondary institutions in response to the “diversity crisis” (Williams, 2008) which is experienced by institutions when there are extensive changes in the student constituency. Diversity planning and implementation in higher educational institutions take place sporadically, and appear to be embedded in only a few educational institutions’ policies and practices. Even more problematic is that these policies and practices are not
specifically targeted for the internationally trained immigrant student population. However, the ITIs may still benefit from some of them.

**Ontario context: College-university collaborative partnerships.**

College-university collaborative partnerships (Decock, 2004; Laden, 2005; Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 1990; Skolnik, 1995) are one way Ontario colleges are able to meet the current changes in student demographics and students’ educational needs. To provide educational pathways, Ontario colleges have established the College University Consortium Council (CUCC) to facilitate agreements between the college and university sectors (Decock, 2004). These bi-lateral initiatives between single colleges and single universities allow students to pursue both a diploma and a degree concurrently. These collaborative and joint programs (Appendix H) provide students with an opportunity to combine “the strong applied focus of college career-oriented programs with a strong foundation of theory and analytical skills” (Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 1990m p. 16). There is recognition among Ontario college personnel that students who are currently accessing post-secondary education have greater motivation to enhance their knowledge and pursue higher degrees (Laden, 2005; Skolnik, 1995). Moreover, “from a societal perspective, there is a need for more educated employees who have at least a baccalaureate degree to meet the demands of the still expanding knowledge economy” (Laden, 2005, p.3). However, few of these opportunities are offered at the Ontario colleges. For ITIs, collaborative and joint programs provide an opportunity to achieve not only a Canadian diploma, but also a degree.
Post-secondary context: Fast-track programs and fundamentals programs.

Fast-track programs are designed in Ontario colleges for those students who have already completed a post-secondary degree or diploma. These programs allow students to complete programs in a shorter period of time. There is recognition that relevant content has been learned in their previous degree or diploma programs. Many of the fast-track programs are accredited by professional associations (Appendix I). These programs are offered to all students who meet the program requirements. However, only a relatively few ITIs continue to access fast-track programs offered at Ontario colleges.

Fundamentals/Foundational programs, on the other hand, are developed for students who fail to meet the college entry requirements in English and mathematics. In some Ontario colleges, these programs are called Fundamentals and in others, they are referred to as Foundational. These are college upgrading certificate programs that provide essential English and mathematics skills for students to succeed in their program of choice. These programs are offered to high school graduates and mature students, but are not specific to ITI students. After successful completion of the fundamentals program, students are able to enrol in their chosen college programs.

Comprehensive context: “Campus Climate” and systemic approach.

Programs that incorporate cultural diversity approaches in institutions relate to the multicultural student population, and diversity efforts that are embedded in an institution’s mandate and in the curriculum, facilitate better learning because they do not focus on “a certain percentage of students of color, a certain number of programs – to be checked off a list” (Milem, Chang, and Antonio, 2005, p. iv). To understand how
campus environment relates to student cultural diversity is to consider the “campus climate” perspective as described by Milem, Chang, and Antonio needs to be considered. It is a multidimensional phenomenon that is shaped by the interaction of internal and external forces....climate is not limited to perceptions and attitudes (what they term the ‘psychological climate’), but also includes the institution’s structure and history as well as people’s interactions across differences. (2005, p. 14)

According to these authors, it is an approach that emphasizes an educational institution’s responsibility to embed psychological and behavioural dimensions so that the organization can enhance students’ learning where they are able to move “discourse about diversity from one that conceptualizes diversity as a democratic outcome to one that views diversity as a process” (p. 3). For internationally trained immigrants, “campus climate” offers the opportunity to access programs and services that are specific to their occupational needs, where Ontario colleges actually have made an effort to change their processes and practices to enable them to align their “institutional talk” with their “institutional walk” (Rowley, Hurtado, and Ponjuan, 2002, p. 3).

However, the campus climate approach could potentially overlook a wide range of diversity factors such as gender, sexual orientation and disability, to identify a few. In fact, addressing cultural diversity only addresses only one aspect of student diversity. These practices do not look beyond college programming and are not included in the services offered at the institutions. For example, in relation to ITIs, it appears that advising services at Ontario colleges do not necessarily include staff with broader
knowledge and understanding of foreign education and credentials and their relevance to programs and services offered. ITIs can be misinformed about their inquiries concerning their program of choice.

Williams (2008) states that, for successful planning and implementation of programs to meet more diverse student populations, change has to take place in stages and throughout the organization where the focus is on “building capacity; cultivating vision and buy-in; establishing accountability process; and providing an adequate level of financial, human, and technical resources by senior leadership to lead change over time” (p. 2) in their programs and services. This might involve inclusive hiring practices, training staff, embedding diversity principles across all disciplines, programs, and courses, and a commitment to “diversity change processes that are multifaceted, dynamic, coordinated, and evolving” (Williams, 2008, p. 3). Schoorman (2000) emphasizes that the commitment to student diversity should be “visible”, “vocal”, and “an integral facet of the mission statement of institutions” (p. 8). An approach that is embedded throughout an educational institution has the potential to create an inclusive environment that engages all stakeholders, values and celebrates differences, and maximizes skills, knowledge, and abilities in achieving organizational diversity goals. Institutions that “encourage the restructuring of educational settings to reflect democratic ideals of equality, justice, and freedom” (Laden, 2004, p. 184) cultivate inclusiveness.
The Evolution of Ontario Colleges’ Responsiveness to Immigration Trends,
Specifically to the Increased ITI Student Population

The Ontario college system was established in 1965 with a commitment to offer opportunities to those seeking specialized education that prepares for meaningful vocations (Dennison and Gallager, 1986; Kelly, 2006). The general mandate of the colleges was to prepare “individuals to enter the workforce, with training of both quality and relevance, to contribute to the economic progress of the province” (Dennison and Gallager; 1986, p. 95). The directive was to fulfill the educational needs of adults whether or not they held a high school diploma and to primarily serve the local community. The emphasis of the programs and training offered through Ontario colleges was therefore to provide relevant skills which were clearly different from those of universities (Stanyon, 2003).

In the first two decades, Ontario colleges served a more ethnically homogeneous student population that was primarily reflective of the European settlers (Kelly, 2007). In 1987, “country of origin” was removed from Canada’s immigration policy, encouraging immigrants from all over world to immigrate. The success of this policy is now apparent in the changes in the present day college student profile. According to the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), “Canadian society is transforming in response to the forces of globalization, the demands of the knowledge/information economy, and the challenges of demographic change” (2009, p. 1). Similarly, from the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO) report (2004), the province recognizes that “Ontario needs a strong adult education system in order to respond to emerging demand, meet skills shortages, enhance productivity, support the re-
entry of workers, and meet the needs of internationally trained individuals” (p. 2). In order to meet the vocational needs of the diverse student constituency, including ITIs, and to prepare them with specific occupational skills, Ontario colleges are seeking innovative ways to focus on program offerings and “the manner in which each college goes about meeting the objectives of the student population they serve and the broader needs of the community” (Kelly, 2006, p. 1).

To facilitate practices within the Ontario college education system and promote entry into the labour market for skilled immigrants, Alboim and the Maytree Foundation (2002) advocate a “systems approach” (p. 2). They argue that various internal and external stakeholders (college personnel, government, community agencies) working “together within and across sectors, will help to achieve more widespread results” (p. 16) in attaining an integrated system. This approach, they claim would value, respect, and recognize ITIs’ qualifications and identify bridging strategies to fill the gaps between their existing qualifications and the ones they aim to acquire. This systems approach would be comprised of the following interdependent components:

1. Incentives for all stakeholders to collaborate in designing, delivering and evaluating programs and services, and for skilled immigrants to access them.

2. Access by skilled immigrants to:
   - Information
   - Assessment Services
   - Expert advice
   - Bridging programs to fill identified gaps
3. A leadership council to foster collaboration, identify priorities and linkages, and communicate results (p. 2).

The emphasis is on leaders who are to collaborate, identify priorities in developing, delivering, and evaluating academic programs and services.

Taking into consideration the concept of a systems approach, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has funded the following initiatives in response to internationally trained immigrant students’ occupation-specific needs:

- Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project
- Bridge Training Programs
- Occupation-Specific Language Training Programs

**Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project.**

The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration led by CON*NECT Strategic Alliances (Colleges of Ontario Network for Education and Training) initiated and funded the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project in December 2003. “The project is designed to improve the pathways for internationally trained immigrants (ITIs) through the Ontario college system, from pre-entry services through employment transition and into the workforce” (CIITE, 2011, p.1).

CIITE has developed a consistent approach in collaboration with all Ontario colleges while providing flexibility in how they implement the recommended policies and practices in the areas of credential recognition, advising services for ITIs, language
benchmarking for college programs, competency assessment, data collection, employment services, organizational development – college action plans, flexible/modular delivery working groups, and francophone issues (CIITE, 2011). The objective of the project was to provide educational opportunities for ITIs facing significant barriers in accessing programs and services in the Ontario colleges (CIITE, 2004). For instance, Internationally Trained Immigrant Advising Centers have been established in several colleges and are serving foreign trained immigrants in providing information and guidance about programs and services offered at the colleges and within their community. These services are offered to all internationally trained immigrants even those who are not interested in accessing the college programs. One of the main reasons CIITE is funding the colleges in this area is that they believe that advising services for ITIs address the issue that too many ITIs waste time, money and motivation or information, advice and support to reach their employment goals. ITI advising services are critical to raise awareness of, and access to, the information that will enable ITIs to gain meaningful employment. (CIITE, 2011, p. 1)

According to the CIITE Advisement Monthly Report (2008), the number of ITI students accessing their services is increasing steadily.

Another critical area where CIITE has made progress is in the credential recognition process. A preliminary step initiated by the CIITE project (2008) has
recently implemented a new admission process called *The Record of Education and Experience* (REE) –

The REE captures an applicant’s personal information, education history, credentials assessed, language test results, work experience, and professional memberships and license. The REE is designed to be a portable document that would be consistently used across the Ontario college system when processing applications for academic recognition.

(CIITE, 2008, p. 5)

The system allows colleges to communicate transfer credits so that students are able to complete the courses that they lack from their transcripts in order to gain a Canadian diploma or certificate. Currently, only a few colleges are participating in implementing REE in their admission practices.

The CIITE project came to its completion in March 2011, and it is up to each Ontario college to make institution-wide changes in how they serve the needs of ITI students and the areas that CIITE has recommended.

**Bridge-training programs.**

Ontario bridge-training programs (Appendix K) are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada specifically for internationally trained immigrant students. These programs recognize ITI students’ prior credentials and are designed specifically for their occupation-specific goals. The components of this program include:
• An initial assessment of education and skills

• Workplace experience

• Skills training or targeted academic training programs

• Preparation for a license or certification examination

• Occupation-specific language training

• Individual learning plans to identify any additional training if needed (MCI, 2011, p.1)

The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Canada provides bursaries up to $5,000 for each student who has successfully enrolled in an Ontario bridge-training program. The bursary covers the cost of tuition, books, and equipment (Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance Program, 2011). This program provides ITI students with the opportunity to gain Canadian education and experience and prepare for professional license or certification examination in a short period of time. However, the bridge-training programs are not designed for all ITIs. They are only offered to ITI students who have high Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores.

**Occupation-specific language training.**

Occupation-specific language training (OSLT) programs (Appendix L) are also funded through Citizenship and Immigration Canada and are offered at 13 Ontario
colleges and at various community centers. These programs are developed for ITIs who are “permanent resident(s) or protected person(s)” (Colleges Ontario, 2011, p. 1) of Canada. The eligible students have to achieve Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 6 to 8 in their English proficiency. The curriculum is interactive and the focus is on improving students’ listening and speaking skills within a short period of time (180 hours). The objective of the OSLT program is to enhance ITI students’ industry-related English communication skills and their understanding of Canadian workplace culture (Colleges Ontario, 2011).

**Conceptual Framework**

Using an organizational learning perspective (Morgan, 1997), this study explores how the two GTA Ontario colleges that are the focus of this study are responding to the emerging needs of internationally trained immigrant students. The concept of organizational learning is based on the notion that organizations that are continuously evolving and changing. The emphasis is on the learning process that is based on experience and intended to maintain or improve organizational performance. As such, Senge (1990) argues for organizations to be considered learning organizations, people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (cited in Infed, 2012, p. 2)

Even though organizations have the capacity to learn, Senge states that organizational structures may not foster reflection and engagement of all their people. For
organizational learning to take place, organizations need to “discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels” (cited in Infed, 2012, p. 2). Senge also states that it is necessary for organizations to provide guidance and tools for people to achieve organizational learning. This approach helps to create successful organizational change. For Senge, change takes place in increments and it is flexible, adaptive, and productive. Similarly, Argyris and Schon (1981) argue that the members of the organization “act as learning agents for the organization. They act as learning agents when they detect a match or mismatch of outcome to expectations” (cited in Nevis, DiBella, Gould, 2000, p. 20). In this case, learning is considered to be as significant as production and delivery in an organization.

Argyris and Schon (1974, 1978) describe two types of organizational learning that either foster or sustain change: single- and double-loop learning. In this context, a loop is referred to as a learning cycle and organizations are “complex arrangements of people in which learning takes place” (Nevis, Ghoreishi, Gould, 1995, p. 3). In single-loop learning (Figure 3), organizations have become proficient in achieving a “desired result (but) without reflection upon the true appropriateness or value of that action and its intended result…the same end is always in place as the desired outcome” (Paul, 2003, p. 38). Single-loop practices develop the ability “to scan the environment, set objectives, and monitor the general performance of the system in relation to these objectives” (Morgan, 1997, p. 88). However, when the situation becomes challenging and unstable, colleges “have great difficulty adapting to the changing circumstances because they are designed to achieve predetermined goals” (Morgan, 1997, p. 28; Bascia & Jacka, 2002).
Single-loop learning is based on the belief that organizations can achieve desired outcomes without significantly changing existing practices.

In this study, Ontario colleges can be seen as learning organizations which employ single-loop learning. Ontario colleges have established the system of policies and practices that primarily serve the direct entry students from high schools (Dennison & Gallager, 1986). These practices can be considered linear and unidirectional based on an input and output model. ITI students are generally placed into an already existing system which does not address the internationally trained immigrants’ diverse needs. For instance, when ITI students are advised to begin their first year of study in an established college program and previous international credentials are not taken into consideration, this recommendation could be perceived as an example of the single-loop learning practice. In this case, the college disregarded the ITI students’ specific retraining needs, which is reflective of the single-loop learning.

Figure 3. Depicts the process of single-loop learning in relation to college practices as it relates to ITI students' occupation-specific needs. This framework is developed based on the concepts found in the literature review.
Argyris and Schon (1974, 1978) emphasize the importance of achieving double-loop learning (Figure #2), which they state is usually the missing level of learning in organizations. In double-loop learning, the focus is on achieving proficiency by questioning whether organizational “operating norms” (Morgan, 1997, p.87) are appropriate through “reflection upon not only actions, but the appropriateness of the outcomes those actions are intended to achieve” (Paul, 2003, p. 39). Double-loop learning requires that organizations have successful strategies in place to review and challenge on-going, pre-determined practices. In relation to the focus of this study, there would be continuous mechanisms in place to ensure ITI students’ input and feedback are considered and the colleges are able to reflect and analyze them in order to design new policies and practices. Figure 4 depicts the double-loop learning process.

Ontario colleges could also be seen as practicing double-loop learning. Recognizing the changing ITI student occupational- specific needs, they have responded by developing new programs such as bridge training and occupation-specific language training (OSLT) programs, which are tailored to ITIs and assist in meeting the requirements of their professions. This initiative could be described as double-loop learning practice. However, if the efficacy of the established bridge training programs or OSLT has not been assessed, this initiative could be considered single-loop learning.

Using the concepts of single-loop and double-loop learning, this study explores how two GTA colleges respond to ITI students’ occupational-training needs. The following domain have been established to determine what college policies and practices adhere to single- and double-loop organizational learning:
Figure 4. Depicts the process of double-loop learning in relation to college practices as it relates to ITI students’ occupation-specific needs. This framework is developed based on the concepts found in the literature review.

- What does the evidence suggest about the learning process and adequacy of program delivery and services for ITI students at the study colleges?

- What does the evidence suggest about the depth, salience, and spread of the resulting actions at the study colleges?

**Summary of Literature Review**

The literature review examined existing literature in four areas: (1) Canadian immigration policy, labour market and professional regulatory bodies; (2) Accreditation practices and immigration policies for ITIs in Europe and Australia; (3) Post-secondary
institutions’ approaches in addressing changes in student demographics; (4) Ontario colleges responsiveness to the increased ITI student population.

The literature review indicated that immigrants generally settle in Ontario, primarily in the Greater Toronto Area hoping to find suitable employment (Lewkowicz, 2008). However, the statistics showed that a large proportion of ITIs face significant challenges because of inconsistencies in immigration policy (Adamyti-Trache & Sweet, 2007; Alboim & Cohl, 2007; Bihendi, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Lewkowicz, 2008; Li, 2000; Lum, 2007; Papillon, 2002; Reitz, 2006, 2007), the requirements of regulatory bodies (Alboim, Finnie, and Meng, 2005; Brouwer, 1999), and the expectations of the labour market (Reitz, 2006; Lewkowicz, 2008; Adamowicz, 2004; AIPSO & ONAPT, 2000; AMSSA, 2000; Davis and Wihak, 2006). As a result, the ITIs find that their credentials and previous work experiences are not recognized fully. In comparison with Canada, Europe and Australia established standardized credential recognition policies which provide opportunities for ITIs to find employment in their field of work (UK National Europass Centre, 2010; UNESCO & Council of Europe, 2004; CIITE, 2008; Canadian Council on Learning, 2008).

It is evident that the lack of established policies related to credential recognition in Canada forces ITIs to access Ontario colleges for retraining (Kelly, 2007; Alboim and the Maytree Foundation, 2002; CIITE 2011). At the same time, Ontario colleges seem to be unprepared to accommodate the changes in ITI student demographics. The literature reviewed identified that the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Canada has funded a few initiatives for ITIs (e.g., CIITE, Bridge Training Programs, OSLT). However,
these initiatives do not embrace the needs of all ITI students. For instance, the bridge training and OSLT programs are developed only in certain sectors (i.e., business, health, and engineering). Still, the majority of the ITI students are engaging in programs that are developed for direct entry students from high school.

To examine these GTA Ontario college practices, this study utilizes Argyris and Schon’s (1974, 1978) work on the single- and double-loop organizational learning as the most appropriate framework. In educational institutions that adhere to single-loop learning, the existing practices remain unchallenged while the organizations that adopt double-loop learning continuously question and redesign the educational practices through reflection, analysis, and evaluation. This organizational learning theory is also used in the interpretation of the study findings.
Chapter Three - Methodology

Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the methodology and research procedures used in this study. This chapter focuses on the following areas: the qualitative research design, site and participant selection, data collection and recording, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Description of Research Methodology

This is an exploratory, descriptive case study of two selected Ontario colleges using qualitative research methods for data collection and document analysis and interviews. These qualitative methods allowed for exploration of the phenomena that are the focus of this study through the emic perspective, that is, the experiences of the participants who are samples of Internationally Trained Immigrant (ITI) students and college personnel from two Ontario colleges located in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). According to Merriam (1998), qualitative research “implies a direct concern with experience as it is ‘lived’ or ‘felt’ or ‘undergone’ [by study participants]….It is assumed that meaning is embedded in people’s experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator’s own perceptions” (p. 6). Patton (1985) supports Merriam’s perspective by emphasizing that qualitative research is:

- an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for
participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting – and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting…The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 6)

As noted, it is the experiences and narratives of individuals in social situations that lend themselves to the construction of knowledge. The meanings which unfolded from the qualitative study are generated by a process which takes place naturally. Hence, depth, richness, and detail provided by qualitative inquiry are related to the broader context of the study (Shram, 2003).

The main research question this study examined is how responsive two participating Ontario colleges in the Greater Toronto Area are to internationally trained immigrant students’ occupation-specific needs as identified by the ITIs themselves. This research identifies a significant social problem for foreign trained immigrants who feel marginalized; as a result, they face challenges and barriers in their integration into Canadian society. Highly educated immigrants are accessing Ontario college education in the hope that, upon graduation, they will find skilled related employment and contribute to settlement in their new homeland. In order to understand the phenomenon in a broader context, additional sub-questions guiding the exploration of the main research question are developed:

1. Based on their experience and satisfaction, how do participating ITI students perceive the value of what the College provides for them?
2. Based on their experience and their college’s policies and practices, how do participating college personnel perceive the value of what the College provides for the ITI students?

3. What successful policies and practices do the study colleges have in place to respond to the ITI students’ occupational training needs?

These sub-questions allowed me to focus on the experiences of college personnel and ITI students within the two Ontario GTA colleges in this study to “discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 11).

**The Researcher**

According to Kirby and Mc Kenna (1989), “the kind of people we are is at the root of what, how and why we research. We bring our Self as a resource to our researching” (p. 19). I can relate my interest in this research topic to my personal and professional experience as an administrator and an immigrant of internationally trained professional parents. For me, the excitement of wanting to learn more about this topic began to grow when I became an administrator in one Ontario college. I came to understand that my researcher self, my administrator self, and my immigrant self are at the center of my research process. Kirby and Mc Kenna (1989) explain that doing research is a human activity. When we engage in research we involve ourselves in a process in which we construct meaning. Because the social world is multifaceted (i.e., the same situation or experience is
able to give us many different kinds of knowledge), when we ‘do research’ we involve ourselves in a process of revealing possible knowledges. (p. 25)

In this study, I am what Kirby and Mc Kenna describe as researching from the margins. “In researching from the margins we are concerned with how research skills can enable people to create knowledge that will describe, explain, and help change the world in which they live” (p.17). Hence, in this inquiry, as I gathered and analyzed meaningful information, I found connections and themes which addressed the phenomenon and ways how Ontario colleges have responded to changes in ITI students’ retraining needs. Even though I was personally close to the topic (as a child of internationally trained immigrant parents who experienced the difficulties I explored, and as an Ontario college administrator), I consciously checked myself repeatedly to ensure that my own attitude and experiences did not bias my interpretation while I was interviewing and analyzing the data. I also adopted an etic (outsider) view by discussing my findings with my thesis advisor.

**Site Selection**

The site selection was based on the location, size, and student demographics of the two Ontario colleges that are the focus of this study. For the purposes of this study, they are referred to by the pseudonyms Western and Eastern Colleges. These are two of the largest colleges in Ontario and are located in different parts of the highly populated, multi-culturally diverse in GTA. The Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) monthly reports indicate that these two GTA colleges serve a critical mass of ITI
students. According to Statistics Canada (2006), such a large number of immigrants have settled in the GTA that the colleges selected for this study are now considered to be some of the most culturally diverse post-secondary institutions in Canada, serving students from over 100 ethno-cultural groups who speak more than 80 languages. Moreover, these two colleges serve a large number of internationally trained immigrants who access the ITI Advising Services.

**Selection of Participants**

Both the college staff and ITIs who were invited to participate in this study were a purposive sample of convenience. The college staff sample was stratified in that several individuals were selected from different roles within the colleges: administrators (deans, chairs and directors), faculty, and support staff in student advising roles.

Initially, I invited eight college personnel and eight ITI students from each of the two study colleges to participate in interviews for this study. However, it was challenging to find college personnel and ITI students who would be willing to participate in this study. Some participants responded that they did not have the time to be interviewed, and others indicated that they did not see the importance or potential impact of the study. Specifically, some of the ITI students stated that they believed that their experiences and perspectives would not make a difference in the responsiveness of the colleges to the needs of ITI students; therefore, they did not see the relevance of participating in the study. In the end, a total of twenty-seven consenting participants were interviewed. Seven college employees from each of the two colleges participated in face-to-face or telephone interviews, and concurrently, telephone and face-to-face
interviews were conducted with seven ITI students from Eastern College and six students from Western College. The CIITE management staff at CON*NECT Strategic Alliances provided publically available contact information of the administrator serving on the CIITE project from each study college. I contacted the key administrator at each participating college to discuss my study and provided them with the information letter (Appendix D). They also helped in contacting the college personnel participants and arranged for a telephone meeting with me. These participants were all experienced in working with ITI students in different capacities at their colleges. The positions included three administrators, two faculty, and two support staff from each of the two study colleges. The college personnel participants also distributed the ITI student recruitment flyer (Appendix G) electronically to their students that invited ITI students to volunteer to participate in this study. The flyer explained the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary and that the ITI students would be asked to participate in an interview which would last about 45 minutes to 1 hour. Interested students were asked to contact me directly. From the total 18 ITI student participants who responded as volunteers from both colleges, I asked them the following questions for selection:

1. Have you attained post-secondary education and gained employment training in a country outside of Canada?

2. Are you enrolled in a full-time, three-year or shorter college level certificate or diploma program?

I sent the information letter (Appendix C) by e-mail to the selected ITI student participants who met these inclusion criteria and arranged a convenient time and
comfortable place for the interview. I also e-mailed the written Consent Form (Appendix E) and asked them to sign it prior to the interview. The consent forms were collected prior to the face-to-face interview or faxed before the telephone interview. Participants were informed (Appendices C & D) that participation was completely voluntary and non-participation would in no way impact on the students’ progress in the program of study now or in the future; participants were free not to answer any questions they did not wish to answer, and they could withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or penalty. If they withdrew, all data collected from them up to that point would be destroyed and not included in the study findings. Participants were also told that none of the interviewees or study colleges were identifiable in any reporting of the study findings in relevant publications or conferences. None of the participants withdrew from the study. The interviewees were assured that all information was kept secure and confidential once the audio-tapes of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed. The information was kept in a secure location, accessible only to me and my faculty supervisor.

Research Instrumentation and Data Collection

The data collected to answer the research questions were generated by: (a) interviews of a purposive sample of convenience of key informants in the two study colleges, that is administrators, faculty, and support staff; (b) interviews of ITI students from each of the two colleges who volunteered to participate in the study and met the selection criteria, and (c) document analysis of relevant codified policies of each study college.
**Instrumentation/data collection tools.**

Interview data on the perspectives of both college and ITI participants on the topic of interest were generated by using semi-structured questionnaires (Appendices A and B) to guide the interview conversations. The interview questions for the semi-structured interview guide were generated by me based on the literature reviewed, my own experience of ten years as an Ontario college administrator, and conversations with ITI students and college personnel.

**Ensuring credibility of data collected.**

To ensure content and face validity of the interview questions the instruments were pilot tested with several individuals who were very familiar with the topic of interest. Interview questions were pilot tested with one college administrator and one ITI student to ensure relevance, clarity and appropriateness (i.e., not leading) of the questions prior to conducting the interviews. Revisions to few of the interview questions were made based on their feedback. The nature of the revisions was primarily to ensure relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the interview questions prior to conducting the interviews.

**Data collection process: Document analysis.**

First, an in-depth content analysis of publicly available relevant documents of the study colleges was conducted after transcribing interview data. These documents included policies, practices, messages from the public web-sites, and marketing materials and were used to analyze existing programs and services to ITIs offered at each college.
I conducted a deep content analysis of the documents to identify themes that emerged that were relevant to the focus of this study.

**Data Collection Process: Interviews with Key Informants and ITI students in the two study colleges.**

Semi-structured interviews (Appendices A and B) were conducted concurrently with a sample of Ontario college personnel and with participating ITI students. The semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewer and interviewee to engage in “conversation with a purpose, a ‘person-to-person encounter’ in which one person elicits information from another” (Merriam, 1998, p. 71). Specifically, these interviews were well-suited to this study because it was the best way to understand individual experiences and gave the ITI students and college personnel an opportunity to voice their thoughts and generated insight into the topic.

I employed a constructivist approach for generating the understanding I was seeking in this study. This constructivist approach was appropriate for this study as “the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the view of participants. This means identifying a culture-sharing group and studying how it develops shared patterns of behaviour…” (Creswell, 2009. p.16). Through dialogue with the participants, I was able to construct meaning and perspectives on the phenomena explored.

In a semi-structured interview, the researcher has a list of questions on a specific topic, and the interviewee has the flexibility in how to respond. Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 314) state that “The emphasis must be on how the interviewee frames and understands
issues and events – that is, what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understanding events, patterns, and forms of behaviour.” In this study, English is a second language for many of the participants. Hence, semi-structured interviews provided the participants with structured questions which were useful for collecting the data as they provided the opportunity to clarify their questions that might arise.

Interviews took place over a six-month period. Each interview lasted approximately an hour, and was conducted over the telephone or in a safe and confidential environment of the participant’s choice. At Eastern College, I met with six out of seven college personnel and three out of seven ITI students. I conducted telephone interviews with the remaining participants. At Western College, I conducted telephone interviews with all college personnel and all but two out of six ITI student participants with whom I met. With the signed consent of the participants, the interviews were audio-taped, both telephone and face-to-face interviews were recorded on separate cassette tapes, labeled, and transcribed by me.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis began during data collection (Creswell, 2009 & 2007). First, document analysis was conducted on the Colleges’ Strategic Plans, Business Plans, Multi-year Accountability Reports, Annual Reports, International Strategy Reports, policies, practices, programs offered at the colleges, messages from the public web sites and marketing materials. I identified specific references to ITIs and themes generated from these documents.
The document analysis was followed by the interviews. Through these interviews, I was able to consider “information about actions and interactions (that was shared), reflect on their meaning, arrive at and evaluate conclusions, and eventually put forward an interpretation” of findings (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p. 21). Analysis of the data generated by the interviews followed the three stages described by Creswell (2002): preparing and organizing data for analysis, exploring the data, describing and developing themes from the data. This approach allowed me to identify emerging themes in different categories (in Sarkans, 2008). According to the data analysis, the two categories (admission practices and program delivery) and some of the themes (admission requirements, advising, credential recognition, and support services) were pre-determined by the interview questions based on the literature review and document analysis. However, several themes in relation to ITI students and college personnel (enrolment of ITI students, customized programming, participation of ITIs in program and policy development, and program evaluation) emerged through data analysis. I developed a matrix (Table 1 & 2) for each study college using data by searching for recurrent experiences, feelings, and attitudes in order to analyze and code the data from the perspectives of both ITI students and college personnel. An additional matrix (Table 3) was developed to provide a format to arrange the data and to determine if colleges were using single-loop or double-loop organizational learning in responding to ITI students’ occupational-training needs. The following domains were used for determining the organizational learning, single- and double-loop process:

1. What do the findings suggest about the learning process and adequacy of program delivery and services for ITI students?
2. What do the findings suggest about the depth, salience, and spread of the resulting actions?

Cross-case analysis was conducted to compare the findings in the two study colleges.

Table 1
Analysis of Eastern College’s responsiveness to ITI students’ occupational-training needs – ITI Study Student Participants’ Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key college programs and services</th>
<th>Issues identified by interviewed ITIs</th>
<th>Number of ITI student participants identifying as an issue</th>
<th>Based on the criteria for determining single- and/ or double-loop learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Analysis of Eastern College’s responsiveness to ITI students’ occupational-training needs – College Personnel Participants’ Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key college programs and services</th>
<th>Issues identified by interviewed college personnel</th>
<th>Number of college personnel participants identifying as an issue</th>
<th>Based on the criteria for determining single- and/ or double-loop learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethical Issues

Formal approval for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Toronto and from each of the two colleges selected for this study before any research activity was begun. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the participating colleges, college personnel, and ITI students.

Table 3

Comparative analysis between Eastern and Western Colleges based on single- and double-loop organizational learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend:</th>
<th>Single Loop</th>
<th>Double Loop</th>
<th>Both Single- and Double Loop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for determining organizational learning</th>
<th>Issues identified in the document</th>
<th>Eastern College</th>
<th>Western College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criterion 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study participants were assured that neither of the interviewees nor the study colleges would be identifiable in any reporting of the study findings in relevant publications or conferences.

Participants were informed in the Information Letters (Appendices C & D) and again in the Consent Forms (Appendices E & F) that participation was completely voluntary, participation or non-participation would in no way impact on the students’ progress in the program of study now or in the future or the employment of the college
staff. At no time would their responses be judged or evaluated and participants were free to decline to answer any questions they did not wish to answer. Participants were assured that the information obtained would be kept confidential and secure at all times; all digital data would be stored on a password protected computer. All the information pertaining to this study (interview transcripts and audio tapes) would be stored securely and accessible only to my faculty supervisor and me.

They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time - without explanation or penalty. If they withdrew, all data collected from them up to that point would be destroyed and not included in the study findings. However, all of the consenting participants completed the interviews and none withdrew from the study.

Lastly, I was not and would not reasonably anticipate being in a relationship with any of the participants where there might be a real or perceived impact on their employment at the colleges in the case of the college staff, or progress in the programs of the ITIs.

Assumptions and Limitations

The assumptions and limitations of this study are as follows:

(1) One of the assumptions is that the ITI interviewees in this study provided honest responses to the questions since they personally had nothing to gain or lose from participating or not participating in this study. Also, I assumed that they were intrinsically motivated to improve the transition to life in Canada for others who might be in similar situations.
(2) Likewise, the college staff who participated also had nothing to gain or lose personally from participating or not participating in this study making it reasonable to assume that their responses were also an accurate reflection of their experiences and perspectives.

(3) A perceived limitation may be that I am also an administrator in an Ontario college and the child of immigrant professionals which might bias my interpretation of the findings. However, as stated previously, at no time was I in a line relationship or in a position of power of any kind over any of the study participants. And, I consciously made every effort to check myself to ensure as unbiased an interpretation of the data as is possible.

(4) The most important limitation of this study is that the data were collected only from the two selected GTA Ontario colleges and small samples of convenience of employees and ITI students of those colleges. Although the findings enrich our understanding of how GTA Ontario colleges respond to ITI students’ occupational-specific needs, they cannot be generalized to all of the twenty-four Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario or other similar institutions. In fact, the study colleges are not likely representative of many other, if any, of the Ontario colleges. Colleges which are located in other areas in Ontario probably do not have a similar influx of immigrants settling in those areas; hence, they might not experience the challenges which are specific to the GTA colleges. Furthermore, the biggest barriers and challenges encountered by ITI students are more directly related to the larger issue of acceptance of the credentials of internationally trained professionals by the credentialing professional associations in Canada. Ontario
colleges have very little, if any, impact on these significant barriers. Despite the guidance and occupational retraining a college may provide for eager ITIs, the certifying bodies still act as fierce and protective gate keepers related to entry to practice. These issues are beyond the scope of this study.

Regardless of these limitations, the findings in this exploratory, descriptive case study should add to our understanding of the issues and hopefully will be useful to those educational institutions (and hopefully policy makers) who sincerely attempt to address the urgent needs of ITI students who have been invited to come to Canada with great expectations but often find barriers to continuing in their chosen professions.
Chapter Four – Research Findings: Eastern College

Chapter Overview

The findings of this study are presented in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four focuses on the data collected from Eastern College and Chapter Five on the data from Western College. The responses of fourteen participants (seven college staff and seven ITIs) interviewed for this study at Eastern College are presented and analyzed to describe their experiences and perceptions. This chapter consists of four sections. The first section is the document analysis of the College’s Strategic Plan, Business Plan, Multi-Year Accountability Report, Annual Report, International Strategy Reports, policies, practices, messages from the public web-sites, and marketing materials. The second and third sections are the presentations of the interview data gathered from Eastern College personnel and ITI students. The final section is a comparative analysis of the findings from the participants and college personnel at Eastern College.

Based on the documents reviewed and data collected, it appears that ITI students are not an institutional priority at Eastern College. Rather, the college views ITI students as part of the larger student constituency. The College’s holistic view of students obscures the possibility of specific support for ITIs; therefore, the unique occupation-specific needs of ITI students are overlooked in their policies and practices.

Eastern College: Overview and Document Review

Eastern College serves over 20,000 full time students on more than 10 campuses. The College’s mission is to provide high quality education which prepares its students for career-related professions by developing programs which are current to industry
demands. In 2008, nearly ¾ of the 20,000 students surveyed cited employment or career preparation as the main goal for attending college. In order to achieve its academic goals, Eastern College is committed to providing students with access, academic upgrading, and flexible program delivery to embrace life-long learning.

In its recent Strategic Plan and Business Plan, there is recognition of Eastern College’s new trend in the student constituency and their specific occupational needs; however, these plans do not provide any specific action for ITI students. In its most recent planning framework, Eastern College identified foreign trained professionals as a unique group of students to whom multiple entry and bridging programs would be offered. It recognized that the majority of the College’s students are mature students. Further, a large proportion of them are internationally trained immigrants who hold university degrees, and that they needed to have their credentials supplemented by Canadian post-secondary education.

The College’s Multi-Year Accountability Agreement Report, which assists the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) in measuring the participation of students from under-represented groups (Aboriginal, first generation, students with disabilities, mature students and francophone students), discussed specific programming such as bridging into diploma programs, but ITIs are not identified as a target group. The Multi-Year Accountability Agreement Report identifies disadvantaged communities, and, according to their report, there is an ambiguity in understanding and recognition of ITI student population which is marginalized.
According to the College’s website, the College received funds from Citizenship Immigration Canada to develop two bridge-training programs for internationally trained professionals. These bridge-training programs are designed specifically for ITI students and the focus of the programs is to provide additional training and Canadian work experience while recognizing ITI students’ previous education and experience. These programs are generally one year in length and have field specific admission requirements. The first bridge-training program at Eastern College was implemented recently, and the College was in the process of developing their second bridge-training program at the time of the study.

**Eastern College: College Personnel Demographics**

The demographic information for Eastern College personnel is presented in Table 4. A purposive, stratified sample of a total of seven college personnel was interviewed. They are categorized based on their current occupation and Ontario college occupational classification (Whitaker, 2008). Of the seven participants, three are in administrative positions (Dean, Director, and Chair), two are faculty, and two are support staff. All seven individuals are in positions that influence ITI students’ academic success at the College.
Table 4

Profile of Study Participants – Eastern College Personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (Pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Ontario College Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doug</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nate</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronac</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Eastern College: College Personnel Interview Findings**

This section presents the College personnel’s experiences and views on how Eastern College addresses ITI students’ occupation-specific needs. The semi-structured interview questions are attached in Appendix B. All of the College personnel interviewed impact ITI students in their education at the College. Several interviewees are administrators who oversee specific schools and programs; several are faculty who guide students through teaching and academic advising; and others are support staff who work as ITI advisors at the College. For instance, they described their roles as follows:

Bob explained:

One of my jobs is to coordinate the College’s efforts in various directions and one of those directions is to work with internationally trained immigrants and I am the lead person when it comes to Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment project and have been the person
that the College depends on addressing the needs of internationally trained immigrants.

Doug said:

Being a coordinator and professor, I am the interface between our students, our faculty, and our programs. I get quite involved with students who get admitted into the programs and help them resolve any issues that they have with the courses that they are taking.

Mary commented:

I (have) worked with internationally trained immigrants for 19 years… My recent position through CIITE within the College is (to coordinate and oversee) the day-to-day operations and advising ITI students.

The interview results are divided into two main categories, key College programs and services, and issues related to these as identified by interviewed college personnel (Table 5). There are two main domains covered in the data: admission practices and program delivery. Within these categories, several key college programs and services were discussed: enrolment, admission requirements, advising, credential recognition, customized programming, program evaluation, support services, participation of ITI students in program and policy development, and lack of effort to accommodate ITI students. These key college programs and services are further divided into specific issues identified by college personnel, based on their experiences and point of view and presented in greater detail.
Table 5
Themes Arising from Interviews of College Personnel at Eastern College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Key college programs and services</th>
<th>Issues identified by interviewed college personnel</th>
<th>Number of college personnel identifying as an issue (n=7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admission Practices</td>
<td>Enrolment of ITI Students</td>
<td>Increasing enrolment of ITI students</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admission Requirements</td>
<td>Uncertainty of the credential submission process</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inability to align international standardized English language proficiency tests (IELTS, TOEFL) with the college assessment test</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>Restructuring of advising services</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credential Recognition</td>
<td>Subjectivity in granting credential recognition and requirement for consistent approach</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Delivery</td>
<td>Customized Programming</td>
<td>One bridge-training program at the college and its dependency on government funding.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of consideration for ITI specific needs (Students are in regular programs or fundamentals)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>Bridge-training programs have not been evaluated</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adherence to regular program evaluation (KPI)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support Services</td>
<td>Absence of specific services for ITI students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation of ITI Students in Program and Policy Development</td>
<td>No policies specifically addressing the needs of ITI students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of Effort to Accommodate ITI students</td>
<td>No revenue from ITI specific programs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of effort to accommodate ITI student needs (inconvenience to change the system)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Admission practices.

The following section of this chapter presents the findings in the area of admission practices from the perspective of participating college personnel. Specifically, enrolment, admission requirements, advising, and credential recognition practices for ITI students at the Eastern College are explored. The findings are as follows.

Enrolment of ITI students.

Participants were asked about the enrolment of ITI students, and all seven interviewees noted an increase in ITI student enrolment compared with previous years. However, the participants indicated that the College does not keep any specific records of ITI student enrolment; the College keeps data of overall numbers of full-time and part-time students. The two comments that follow are representative of the comments of the entire group:

Bob said:

My observation is that ITI students have increased dramatically….we know certain pockets of ITI students have increased, so in a number of graduate certificate programs there are ITIs… I have no statistical analysis which is one of the deficits that we have…. we have no measure of ITI students in full-time programs.
Nate agreed:

We are now seeing far more (professionally) trained (and) accredited individuals entering (college) programs. It is a significant number of people (who) now have credentials from some other place other than Canada... But, I don’t have statistics on the ITI student enrolment.

The reasons for increased enrolment of ITI students are indicated in participants’ comments that are based on their observations of working with ITI students in various capacities. According to all of the participants, the ITI students at Eastern College are highly trained professionals, who are enrolled in various college programs. The participants want to gain hands-on, practical experience and training and they perceive college education as a pathway to finding appropriate employment. For example, Doug stated:

Yes, in the past five years I have seen the increase (in ITI student population). Many ITIs are coming to colleges because they can see the value of education in helping them to find appropriate jobs. One third of our students in our department are ITIs. Across the College, I am not sure. In the past 5 years, more and more ITIs are coming into the College and they come to us because of our practical aspect of the learning process. They want the hands-on, industry contact, quick, and related to their past experience. Most of our curriculum is hands-on which is what they are looking for.
Admission requirements.

More than half the Eastern College respondents (n=5) stated that students applying for two or three year diploma programs apply through Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) and for bridge-training programs directly into the college. OCAS is the centralized application processing center for all Ontario colleges. For instance, Mary said: “If they (students) would want a two or three year diploma, then they would have to follow the OCAS application process.” And, Tracy explained “for the bridging program, students did not need to apply through OCAS. They applied directly to the College. We have someone who screens their requirements.”

However, none of the seven participants was sure of the credential submission process for ITI students and they did not know how to advise these students. For instance, Ronac emphasized, “I am not certain about OCAS, how it works with internationally trained individuals. I don’t even know what to tell them about how they can submit their credentials.” Similarly, Doug stated, “I am not sure (if) it is process related. They must apply to OCAS or to the College, because I receive their transcripts.” Another participant indicated that students are able to submit their credentials to OCAS, but the students pay more in application fees. Also, she discussed her disappointment with the College for not providing students with any assistance with filling out the OCAS application as she felt that some ITI students could benefit from the service. Tracy remarked:

I am not aware of any help that the College has for ITI students who need (assistance) to fill the OCAS application. This application process is new
to them and they need help. I help them with the OCAS application. Our division is the only area that can help them….Through OCAS they can have their credential assessed. The option has always been there. They pay more, but they are changing it as of this year.

Of this group, four interviewees had mixed feelings about the College’s application process in assessing foreign credentials. They felt that there was a need for clear processes and practices that should be established across the College.

According to the data collected, there seems to be an inconsistency in participants’ opinions about the recognition of the international standardized English proficiency tests such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Half of the respondents (n=4) noted that the College does not accept IELTS and TOEFL for admission decisions and students are still expected to do the college English assessment test. One participant also noted that the college assessment tests are North American based and indicated that some students were not familiar with certain North American expressions, which could hinder their success on the test. He also stated that if students do not meet the College’s English requirements for their programs, they are denied access to their programs. This meant that the students would have to take upgrading programs. Bob said:

We do require them (ITIs) to do our assessment test (for admission) just as any other students. We are not able to align IELTS or TOEFL scores. The assessment test includes computer based and a writing sample…. I believe that it is more North American based language assessment test,
which is also difficult for students because they might not be familiar with some of the idioms and expressions. Therefore, they might not do well on the tests and will be placed at a lower English level or they might not even meet the program requirements. They might have to be placed in a fundamentals program or English upgrading courses in Continuing Education.

Similarly, another participant commented: “I believe that all students, even if they are internationally trained or from high school, would have to write the College’s English test (Tom).” On the other hand, another participant stated that IELTS and TOEFL scores from an English speaking country are accepted at the College. Mary stated, “if their country of origin is English speaking, then we would accept the IELTS or TOEFL scores. However, they do recommend that the students do our college assessment tests. But we do accept those scores.”

**Advising.**

All seven participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the College’s advising practices. In most schools, student advising takes place through faculty coordinators who lack expertise in meeting diversified ITI student needs. Therefore, in the participants’ responses, they expressed the need for specialized ITI advising services that are focused on ITI students. Tom declared, “No, it (i.e., advising) is lacking. My academic advisor is an advisor but for all students not only for internationally trained students. She does see ITI students among other students. I do not know of an area within the College that does ITI advising.” Similarly, Mary commented, “I don’t think that the average ITI student is
getting the kind of information that they should which is specific to their training needs from the admission area.”

However, three participants stated that the College offers ITI advising services to internationally trained immigrants but not exclusively to ITI students. The advising services cater to the community and to those prospective students who might be interested in pursuing college education in the future. Bob indicated, “If they are not our College students, then they have access to ITI advisement services which is more services than any other members in the public have access to.”

The ITI advisor positions were funded by the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project. The project came to its completion in March 2011 and the College decided not to continue offering ITI advising services because these services only benefitted a specific student constituency. Three college staff interviewees indicated that ITI advising had no value because it is a government funded initiative, and it does not bring any financial resources to the College. Tracy acknowledged her frustration:

It is frustrating for me because we have to meet with different departments to educate them and convince them about what we were doing. Just getting departments to understand the importance of (advising) ITI students and helping them in the right path was difficult… The admission people did not know that we were here. They never advised (ITI) students to see us. What is difficult for me to comprehend is that a MBA from another country is enrolled in the business fundamentals program. I question why they are asked to take the business fundamentals program.…
Just that our director who oversaw the program never was interested in the program.

Mary agreed:

I don’t think that the College bought into it (ITI advising) because it is government funded and the services are not for all students. The admission area doesn’t know about us and they don’t send them (ITI students) to us. Even the program areas don’t know about us within the College. The way we recruited our ITI clients is by going to community agencies and doing presentations about our services. It is unfortunate; the College did not buy into the ITI advising services. We are not the core strength of the College; I don’t think that the areas paid attention to us. We don’t bring financial resources to the College.

In addition, two participants indicated that the College did not provide them with any formal training to advise ITI students. Their knowledge came from their prior experience working with internationally trained immigrants. For instance, Tracy commented:

The College did not provide any training for us (ITI advisors). For me, it came from my past experience. I have worked with ITI students for the last 14 years…. I have always worked with ITIs. Based on my experience working with ITI students, I have learned about the programs and services at our College, other colleges, and the community. I basically self-taught myself.
Another participant pointed out that the College treats ‘all students as students’. Therefore, the specific needs of ITI students are overlooked. Ronac stated, “Students are all treated as students as opposed to separating them. But for reporting purposes, I am not sure if they have been separated.”

On the other hand, the College is currently working on a comprehensive restructuring plan for advising. They are in the process of developing their advising model. Two participants said “The College has recently realized that we don’t have a cohesive approach to any sort of advising including ITIs. We are in the process of developing an advising model for all students at the College (Bob),” and Mary said “The College is going through restructuring more of an advisement component. I am hoping that they would have a particular person assigned to advising ITI students. The advisors would have to have similar and cross training. It is really important to the role of an advisor for our students.”

**Credential recognition.**

The College has three different mechanisms to provide recognition of existing credentials: transfer credits, prior learning assessment recognition (PLAR), and advanced standing. Nate explained the College processes in detail:

We give a large proportion of transfer credits because we have different means of recognizing it. One is to evaluate the transcript based on the subject completed and compare it to what is done here. The other is through advanced standing which is a process of recognizing that they have completed the subject successfully somewhere else. Another is prior
learning assessment used when we have a reasonable doubt that the person might have mastered an area, and then the student can take a challenge exam, produce a portfolio in the field, or documentation from employer. So there are a tremendous amount of resources that are available for people to recognize and accredit their work. I think through an accumulative of means, you can receive 75% transfer credits based on your performance in other institutions. These policies are consistent across board.

All seven participants indicated that faculty coordinators oversee credential recognition for all students. They grant credential recognition based on the reports provided by the organizations that conduct foreign credential assessments. Tom clarified by stating:

When the students are accepted into the program, we have an academic coordinator with my department who would meet with the students so that they can provide advanced standing. These students get advanced standings based on the assessment from World Education Services (WES) or UofT. Students are assessed on an individual basis.

Similarly, Ronac stated:

We do have advanced standing, transfer credits and PLAR in place. Course coordinators grant them with advanced standing and transfer credits based on their transcripts. Basically, they bring the description of
the course and grades and based on that, the coordinators can provide advanced standing.

One participant remarked that ITI students expect program coordinators to grant them advanced standings for the first year, so that they can go into second year of their chosen programs. However, he indicated that it is not always the case. Some students only receive a few credits for their prior education and experience, and they are expected to complete their first year. He said:

A lot of the ITI students think that because they have the experience and education that they can directly go into second or third year. That’s not the case. I have granted some/few courses and they had to complete in their first year. (Doug)

Four participants indicated that the College does not have a consistent approach to providing credential recognition and keeping student records of prior credits. The College is in the process of establishing a centralized database system so that each department is able to see for which courses students receive credits. Tom provided the following information:

There isn’t a systematic approach to providing advanced standing or transfer credits, but it is an area that the College is currently working towards. So when a student moves from one college to another, we are able to assess them easily and upload their information in a centralized system that we can all refer to. If we have a centralized system, even
between schools we can see what transfer credits or advanced standings that students have received credits towards.

Bob explained:

There is a consistent approach to maintaining transfer credits across the College. We are in the process of working on an internal data base so that we are able to update what transfer credits students have received and who gave them and so on.

**Program delivery.**

This section of the study focuses on specific customized programs that Eastern College offers to meet the occupation-specific needs of the ITI students. Moreover, it explores how the College evaluates its programs and services and the perspectives of college personnel in how the College is responding to ITI students in this area.

**Customized programming.**

More than half of the participants (n=5) stated that the College offers two customized, bridge-training programs for ITI students. The first bridge-training program was launched in September 2010, and the objective of this eight-month program is to provide ITI students with occupation-specific language training along with specific program related courses with a mentoring component. Similarly, the College is also implementing a second bridge-training program which was launched in September 2011. These programs are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Bob explained:
We have one bridging program in the College. It functions as a self-standing graduate certificate. We rolled out in Sept/2010 and we have 25 students, and next year we will be rolling out another program. These programs have mentoring, occupation-specific language training and it does not have co-op. There is a job search component. We have lots of outreach where the students are able to attend conferences.

Another respondent indicated that the purpose of these programs is for ITI students to find successful employment in Canada. These highly trained students are to receive the knowledge and occupation-specific language training in their field of study in a short time period. Nate commented:

Well, I think that you have to look at the end purpose of the program. The end purpose of the program is to find employment for these folks. At the end of the day that they will receive relevant employment to the particular field that they have studied. So, they have a foundational knowledge in one or various disciplines and we are giving them a specific application with their discipline in fields that there are actual employment opportunities in the Canadian setting. So in many ways building an opportunity for foreign trained professions, that this is a field that there is an opportunity for highly skilled, highly trained, highly educated people, a foreign trained person would be perfect, but would have the ability to apply to a specific context.
However, two participants highlighted that Eastern College only offers two customized bridge-training programs for foreign trained professionals in comparison to many Ontario colleges. They believed that the College has not made the ITI student constituency a priority because the College generally does not have any student enrolment concerns, and these programs do not bring any financial incentives or revenue to the College. For instance, Tracy said:

This College has one bridging program which started this September, 2010. One bridging program and other colleges and universities have bridging programs and we refer them to those programs. I would say that our College is new in terms of offering bridging programs. We also have another program coming up this September, 2011… I think that the College is challenged. We keep getting more ITI students and yet the focus seems to be elsewhere. It is not meeting the needs of our students. I think the focus is on the international students and it is all about money.

Bob agreed:

The College has not jumped up and down when it comes to ITIs. It is because we are not hungry. The students are still knocking at our door. We still have not got a need to beat the bushes. On top of that if we design a program specific to an ITI, when that person only needs two courses after they receive transfer credits, then the student does not generate the same grant or revenue as a full-time student. So, there is no financial incentive to do this. We will end up putting more resources to
students who are less financially reimbursed. Why would I bring reduced load students when I can bring full-time students?

Furthermore, three interviewees recommended that the College should focus on developing many short customized programs for ITI students alongside developing programs in general for all students. Mary said:

We have not had any bridging programs except for these two programs. The ITI students need fast track programs, short-term programs for eight months which are specific for their need. They have a lot of experience and education; they need to understand the cultural norms, the types of questions that will be asked in interviews. It is really important… I don’t think that these programs (are) for ITI students. I think that they (programs) are developed for students in general. These classes are a mismatch for all students and (do) not have a language component as the bridging programs that is (specific) for ITI students. Our eight months grad certificates are also for all students and these are the programs internationally trained students want. They want something that is quick. I can’t put a PhD from another country with students who are coming from high school into two or three years program. I just can’t do it. I have to think of alternative ways they can access the program.

Several college personnel participants (n=3) also indicated that the College offers occupation-specific language training (OSLT) programs. These programs are sector specific language training for ITIs and designed to prepare them for the Canadian labour
market. They are usually short, three to six months in length and funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The participants stated that the curriculum is interactive and enhances the student’s listening and speaking skills. Two participants stated that the OSLT programs are offered during the evenings and weekends and have high enrolment. The College is recruiting students from different community agencies. However, the remaining participants were unaware of the OSLT program and were surprised to hear that the College offers them. Tom admitted, “I did not know that the College offered these types of programs.” Another participant (Mary) stated, “Most of the students come from community organizations. When I meet with ITI students, I let them know about the program. I don’t think many areas are aware of OSLT programs. I think it is because they are government funded.”

**Program evaluation.**

Participants were asked about the success of the bridge-training program, which was recently offered and three participants indicated that the program has not undergone any evaluation. The students have just completed their first semester, and the College is waiting until they completed the program. Doug said, “We have not evaluated the program. It is still too early and I am sure that they will have something set-up by the end of eight months of the program.” In fact, ITI students adhere to general college evaluations and ministry mandated evaluations such as the KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). These evaluations are for all students, and are not specific for ITI students. Tom explained:
Yes, in a number of different ways. KPIs that all colleges participate in. We also have student evaluation of faculty members. We have Program Advisory Committees. We have faculty review our programs from materials to text review. We also have (myself) going in to review the faculty member. However, none of these evaluations are for a specific group of students, instead as it pertains to all students. It is also meeting the needs of the student and their occupation-specific needs. We don’t break down the different types of students.

**Support services.**

Five respondents commented that the support services such as the library, financial aid, counseling among others, are provided for all students at the College. Bob voiced, “The ITI students are treated as any other student in the College.” Several participants indicated that ITI students continuously ask career-related questions, and they recommended that it would be helpful to have college personnel dedicated to assisting this group of students. Doug said:

The types of questions that they ask me are career advice, not financial either. When they come to me, the questions are career-oriented questions. It would be good for the career center to have someone who knows what these students (ITIs) are looking for and are able to help them.

Also, another participant recommended offering bursary programs for ITI students even though she acknowledged that Ontario Student Assistance Program was immensely helpful in pursuing their education in Canada. For instance, Mary said:
Financial services, the ITI students find quite useful if they are eligible. However, I believe that the College should have more bursary assistance programs for ITI students. Many have to take care of their family and are following their education at the College. ITI students have told me how stressful it is for them.

Regardless of the service gaps identified by the respondents, all participants spoke about the importance and usefulness of all the current services offered at the College.

**Participation of ITI students in program and policy development.**

More than half of the college staff participants (n=5) indicated that the policies at the College are for all students. They have students participating in policy and program development committees but not from specific student groups. Tom explained:

They are part of the student voice. That is the voice that is made up of many types of students. We have students from wide range of areas. We do not have space for each type of student. Students do sit on these committees and they not only bring their voice but they also bring others’ voices.

These participants also expressed that the College does not have any specific policies and procedures for ITI students and seemed quite perplexed why the College would implement practices that would only address ITI students. The following are examples of the comments that were made:
We don’t consult with (ITI students) what sort of programs that they would like to pursue. We hear from the industry and from our experience. Also, we have policies for all students at the College. I don’t understand why there would be policies or procedures that only address the ITI students. (Doug)

There are many College policies, nothing specific to internationally trained immigrant students. We have students in the committee through our student government, and we do not have particular policies for ITI students. (Bob)

*Lack of effort to accommodate ITI students.*

Six interviewees admitted that the College has not recognized the unique educational and occupational needs of internationally trained immigrant students. The participants were asked to rank the College’s efforts in responding to ITI students. On a scale from one to ten, in which one was low and ten was high, the respondents ranked the College at four for efforts in responding to ITI students. However, the participants were optimistic with the new senior level leadership team; they believed in some positive changes that would address ITI students. Mary expressed it this way:

I think that they are not doing enough. Because, typically internationally trained individual that we see today, one that is highly educated, with lots of experience, probably does not need a three year program. They might need a fast-track or bridging programs with employability focus… I would rank them less than five. I wouldn’t rank them high at all. I don’t think the College has responded to ITI students, instead to students in general.
We have a new leadership now and I think that there will be changes in the College in the next two years.

Another participant remarked that it is easier for the colleges to serve homogeneous student groups, such as direct entry students from high school. They do not impact the College processes as an entity. He recognized that it becomes challenging for the College to serve those students who are not part of the direct entry student group because they have different educational needs. However, he believed that Eastern College has certain processes in place to serve ITI students, but they are not clearly communicated across the College. As Tom stated:

It is easier for colleges and universities to deal with relatively homogeneous type of entry from high school from these types of background. So the colleges build processes around the needs of these students. It does become more challenging to deal with individuals who come with different background that does not fit the homogeneous group of students… I would put down a four. I think that there is recognition that part of the student body is ITI students and there are things that are in play. However, it is not well communicated and I think a lot more should be in place.

Furthermore, another participant explained even the process of identifying the bridge-training programs were not consulted with ITI students, and there were no specific or identified strategies in place. Bob said:
I would give Eastern College four out of ten how it serves ITI students.

We do not have any programs in a systematic way that addresses the ITI students’ needs….Happens-stance (development of the bridging programs)! In this particular situation, we were running employment related programs. Couple of years ago, many of our clients showed interest in a similar program. Our folks over there got in touch with the Center requested to have someone to do a workshop. That individual came back and indicated the enthusiasm among clients showing interest in taking this program. I got together with the Chair of the program and said that it is a no brainer that there is an interest in this program and we should develop a program. There was synergy and it worked out well.

Overall, participants agreed that more and more ITI students are accessing the College and the College should be conscious of this particular student constituency and believed that more can be done for them.

**Summary of College Personnel Interview Results**

To summarize this section of the chapter, the findings from the college personnel are presented based on their experiences of working with ITI students at Eastern College. College personnel recognize that there is a large influx of ITI students accessing Eastern College. The College offers a wide range of programs and services to their students. However, they indicated only a few of these programs and services are designed for ITI students. They stated that the ITI student constituency is not sufficiently large enough to invest funds in and generate revenue. Therefore, they are perceived and treated as any other student at the College.
Eastern College: ITI Student Demographics

The demographic information of ITI study student participants is presented in Table 6. A total of seven ITI student participants were interviewed, Fatima from Bangladesh, Danny from Jamaica, Kim from Philippines, Sherry from China, Sultana from Kazakhstan, John from China, and Zohra from Iran (all names are pseudonyms). Students varied in relation to geographical region, date of immigration, gender, previous level of education, previous occupation, years of work experience, current program enrolled, and enrolment date. The participants originated from various geographical regions including one from Bangladesh, two from China, one from Jamaica, one from Iran, one from Philippines, and one from Kazakhstan. All of the participants immigrated to Canada between 2001 to 2010. Of the seven participants, four are female and three are male. Five possess a Bachelor of Science degree, one has a college certificate in Accounting and one holds a Masters degree in Finance. In terms of their profession, four are engineers, one is a teacher, and two are accountants. Years of experience in their profession range from 1 to 17. The programs that the participants are currently enrolled in are accounting fundamentals (n=2), business fundamentals (n=1), applied science and technology fundamentals (n=1), practical nursing (n=1), early childhood education (n=1), and accounting diploma (n=1). All of the students have been enrolled in their programs for at least one year.

Eastern College: ITI students’ Interview Results

This section summarizes the participating ITI students’ experiences and opinions on how Eastern College meets their occupation-specific needs. The semi-structured interview questions are attached in Appendix A. Two main categories surfaced from the
data analysis: admission practices, and program delivery. Admission practices include admission requirements, advising, and credential recognition. Program delivery include customized programming, participation of ITI students in program and policy development, support services, and program evaluation. The issues identified by ITI student participants interviewed are discussed in greater detail.

This section summarizes the participating ITI students’ experiences and opinions on how Eastern College meets their occupation-specific needs. Two main categories surfaced from the data analysis: admission practices, and program delivery. Admission practices include admission requirements, advising, and credential recognition. Program delivery include customized programming, participation of ITI students in program and policy development, support services, and program evaluation. The issues identified by interviewed ITI student participants are discussed in greater detail.

**Admission practices.**

According to Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment report (2008), Ontario colleges use the term “admissions” to refer to the “processes of application, admission, and the entities that implement admissions processes” (p. 6). In this section, the participants’ perceptions of the College’s admission practices and its ability to serve their occupational needs were examined. Specifically, participants were asked questions about entry requirements to their chosen programs, college assessment tests, the Ontario
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Immigration Date</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Level of Education Prior to Entry to Canada</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Years of Work Experience</th>
<th>Current Program at Eastern College</th>
<th>Enrolment Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatima</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Graduate Studies – Completed Masters in Finance</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Accounting Fundamentals</td>
<td>Sept, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>College Certificate in Accounting</td>
<td>Accounts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accounting Fundamentals</td>
<td>Sept, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science – Specialized in Electronics and Communications Engineering</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Applied Science Technology Fundamentals</td>
<td>Sept, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science – Specialized in Electronics and Communications Engineering</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Practical Nursing Accounting</td>
<td>Sept, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Science – Specialized in Industrial Engineering and Management</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Sept, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science – Specialized in Automatic Control Systems Engineer</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Business Fundamentals</td>
<td>Sept, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultana</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science – Specialized in Automatic Control Systems Engineer</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Sept, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science degree – Specialized in teaching Science and English</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>May, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zohra</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science degree – Specialized in teaching Science and English</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>May, 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All names are pseudonyms*
Colleges Application Service (OCAS) process and assistance, advising, and credential recognition. Three areas of concern emerged: admission requirements, advising, and credential recognition.

Admission requirements.

Most participants (n=5 of 7) initially discussed their disappointment about not meeting the program requirements for their selected diploma programs. They were placed in fundamentals programs because of their low scores on the college level English assessment test. The objective of this one-year (two semesters) program is to provide students with an opportunity to improve English, Math, and program specific skills before they are able to pursue their diploma programs. These programs are offered to direct entry students coming from high school as well as non-direct entry, mature students. The participants of the study indicated that they were advised to pursue the fundamentals program, and they responded differently to their placement.

Fatima did not disagree:

I initially applied to financial accounting diploma, but I did (not) get in. They told me to take business fundamentals which will help me to get into the financial accounting diploma. I think that they know what is best for me and I did (not) ask why. Now I am in the accounting fundamentals program.
### Table 7

Themes Arising from Interviews of ITI Student Interviews at Eastern College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Key college programs and services</th>
<th>Issues identified by interviewed ITI students</th>
<th>Number of students identifying as an issue n=7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admission Practices</strong></td>
<td>Admission Requirements</td>
<td>Not meeting the program level English standards</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Absence of assistance and clear procedures for OCAS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>Unawareness of ITI advisors’ services</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unhelpfulness of advisors and lack of clarity in communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credential Recognition</td>
<td>Awareness of credential recognition</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of acknowledgement of foreign credentials</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Delivery</strong></td>
<td>Customized Programming</td>
<td>Placed in programs that are not customized for internationally trained immigrant student needs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of programs with placements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation of ITIs in Program and Policy Development Support Services</td>
<td>Lack of participation in policy and program development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Helpfulness of financial aid</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of services specific to ITI students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>Usefulness of the program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Waste of time</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contentment with the college</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Danny, on the other hand, voiced his disappointment about being placed in the fundamentals program since he had achieved a high score on his English assessment test. He felt that the College should have provided him with an explanation as to why he had been enrolled in a fundamentals program:

As part of an entry test, I had to do the English (assessment) test. I scored very high on it. They told me I met the college level (requirements)…. I am currently in a program that I originally did not apply for. I wanted to be in the accounting and finance program. I was not allowed to go into the program because they said that I did not meet the admission requirements and I am not sure why. I am put into a program called business fundamentals which I did not want to get into. They said that it is a foot in the door. When I realized that I didn’t have any choice, they said that I can get into the program I want to after I complete this program.

A third participant, Zohra, who has her undergraduate degree from a university in the United States, expressed her frustration with the admissions process. She felt that the College lacked a consistent approach; it depended on each college personnel. These are her words:

First they told me I have to do English and then they told me that I don’t have to. I told them that I studied in English in United States at a university and I refused to do the English test. I fought to get into my program. I told her that I am not going to do the assessment test because I got my degree from an English language university and country. I convinced them that all my subjects that I took were in
English. You don’t get the same information (from different college personnel).

It depends (on) who looks at your application.

Overall, four of the seven participants felt that it was beneficial for them to take English upgrading courses in their fundamentals programs or prior to enrolling in their diploma programs. The other participants noted that taking English upgrading courses prolonged their program of study, and believed it was not necessary.

When the respondents were asked questions about Ontario College Application Services (OCAS) and the related processes, five of the seven participants indicated that the OCAS application was specific to high school students. They indicated that they were not requested to provide their previous educational qualifications through OCAS, instead they had to submit those documents separately to the College. Danny stated:

The issue that I have is that the questions they ask are for people who are from high school. I find that it is a test of their ability, knowledge, and competence for a person who is coming out of high school. They had some basic questions and it was not for working professionals. I was disappointed with some of those questions.

In addition, all seven of the participants indicated that they did not receive any assistance from the College to fill out the OCAS application from the College. They completed the application on their own or with the assistance of a family member. Sultana indicated, “I applied through the Ontario College for full-time ….nobody helped me with the application, I did it on my own.”
The participants generally commented that the College should have personnel to provide them with accurate information, assistance with admission requirements, and assistance with the OCAS application.

**Advising.**

Advising services that are offered at the Eastern College include career guidance for potential and current students. The College received funding from CIITE project for ITI advisors who specifically provided pre-entry advising for internationally trained immigrants. Participants were asked about the effectiveness of the College’s advising services in meeting their occupation-specific needs. Two out of seven participants indicated that they were not aware of ITI advising services at the College and were surprised to learn about them. The participants reported that no one at the College had informed them of the ITI advisors. They remarked:

No, I don’t know anything about them (ITI advisors). I have never heard of them.

Nobody told me about them….They should have someone to help us speak with me one-to-one and tell me where I can go and how I can apply and services that the College has for ITI students. I didn’t even know that they have an advisor or coordinator. Nobody told me so I didn’t pursue it. (Fatima)

And, Zohra said: “I have no idea that the College has ITI advisors,”

Three participants found the advisors to be unhelpful and felt that they were not able to guide them appropriately. For instance, Ian expressed,

I don’t think the advisor I saw helped me too much. She told me information that I already know. I was asking about qualifications and
credentials and she didn’t know that. There was no one to give me the right information about my program; I looked for it on my own.

Two participants discussed their disappointments about the advisors placing them in fundamentals programs without any clear explanation. In particular, one participant believed that he was placed in the fundamentals program simply because he was an immigrant even though he had met the program requirements in the college assessment tests.

They told me to take business fundamentals first and to go to accounting after. I can take some courses from business fundamentals into the accounting program. But I don’t know why they want me to do that. I don’t know if they know why I have to do that and I am wasting my time doing that. (John)

Danny had a similar observation:

The advisors should not put us in fundamentals programs because we are immigrants. For one, they need to have more precise information. They have to make sure that everybody has the same information. So that one person doesn’t give you one type of information and another person doesn’t give another type of information. I think also that they need to be a little more precise what you need to do as an internationally trained immigrant to cut down the time in the College.
credential recognition.

As stated in the last section, Eastern College has established credential recognition processes for all students. The College has procedures such as transfer credits, advanced standings, and prior learning assessments for credential recognition. Faculty and coordinators often use a variety of processes in recognizing student academic credentials. This section explores how credential recognition processes at the College have assisted ITI students in achieving their educational goals.

All seven participants indicated that they were not informed by college personnel about credential recognition. One participant believed that ITI students come from higher educational background, and the College should have informed them of the various credential recognition processes. Three interviewees learned about credential recognition through the College’s website and marketing materials. One participant stated:

Nobody advised me of advanced standing or transfer credits. I learned it on a notice board while I was waiting for my counselor. Don’t you think the College people should tell us about it? Foreign trained immigrants have a lot of education that they can use towards the basic courses. We can then focus on courses that we really need to take to gain the knowledge in the field. Can you believe nobody told me? (Danny)

Similarly, another participant stated:
I heard about transfer credits from the web site. I just went to the web site and then I can talk to somebody about it. They told me that I need course descriptions from my home country. It is difficult to get that information from my university. I decided to do something different anyway. I am in the Practical Nursing program, very different from Engineering. (Ian)

Five participants indicated that their foreign credentials did not hold any value or meaning at the College. They believed that their previous education was dismissed, and they had to start from the beginning. The respondents rationalized that the college personnel were unfamiliar with foreign trained qualifications; they lacked knowledge and resources to assess the participants’ foreign credentials. One participant appealed the College’s decision because she believed that her educational credential should have been recognized. Several participants articulated their discontent with starting from the beginning: Fatima said: “I feel bad that my experience and education are not recognized. What can I do? I have to take this course to get the Canadian education. They didn’t give me any credits.” And Kim explained:

When I went to the College, they told me that my credentials were nothing and I have to start back to zero…. It is hard for students from other countries when they have finished other degrees, they should assess our credentials. Going back to zero is too hard for us. They should have better ways to assess credentials. They said that my credentials mean nothing.
Furthermore, Zohra observed:

My study was in English and still they (did not) recognize anything here in Canada, even if it is English. I fought with them and they asked me to evaluate my degree. They (did not) realize that the standards in U.S. are higher than here.

**Program delivery.**

This part of the chapter examines the College’s practices in program delivery and how the ITI students’ occupation-specific needs are addressed. The participants were asked questions about their programs, program evaluation, support services and their participation in college policy development. Four areas emerged: customized programming, participation in program and policy development, support services, and program evaluation.

*Customized programming.*

According to the College’s website, Eastern College offers several fast track programs in various disciplines but these are not specific to ITI students. The curriculum of these programs is modified according to students’ prior educational academic credentials. Primarily, it is mature students who access these programs. Contrary to the College’s practices, none of the respondents were placed in fast track programs. Five interviewees stated that they were placed in either fundamentals or regular college diploma programs with direct entry students from high schools. They believed that shorter, customized programs would have been better tailored to their occupational
learning needs. Also, two participants noted that being in a classroom with other ITI students would have helped them to gain information, and support each other in their settlement process. Sultana said: “My program that I am in is for all students not only for ITI students.” Fatima further observed:

The classes should have only international students instead of putting us with high school students. We are 25 to 30 students in a class and we are all from different (fundamentals) programs…. If they have a class for international students, then I can talk to them, find information, and (seek help) from each other. This is (extremely) important for us.

Zohra commented: “They should really try to recognize degrees from other countries and have shorter programs. Some programs are not helping international trained immigrants.”

Three ITI students complained that their programs did not have a practicum component. The participants indicated the importance of field placement in gaining Canadian work experience. They also expressed their concerns in finding employment without having any work experience in Canada. Sultana said, “I think my program, specifically with the two year diploma, should have the coop program….I am worried when I finish the program I can’t find job because I have no experience.” Kim also addressed a similar concern, “The program should have coop so that I can gain some experience.” Participants preferred customized programs with placements which would address their occupation-specific needs better and would have given them the opportunity to complete their programs in a shorter time period. When ITI student participants were
asked about bridge-training programs or occupation-specific language training programs offered at the College, none of the participants were aware of them. Most interviewees indicated that they have never heard of these programs and were surprised to hear that they were tailored to ITI students’ occupational needs. Sultana stated “They (the College) should tell us about all the programs. Then we can make the right decision. I think no one can help us at the College.”

*Participation of ITI students in program and policy development.*

Interviewees were asked questions about their knowledge of college policies and procedures and their level of involvement in program and policy development. For instance, when new programs are developed at the College, various stakeholders are involved in the process. These stakeholders include faculty, administrators, external experts in the profession, and students. However, most participants (n=5) mentioned that they were not aware of many of the College policies and procedures. When the interviewees were asked questions about their involvement in policy or program development at the College, they were not aware that they could participate in these committees. Fatima expressed, “I don’t know what they are. No, I don’t know how I can express my concerns.” Also, three participants stated that their perspectives or concerns would not have any impact on fostering any college-wide changes. They voiced it this way:

For me personally, I wouldn’t feel shy in expressing, but I don’t know if I am able to express my views in a committee and if it would even matter in making a change at the College to help us. (Danny).
Similarly, Kim said: “I don’t sit on any committees. I don’t think that they consider internationally trained students.”

**Support services.**

There are many services that exist at the Eastern College for all students. Students have access to services such as the library, career counseling, and financial aid to name a few. The students were asked several questions to determine the helpfulness of the existing services in meeting students’ academic goals. The participants (n=5) who are currently accessing financial aid spoke about the usefulness of the student loan. They were grateful that the student loan not only covered their tuition fee, but also their family needs. John explained, “I am on OSAP and I find it useful. It gives money for my family too.” Another participant discussed that without the student loan, she would not have been able to pursue her education. Kim stated, “I am on OSAP and I find it useful and helpful. If I didn’t receive the student loan, I could not have continued my education at the College.”

Four participants also indicated the need for some additional services that would benefit the ITI students. For instance, Fatima discussed the importance of career counseling services in assisting students with resume writing and finding employment. She also indicated that a student club or an association for ITI students would be helpful to meet students who are in a similar situation as they are, so that they can help each other. She said, “training with resume writing and cover letters (would be) helpful and help (with) finding jobs. I also think that it would be good to have a group or club for internationally trained students. So we can help each other.” John indicated that tutoring
services are critical for students like him who would like to improve their English skills. Alternatively, he also suggested that students from advanced semesters could help the entry level students with program related courses. He said

They should have tutors to help students like myself. I need to improve my English…. Students at other levels should help new students. For example, within Chinese people, we help each other with the magnetic course. For Chinese students English is poor. Other students can give us opportunities to advance English, Mathematics, or Psychology.

However, the respondents were generally content with the services that are offered by the College to the student body as a whole.

**Program evaluation.**

This area of the study explores the usefulness of the courses, course content, the program, and the College in achieving the participants’ career goals.

More than half of the participants (n=4) articulated that they were content with the College program and rated the College six out of ten. Their education at the College has helped them in improving their English skills, learning new knowledge in the field, finding employment, and learning about Canadian life in general. The respondents offered the following: “I am not good in English, so I think that it is helpful… I get to know myself. Computers are also helpful even though I know computers…I give the college six out of ten,” said Fatima. Ian commented: “I think that I am improving my communication skills…I like everything. I like talking and exchanging ideas and
improve my English. I am a middle aged male and I find the classes are useful.” And, John agreed: “I think it is better for me. Lot of people told me when I finish my diploma; I can get a better job. I find the classes very helpful. I find all the subjects useful.”

On the other hand, the remaining three participants expressed their discontent with the courses and ranked the College four out of ten. They indicated that they already had some knowledge in the program they were enrolled in and felt that the course content was quite basic, and they were wasting their time. They also commented that the College should have only placed them in specific program courses which would help them in gaining occupation-specific knowledge. Sultana said:

A lot of courses that I take are not very useful like statistics and mathematics. They are good for students from high school. For me, it is a waste of time. They could have given me only the professional courses because I already have a degree. I think the College is a four, they can do much better.

Danny also shared his frustration:

I applied for the accounting and finance program. I was told that I could not go into the program directly. I feel what I am learning in the business fundamentals program are things that I have done before, not the things that I really need to study. So, in order to get into the College, I have done several entry level tests and I was told that I could only get into accounting fundamentals. They told me that the program that I wanted to get in, accounting and finance program is a very challenging program. So, I
guess that they were not sure as an internationally trained student how I would do in the program.

Overall, three students expressed their contentment with the decision to pursue their education at the Eastern College. They shared their gratitude with the College for helping them to improve their English skills and foster a positive environment. Ian declared, “I am happy with the learning environment. I wish that I had this kind of learning environment 25 years ago, I could have done better.” Also, they stated that the College is well known for its programs in Ontario. For instance, John emphasized, “I chose this College because they are famous in CGA (Certified General Accounting) and accounting programs in GTA. That’s why I wanted to come to this College.”

**Summary of ITI Students’ Interview Results**

This section summarizes the ITI students’ comments about their experiences of being students at Eastern College. The student participants expressed general satisfaction with the programs that they were enrolled in at the College. It is noted in the findings that the College did not respond to their specific needs by offering more customized programs, recognizing their foreign credentials, and expanding their ITI advising services. The participants believed that Eastern College has the potential to be more responsive to their needs.

**Comparative Analysis of ITI Students and College Personnel at Eastern College**

This segment of the chapter presents the comparative analysis of the findings from seven ITI students and seven college personnel from Eastern College. The perceptions, views, opinions, and experiences of the two groups of interviewees will be
compared to examine how responsive the College is to changes in ITI students’ occupation-specific needs. As such, the analysis is presented in two main sections: admission practices and program delivery.

**Admission practices.**

ITI students and college personnel at the Eastern College were asked about the reasons for accessing college education. The data suggest that one of the reasons that ITI students access college education is to obtain Canadian credentials which serve as the pathway to employment. The college personnel recognized ITI students as highly trained professionals who value college education to enhance their industry specific knowledge and hands-on training. However, the data suggest that the ITI students encounter challenges when accessing programs of their choice. One of the core challenges is related to their credential recognition. ITI students felt that their foreign credentials did not hold any value at the College and were dismissed. They voiced that the college personnel lacked knowledge and were unfamiliar with qualifications from other countries. The comments of college personnel supported the students’ concerns, and they agreed that the College does not have a consistent approach to providing credential recognition. There is an absence of the central database within Eastern College and among all Ontario colleges, although the College is presently working on establishing one.

Another obstacle is the lack of recognition of international standardized English proficiency test achievement. The college personnel indicated that the College does not accept international standardized English language proficiency tests unless the potential...
students are degree holders from English speaking countries. However, this was contradicted by one of the ITI students (Zohra) whose credential was earned in an English language program in an American university. All seven participants were asked to take the college English assessment test, including the ones who have completed their degrees from English speaking countries. According to the test results, 70% of the ITI student participants scored less than the program requirement in their English assessment and were placed in fundamentals or English upgrading programs. This admission process impeded the ITI students’ completion of their program and added frustration and increased the financial burden on them and their families. Input from both the college personnel and the ITI participants indicated that the College’s English assessment practices should be re-examined.

Both college personnel and ITI students agreed on the need for streamlined services in advising. ITI student participants indicated that the college personnel lacked expertise in guiding them into the suitable programs of their choice. The advisors were not familiar with the unique needs of ITI students; they treated them as regular students. The college personnel agreed that ITI students have specific needs; however, they are treated as any other student at the College (the philosophy of the College is “a student is a student”!!) Furthermore, most of the college personnel and all of the ITI student participants were unaware of the ITI advisors who work at the College. The ITI advisors explained that the College has not given any significance to the ITI students because the College does not have any concern about the influx of students enrolling into the programs. However, two college personnel indicated that the College is currently restructuring its advising practices for all students.
Program delivery.

While exploring the types of customized programming offered at the College, both the ITI students and the college personnel interviewees recognized that ITI students prefer shorter, customized programs with a work placement component that would meet their occupational learning needs. However, there are only two customized bridge-training programs and several occupation-specific language training (OSLT) programs offered to ITI students currently. 42% (n=3) of the college personnel participants believed that the College has not identified the needs of ITI students as a priority because these programs are shorter, government funded and therefore do not bring in as much revenue as a regular college program. In fact, none of the ITI student participants were placed in any of the bridge-training programs or OSLT programs; rather, they were in either fundamentals or regular college diploma programs in which the student pays full tuition fee.

Comparing the findings regarding the support services, it is noted that college personnel and ITI students commented that the services offered at the College are for all students including ITIs. However, all of the participants recommended that it would be helpful to have staff dedicated to helping ITI students specifically in career counseling. ITI students expressed that career counseling services should help them find employment and help in writing their resumes and cover letters. They also suggested that an ITI student club for internationally trained students would be helpful for meeting people, finding information, and providing an opportunity to help each other with their academic programs. In addition, ITI students expressed their satisfaction with financial services,
yet indicated that bursaries could help them substantially in pursuing their career goals at the College.

When questions were asked about ITI students’ involvement in policy and program development, ITI students indicated that they were not familiar with college policies and were not aware that they could participate in these committees. They also felt that their concerns or views would not have any impact on college-wide changes. College personnel, on the other hand, emphasized that the college policies are for all students and not for any specific student constituency. They explained that students participate in policy and program development, and they are usually assigned by their student body. However, it was noted that when the College developed the bridge-training programs, none of the ITI student participants were on the program development team.

Program evaluations were examined, and the comparative analysis indicated that the College adheres to program evaluations from classroom to college level. Students acknowledged that the college programs have primarily helped them in improving their English skills, obtaining current and relevant knowledge in their occupations, and learning about Canadian life in general. However, 42% (n=3) of the ITI student participants expressed their discontent with the programs because they felt they were wasting their time in taking “basic courses” instead of taking occupation-specific program-related courses, which would have helped them to complete their programs in a shorter period of time. On average, students rated the College five out of ten in its responsiveness to ITI students’ occupation-specific needs.

According to the college personnel, Eastern College recognizes ITIs have explicit learning needs; however, the College does not offer specific support for them. The
personnel participants ranked the College four out of ten on its efforts in responding to ITI students occupation-specific needs. For example, the College only offers two bridge-training programs. These customized programs for ITI students are not considered a priority for Eastern College because they are government funded and are not seen as revenue generating. However, the college personnel believed in the possibility of positive changes that would emphasize ITI students educational and career goals in the future.

Summary

Based on the documents reviewed and data collected, it appears that ITI students are not an institutional priority at Eastern College. Rather, the College views ITI students as part of the larger student constituency. The College’s holistic view of students obscures the possibility of specific support for ITIs; therefore, the unique occupation-specific needs of ITI students are largely overlooked in their policies and practices.
Chapter Five – Research Findings: Western College

Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on the responses of participating college personnel and ITI students at Western College. It examines the experiences and views of thirteen study participants (seven college staff and six ITIs) regarding the college’s response to ITI student occupation-specific needs. Based on the data collected and documents reviewed, ITI students have been an institutional priority and the College has the capacity to provide services. But, there is more to be done since not all ITI students know what is available for them.

This chapter consists of four sections similar to Chapter 4: document analysis of the College’s Strategic Plan, Business Plan, Multi-Year Accountability Report, Annual Report, International Strategy Reports, policies, practices, messages from the public websites, and marketing materials; presentations of the interview data gathered from ITI students and college personnel, and a comparative analysis of the findings of the two groups of participants.

Western College: Overview and Document Review

Western College serves approximately 15,000 full time students at several campuses. The College offers 150 certificate, diploma, degree, and post-graduate certificate programs based on industry needs. The College’s core value is to offer high quality education and workplace-readiness training so that the students are able to integrate into the workforce seamlessly. The College also recognizes its student constituency and has implemented different strategies within the College to embed
practices to accommodate their educational priorities. For instance, the College fosters diversity hiring practices to enhance effective interaction among students and staff at the College.

In recent years, there has been a substantial influx of internationally trained immigrants into the College. This change in student demographics has already been taken into consideration and reflected in the College’s recent Strategic and Business Plans. These documents suggest recognition of the immigrant student constituency as a distinctive group of individuals with specific occupation-focused needs. The College currently offers bridge-training programs, occupation-specific language training programs, English upgrading courses and ITI student advising services. The College also has a specific department that assists immigrant and international students. Western College is also a key participant in the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project where it influences Ontario college-wide changes to alleviate challenges faced by immigrants. In its dedication to student success, the College has committed to enhancing and developing pathways and programs for immigrants. As stated in their recent Business Plan, the College is improving their bridge-training programs, language programs, and credential recognition processes for immigrant and international students. In its Annual Report, the commitment to improve program offerings for immigrant students is stressed because, the Canadian labour force will be primarily dependent on immigrants in the future.

However, the College’s Multi-Year Accountability Agreement Report, which assists the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities in measuring the participation
of students from under-represented groups (i.e., Aboriginal, first generation, students with disabilities, mature students and francophone students), ITI students were not mentioned. Furthermore, Western College’s Draft International Strategy Report specifically discusses international recruitment, globalization of curriculum, faculty development and student work/study placement abroad strategies; however, there was no indication of recruitment or academic strategies for ITI students.

Based on the documents reviewed, it is evident that Western College is striving towards improving its policies and practices to meet the ITI student needs. Even though there is a strong commitment to make changes outlined in several documents, there is still lack of recognition of ITI students as a unique student constituency.

The following section will present the perspectives and experiences of the Western College personnel who influence ITI students’ academic success. Subsequently, the findings from ITI students will be outlined, and the comparative analysis of ITI students and college personnel responses and perceptions will be conducted.

**Western College: College Personnel Demographics**

The demographic information for the college personnel at Western College is presented in Table 8. A total of seven college personnel were interviewed. They are categorized based on their current occupation, Ontario college occupational classification, and gender. Of the seven participants, six are female and one is male. Four are administrators (Dean, Director, and Chair), one faculty, and two support staff.
Table 8
Profile of Participants – Western College Personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Ontario College Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Faculty and Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Associate Vice-President</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Western College: College Personnel Interview Results**

This segment of the chapter explores the responses of the college personnel at Western College on how the College meets ITI students’ occupation-specific needs. All seven participants work directly with ITI students in ensuring their academic success. The following participants described their current positions at the College: Andrea explained:

My focus is really 99.9% is on immigrant students as opposed to the international students. I am responsible for a number of projects that are related to preparing them ultimately for the Canadian work force and the
programs relate to language training; they relate to other curriculum; they relate to engagement with employers; they relate to credential recognition.

Paula clarified:

As an entry advisor, I was hired by CIITE. It is a provincial project which stands for Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment. In my position as an entry advisor I am able to assist internationally trained immigrants, first of all, I provide information about college programs.

Mindy’s work is specific to OSLT:

I work on a project called the occupation-specific language training which (stands) for OSLT. This project focuses on providing free communications courses that are sector specific and these courses are fully funded by CIC. The courses range anywhere from OSLT for business, OSLT for sciences, OSLT for construction, OSLT for technology, OSLT for human services and OSLT for automotive.

And, Chris described his role as follows:

I am responsible for the intensive English language program, TESL, and overseeing a bridging program that mostly interacts with internationally trained professionals. The intensive English language program has internationally trained professionals; we are offering language support rather than academic support…. I am responsible for the pre-entry
students, those students who have not been accepted as diploma students and are hoping to get in.

The interview results are presented in Table 9 based on the main categories of: key college programs and services, and issues identified by interviewed college personnel. There are two main categories that emerged from the data: admission practices and program delivery. Within these two categories, several key college programs and services are identified: enrolment, admission requirements, advising, credential recognition, customized programming, program evaluation, support services, and participation of ITI students in program and policy development. Several sub-categories were identified. These key college programs and services are then sub-categorized into issues and concerns raised by participants.

Admission practices.

The following section presents the findings related to admission practices. Specifically, enrolment, admission requirements, advising, and credential recognition for ITI students at the Western College are examined. The findings are presented as follows:

Enrolment of ITI students.

More than half of the participants (n=4 of 7) indicated that the College has experienced an increase in ITI student enrolment. Their observations are based on the work that they do with the ITI students. Paula stated, “Certainly in our case we have seen it (increase in ITI enrolment). The demand has gone up for each advisor.”
Table 9

Themes Arising from Interviews of College Personnel at Western College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Key college programs and services</th>
<th>Issues identified by interviewed college personnel</th>
<th>Number of college personnel identifying as an issue (n=7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
<td>Enrolment of ITI Students</td>
<td>Increase in enrolment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
<td>Admission Requirements</td>
<td>Recognition of foreign credentials through OCAS application process</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognition of international English standardized assessments (TOEFL, IELTS)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of streamlined advising services</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credential Recognition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Requirement for a consistent approach to credential recognition</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Delivery</td>
<td>Customized Programming</td>
<td>Need for more ESL support</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Delivery</td>
<td>A variety of customized programs for ITI students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Delivery</td>
<td>Participation of ITIs in Program and Policy Development</td>
<td>Absence of ITI student participation in college policy and program development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Delivery</td>
<td>Support Services</td>
<td>Responsiveness of support services to ITI student needs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Delivery</td>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>Various mechanisms for program success evaluation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of data on employment success of ITI students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Proactive approach to addressing ITI student needs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Laura remarked that ITI students have always accessed “their College, and the students’ occupation-specific needs have not changed; only the enrolment has increased. She explained further that, “This (ITI students accessing the College) has always happened and to some extent, what I see in terms of student need has not changed really at all in terms of type. It has only changed in quantity.” However, college personnel expressed that the College did not have any mechanism in place to track ITI student enrolment. One of the participants explained that the College only has records of those ITI students who have accessed the ITI advising services, but those students are considered prospective students. They might access the ITI advising services but not pursue a program at the College. Therefore, the College is not able to provide any documentation specific to ITI student enrolment; rather, the College keeps enrolment data of domestic and international students. Most recently, the College has been collecting data on those students who are born in and outside of Canada. It was also noted that many of the ITI students are accessing the College through part-time studies, and the College does not have any records of this group of students either. The interviewees highlighted the following:

Paula said:

This is a bit of a challenge with our service, because all the individuals that we are seeing (ITI Advising Services) are perspective, we have not been able to develop a method that our students are actually translating into our college students. We have no method or mechanism to compute that at this point.
And, Ann stated:

I wouldn’t say we have statistics, but from my observation, it has increased significantly. Just looking at our own department, over the years, I have observed how it has expanded.

We collect data on those internationally trained immigrants who are coming through advising. They are looking for advising assistance and that is not the whole population. We can’t tell you what the percentage of ITIs are, but what we can tell you is the number of people who have immigrated to Canada and if they are domestic students or international students. Up to this year, we are only able to tell you if they were born in Canada or not born in Canada. …There are lots of ITIs coming through Con Ed. (Continuing Education) programs and there is no way of tracking it. They don’t go through any advising or assistance or they don’t come into any special programs, so those folks we would not know who they are, the ITI part of it. (Mindy)

Admission requirements.

Many participants (n=5 of 7) indicated that ITI students apply through the Ontario College Application Services (OCAS) for bridge-training and college diploma and certificate programs, and they also submit their foreign credentials through OCAS. OCAS is affiliated with institutions that evaluate foreign credentials; it offers credential recognition services for ITI students through the Record of Education and Employment
OCAS has recently implemented the Record of Education and Experience (REE) through the CIITE project, and Western College participated in its piloting stage. The College then adopted REE as part of the credential recognition mechanism to streamline the process. As a result, the students receive their acceptance from the College knowing what courses have been recognized. Two participants clarified:

They (ITI students) do have to apply through OCAS for the bridging program. We have on the website a page dedicated to the program. For example, they (ITI students) need to have one year teaching experience, they need to have Canadian equivalency at a Masters level in a teachable area, they need to have CLB (Canadian Language Benchmarks) in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They also have to (be) landed immigrants or permanent residents (Andrea).

Ann explained:

We are working on a project for credential recognition; we are using the REE which was built for the CIITE project. In this area, granting credentials and consistency in evaluations is an area for development and we are currently working on it….In the CIITE project, it was recognized that credential process is based on 3 things: building an infrastructure, the system actually to manage the process and the information, policies and guidelines in doing the recognition, and faculty understanding about the recognition. The REE is the tool that is now adopted by OCAS and broadly available to all Ontario colleges.
Regardless of the existing REE process, ITI advisors continue to assist ITI students with the OCAS application process. One respondent indicated that some ITI students are challenged with using computers and are unfamiliar with the terminologies used on the application. Mindy explained:

These individuals are not familiar with how to simply apply to a college. So going through with them in a systematic way, teaching them how to go through the website, how to access the online application is also important….In terms of usage of that system, the difficulties arise with ITIs who have not used computers or have no computer skills. They are usually apprehensive about not knowing what buttons to press and where to find it, they also might not understand simple things like SIN (Social Insurance Number) or please check off if you have a high school transcript, post-secondary transcript and they think that it is a mark sheet from their country. Terminology could be difficult for some of these clients.

Furthermore, students do not adhere to the OCAS application process when they apply for short programs such as occupation-specific language training (OSLT). The OSLT programs are three-month programs that focus on occupation sector specific language training. These programs are developed and funded by the provincial government and are offered at Ontario colleges. They offer pathways to employment and post-secondary education. Mindy again remarked:
They (ITI students) come directly into our area for the OSLT program. They don’t apply through OCAS because these courses are free for the students. They have to meet the benchmark, they have to have relevant experience from their home country, and they have to be a resident or a convention refugee. For instance, the nurses have to have a letter from the CNO, College of Nurses of Ontario and most cases they come to us because they get a letter from CNO saying that they are lacking fluency. Now, for other courses, some provide certificates of what they have done, we take it in face value.

When the participants were asked about the acceptance of international standardized English proficiency test scores for specific programs, four participants noted that the College recognizes International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores, but the accepted test scores differ based on program requirements. All students, however, are expected to take their college English assessment test for English placement purposes. The College uses two different types of English assessment tools, Canadian Language Benchmarks and Accuplacer. The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) test is a national standardized assessment test which is used to measure the student’s English proficiency (CCLB, 2011). The Accuplacer, on the other hand, is a college-wide English assessment test. Students in the bridge-training programs and ESL programs are expected to take the CLB test, and students accessing all other programs take the Accuplacer test. The participants shared the following: “We do post the IELTS and TOEFL scores for our programs. However, they differ for each of our programs” said Chris. Laura clarified, “We do
accept IELTS and TOEFL tests for admission and then the students are expected to do placement tests.” Ann confirmed these perceptions:

Well, they have to do language assessments to determine what level of English that they are going to go into… We use both, benchmarks are used in bridging programs and they are government specified. Our ESL program is realigned and there is a correlation between Canadian Language Benchmarks and our ESL programs. We are not doing benchmark based placement assessments; it is way too expensive and cumbersome.

**Advising.**

All of the participants indicated that the College offers advising services specifically to ITI students. However, five interviewees stated that increased numbers of ITI students are accessing the College’s advising services. These services are primarily offered to those ITIs in the community but not always to those who access college education. These individuals seek advice about college programs and suitable employment. Karen explained,

From what I know … it is about what program I should take and what is right for me or it could be anything. It is the go-to area for students. They can even ask questions like I need to go to financial aid, whom do I need to talk to?
However, college personnel in general felt that the ITI advising area is “oversubscribed and under staffed.” They have indicated that the College is working to streamline the services within ITI advising to add a credential recognition office. The purpose of this alteration to the College’s advising services is to make ITI students aware of the courses that they are eligible to receive credits for before entering into their programs. Also, one of the participants spoke about the need for a career center for ITI students. She stated that many of their questions are related to career advising. The following experiences were shared by the respondents:

We do have advising services that are offered at both campuses that are oversubscribed and under staffed. We like to expand the services and one of the things that we are interested in doing as part of a systems approach in terms of credential recognition is to create a credential office that would take those kinds of questions away from the advisors and specifically house it with experts who are aware of foreign credentials. Our advisors are now dealing with someone who wants to make a career change to somebody who wants to enter the College. It really is all over the place, said Andrea.

Mindy replied:

We offer advising services for ITI students. Definitely a lot of people are using it. The ITI advising is right across from our office and I can see that a lot of people are using it. Definitely there are more inquiries for the limited number of advisors that we have.
Paula added:

I think for the individuals that I have met that there is a great deal of interest in the career services center. Lot of them (ITIs) want to know if I will be guaranteed a job when I graduate. Will there be a job for me? Am I able to access the employer postings? There are career counselors who are able to prepare them for interviews and prepare their resume.

_Credential recognition._

The participants at Western College spoke about four different approaches to credential recognition: transfer credits, advanced standings, prior learning assessment recognition (PLAR), and Record of Education and Experience (REE) through OCAS. Paula explained the various approaches to credential recognition in detail. She said:

We have advanced standing for those individuals who want to apply for a semester greater than semester one. … We often refer them to the program coordinators who have greater understanding of the curriculum and who have greater understanding of what these individuals may be possessing before coming to the College. They can determine whether they are suitable candidates for advanced standings. It means that the individual has completed enough credits for the first semester of first year to bypass that section of the program.

In terms of exemptions (transfer credits), let’s say 2 or 3 courses that could be counted towards their diploma program, the exemption process
includes that they would fill the exemption evaluation form from the internet, fill it out, attach appropriate documents with courses that they have taken outside of Canada along with course outline to the academic department within the first 10 days of their program. At that time, they are still responsible for registering for all their courses, the academic department will come with their decision by the third week of classes.

The final method is PLAR which is prior learning assessment and we have one advisor who deals with it. These individuals have life learning experience and would want to substitute that for a course. So what these individuals need to do is to meet with someone from their academic division, they will need to take a test to demonstrate that their knowledge meets learning objectives of the course. There is a fee to write the test. There is a subject matter expert who will (create) the test and provide it to the student.

In terms of credential recognition, when they apply through the application process and if they are holding international credentials whether it is from secondary or post-secondary, the transcripts would be assessed. OCAS (Ontario College Application Service) has a partnership with ICAS which is International Credential Assessment Service of Canada, for a fee of about $60, students can send their international credentials and have it assessed by ICAS.
However, these participants spoke about the lack of consistency in credential recognition across the College. These respondents stated the need for consistent policy or criteria to assist in granting credentials. Laura emphasized:

We are not as consistent. The best decision we have made in terms of consistency is that we have reduced the number of people who make those decisions. One coordinator will oversee the request and if she is unclear about it, she can go to the Chair, so that we can get much more consistency over time because it is only one person making the decision.

And Ann said, “We were also able to uncover inconsistent policies and faculty attitude about the process. Not that we have uncovered that, we can find ways to move forward and put things in place to fix this.”

Andrea was the only participant who indicated that the College is in the process of streamlining its credential recognition process, and it is the first college in Ontario to identify and to make changes to their current credential recognition practices. She stated:

I am proud to say that this College has built an internal group to build credential recognition and we started very early. It included our department, Registrar’s office, and the AVP academic. The goal is to streamline credentials that they are transferring from colleges and universities, credential assessed and recognized as well as those who are coming with international credentials. We are looking into creating a systematic approach. There is also funding that is available to upgrade the
database. So the Registrar’s office is going to be using some of the funds to do the very thing. We are also as a college creating a systematic approach to higher learning, international credential recognition, and transfer credits and I am very pleased to say that there is a broad agreement across the College to do this and it is a several years process to roll this out. I think it will have a substantial impact on ITI students.

**Program delivery.**

This section examines how the College addresses the ITI students’ occupation-specific needs in the area of program delivery. The participants were asked questions about their programs, program evaluation, support services and their participation in college policy development. Five areas of concern emerged: customized programming, program evaluation, support services, participation in program and policy development, and student awareness and active recruitment of ITI students.

**Customized programming.**

Three respondents recognized that the College has ESL upgrading courses in place. However, they felt that the College needs to focus on more ESL support for ITI students, so that the students are at a language level that employers would find acceptable. Ann explained:

It’s been identified that students need stronger ESL support. Our ESL programs are pretty strong; however, there is a desire for more support in the language area in a post-secondary context. We have not figured out
what we are going to do with that one, we just got that information…Often in the language area and skills are where they are challenged. You know that it is an area that students are less satisfied than where we want them to be and employers also.

All seven participants spoke about the different types of customized programs offered to ITI students. The College has bridge-training programs, occupation- specific language training programs, and ESL upgrading programs and courses in addition to the college diploma and certificate programs. These programs are generally full, and there is a waitlist for most of them. The participants expressed:

We have bridging programs….In addition, the College offers occupational- specific language training to ITI students who do not choose to enter the work place right away, might choose some academic training in Canada and probably they have not attended an academic institution in Canada… We have full enrolment in all our OSLT programs. We also have a waitlist of students for all our programs. (Andrea)

In my department, the whole space is dedicated to international students and internationally trained individuals. That’s all I see. Basically, I work in a dedicated space; those are the students that I see every day. (Karen)

We are one of the few colleges where international, immigrant education and ESL has been combined because the president thought that there is
convergence between the international student, international study abroad, and immigrant issues. (Ann)

Mindy clarified:

It (OSLT program) is funded by CIC and it is administered through Colleges Ontario and it is sector specific and it is designed for permanent residents, convention refugees, and that is one of their requirements. Another requirement is that they have to have relevant background, so it is for example designed for nurses who have a nursing background from their home country or accountants who are already accountants from their home country and they need to have a CLB ranging from 6 to 8 with the exception of automotive where the range is 5 to 8…. The course involves communication in all aspects in terms of communicating in a nursing environment, communicating with your patients, peers, supervisors, documentation, pronunciation of correct terminology, how to make a call and leave a call, how to prepare a resume, networking skills, interview skills, so they do mock interviews. The idea is that they don’t know how to apply their experience from back home.

On the other hand, one participant voiced that some of the bridge-training programs are not doing well in terms of student enrolment. The College is in the process of identifying the success of these programs. Ann said:
I can tell you the things that I think are weaknesses that have been identified in a variety of ways, including student feedback. So, our bridging programs in general are not as successful as we would like them to be. We have a tougher time getting enrolment, this should be happening considering the number of ITI students that are at the College. This is a general statement; they are not as firmly enrolled as they should be in the bridging programs, given the population. There is a project that was in last year’s Business Plan and we did not have the resources to do it. We will carry it forward to this year’s Business Plan and figure out what is missing and maybe we want to implement across college learning.

*Participation of ITI students in program and policy development.*

Five participants remarked that ITI students do not participate in college policy and program development. The College does not single out a specific student constituency; rather, all students participate in these committees, and they are generally assigned by the student association. Two participants provided the following information: Ann said “The student government actively represents the interest of students. We don’t necessarily single out ITI students,” while Laura explained:

Students who sit on these committees come from various paths. So they may or may not be internationally trained immigrant students, but ITI student is not the criterion. A student who is actively interested and winds up in a policy making committees for example, may or may not be an ITI
student. It could be a student who is from the student government, in which the student government has seats.

Support services.

Almost all of the respondents (n=6) indicated that the College recognizes that a large proportion of their student constituency are immigrants, and each service at the College is expected to respond to their needs. In fact, the College uses surveys and Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to evaluate their services from the perspective of immigrant students. In addition, the College has a specific department which addresses ITI students’ needs. Ann stated:

Because of the number of immigrants at our institution, every service has to be responsive to and appropriate for that population. Tutoring and learning center point of view, tutoring in math and English are appropriate more importantly they have to be designed for the ITI students. More than half of the population has come from somewhere else and a third has ESL as their background. So, it is difficult to say that this service is particularly for ITI. Instead, everything we do, from the food that we serve in the cafeteria to the provision of an appropriate place for worship through to the hiring of the diversity of our faculty and staff, to I can go on and on and on, in many ways the College is responsive to the immigrants and the ITI student population. We also have the area that I oversee specifically responding to immigrant and international students.
Laura agreed, saying “We use KPI data and survey data and analyze it by major groups. So we look at all of our data from the point of view of the immigrant student perspective and international student perspective. We do a lot of surveys.”

**Program evaluations.**

All seven interviewees indicated that the College has several mechanisms of evaluating success of programs at the College. The College uses KPIs, surveys, student satisfaction, enrolment, financial viability, graduation, and employment rate to evaluate the program success in meeting the students’ occupation-specific needs. In the government funded, occupation-specific language training programs, the evaluations take place at the end of each unit. Two of the participants stated:

We know that the programs are successful through our KPI (Key Performance Indicators), and surveys that goes out to the students. We also have student satisfaction surveys; we also look at graduates to see who is employed and who isn’t. We also have our alumni who follow-up with the graduates. (Chris)

There is evaluation at the end of each unit (OSLT programs). In order to complete the course, the students are assessed and the instructor determines whether the student is successful or not. Students pass or not pass the course. They will receive a localized credential, so they get the college certificate at the completion of the course. (Mindy)
However, five participants indicated that the College does not have a systemic approach to evaluating the employment success of ITI students. They voiced that this is an area that the College needs to focus on improving since the goal is to prepare students for career success. Three participants remarked:

We don’t track them. Basically, I know this because they send me e-mails and we keep in touch informally. In the past our intern has sent questionnaires and not everyone responds. So, we don’t hear from everyone. The information that I am giving you is from informal communication with the students. We don’t have a method to formally collect all this data. (Karen)

When the program was funded by the government, gathering data was part of the initiative and we would have to send a report with data. This area is one of our weaknesses in which we are not gathering data in a systematic way about student success. We don’t have the funding for it. (Ann)

We have not been able to track that (gaining successful employment) in a consistent way. We have tracked that anecdotally, but moving forward we are going to track that. CIC has not given us any money to do that type of follow-up. (Andrea)

Overall, more than half of the participants (n=5) rated the College eight out of ten for its proactive approach to attend to ITI student needs. The participants felt that the College makes a continuous effort to address ITI students’ occupation-specific needs by
recognizing the unique experiences of ITI students. It continues to establish pathways for ITI students to access their programs. The College evaluates their programs and services to make changes which better accommodate ITI students. The respondents noted:

I would definitely give them eight out of ten. I would say that the College makes an effort to plan and improve on programs that they offer. The individuals who come to our college want to take the programs that are offered by our college. (Paula)

I would rank them at eight. There are areas that we have to improve on. Based on what we do, we are doing a lot. There is recognition of what we do for ITI students. We value their experience and having the vision is important. There is a recognition that the success of Canada lies in the hands of ITIs. (Mindy)

Excellent and wonderful. I do believe that the College is doing a lot. The College has put a huge amount of money in things that other colleges didn’t. So for instance, the College funded advising support as part of the CIITE project for two years without any money from ACCC (Association of Canadian Community Colleges) or the government. We paid for advisors to participate in that project and we paid for it ourselves because we believed in it. The College is one of the first colleges to build advising services and we paid for those advising services, long before CIITE funding became available…. We have a very diverse and effective Human Rights Office whose mandate goes far beyond dealing with human rights
issues. They ensure that we are hiring diversity in faculty, ensuring that there are things in place for newcomers to the country; they handle all kinds of issues proactively such as access to worship facilities. We have very strong resources for ITI students. Each year we get a report on the diversity of our faculty and how proactive we are in hiring immigrants and diverse population in all the ranks of the College. We look at (those) data as a management team and we particularly work towards ensuring that the diversity of faculty matches the diversity of the population... We are looking at a pre-arrival project. I can’t say anything about that now. Mentoring is the other thing that we do not have here. So mentoring is another thing that is on the list. We have to see if we will be going forward with it or not…. We still have lots to learn and we have lots to improve, but in terms of commitment and following through and putting investments and putting matrix in place to measure results and building this into our daily practice, I think that we do a great job. There are a huge number of people who are committed to this population in our faculty and our support staff rank. (Ann)

**Summary of College Personnel Interview Results**

In this part of the chapter, the summary of the findings from Western College personnel are presented based on their experiences working with ITI students. The College recognizes that there is an influx of ITI students accessing their college education even though; the College does not keep track of ITI student enrolment. The College offers specific programs for ITI students such as bridge-training, occupation-specific
language training, and English upgrading programs and courses. They also have a
department dedicated to ITI and immigrant students along with ITI advising. However,
not all college personnel are familiar with the college programs and services offered to
ITI students.

**Western College: ITI Student Demographics**

The demographic information about the ITI student participants is presented in
Table 10. A total of six ITI student participants - Juan, Victor, Tony, Farah, Jenny, and
Sophie - were interviewed (all names are pseudonyms). They vary in terms of
geographical regions, date of immigration, gender, previous level of education, previous
occupation, years of work experience, current program enrolled, and enrolment date. The
participants’ geographical regions of origin varied, and they included one from
Columbia, one from the Philippines, one from Iran, and three from China. All of the
participants immigrated to Canada between 2004 and 2010. Of the six participants, half
are female and half are male. Four hold a Bachelor of Science degree and two hold a
Masters degree. In terms of their profession, one is a professor, one is a teacher, one is a
radiologist, one is a lawyer, one is a nurse, and one is a computer specialist. Their
professional experience ranges from two to 16 years. The programs that the participants
are currently enrolled in are College Teacher Trainer (n=1), Health Promotions (n=1),
Practical Nursing (n=2), Nursing (n=1), and Business and Accounting (n=1). Finally, all
of the students have been enrolled in their programs for at least one year.
Table 10

Overview of the ITI student participants* at the Western College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Immigration Date</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Level of Education Prior to Entry</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Years of Work Experience</th>
<th>Current Program at Western College</th>
<th>Enrolment Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Graduate Studies – Completed Masters degree in Communication and Cultural Mass Media</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>College Teacher Trainer Program</td>
<td>Sept 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science – Agnostic Radiology</td>
<td>Radiologist</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Health Promotions Program</td>
<td>Sept 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Graduate Studies – Masters in Law</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Practical Nursing Program</td>
<td>Sept 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farah</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science – Specialized in Micro Biology</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Practical Nursing Program</td>
<td>Sept 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science – Nursing</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Sept 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science – Specialized in Computer Application</td>
<td>Computer Application Specialist</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Business and Accounting</td>
<td>Sept 09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All names are pseudonyms
Western College: ITI Students’ Interview Results

This section presents the findings from the ITI students currently attending Western College. Their perspectives, opinions, and experiences about the College’s responsiveness to their occupation-specific needs are presented in a narrative. Two main categories surfaced from the data analysis: admission practices and program delivery. Admission practices entail admission requirements, advising, and credential recognition. Program delivery includes customized programming, participation of ITI students in program and policy development, support services, and program evaluation.

Admission practices.

In this section of the study, the participants shared their experiences concerning entry requirements to their chosen programs, college assessment tests, Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) process and assistance, advising, and credential recognition. As a result of analyzing the data, issues and concerns were identified in the areas of admission requirements, advising, and credential recognition.

Admission requirements.

The data collected revealed that the College has established pathways with local and international institutions. Four out of the six participants came from local post-secondary institutions or community agencies in Toronto or from international educational institutions where the College has formalized pathways into their academic programs for students.
### Table 11
Themes Arising from Interviews of ITI Students at Western College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Key College Programs and Services</th>
<th>Issues identified by interviewed ITI students</th>
<th>Number of Students Identifying as an Issue (n=6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admission</strong></td>
<td>Admission Requirements</td>
<td>Established pathways from other institutions or other countries</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting the college admission requirements</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clear procedures for OCAS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advising</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unhelpfulness of advisors and lack of clarity in communication</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unawareness of ITI advisors’ services</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Helpfulness of academic coordinators</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credential Recognition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unawareness of credential recognition at the college</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of acknowledgement of foreign credentials</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Delivery</strong></td>
<td>Customized Programming</td>
<td>Placement in programs that are not customized for ITI students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Requirement for stronger ESL support</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation of ITIs in Program and Policy Development Support Services</td>
<td>Feeling of worthlessness in the contribution to policy development at the college</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>Helpfulness of the support services</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unaware of the department that assists ITI students at the college</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student satisfaction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of the respondents made the following comments:

When I came here, I went to a high school in Toronto and I got my diploma there. They told me that this school has the practical nursing program and we can do the test here. If I pass, then they will accept me into the nursing program (at the College)… That’s why I applied to the nursing program. (Farah)

I went to the CARE center first. This organization has lots of nurses, internationally educated nurses, working for their license and then working as a nurse. I joined this organization as a member and they advised me to take this program. Because in China, the nursing system is little bit different from here. Some guidelines we have here, I have never heard of it… The CARE center advised me to take the academic pathways for internationally trained nurses program and that’s why I am taking it. I think that it is a useful program for us and that’s why, I took their advice. (Jenny)

Well, I knew about this college before coming to Canada. They had this program and it is called CIIP, Canadian Immigration Integration Program. That is a two day seminar program which is about programs that are offered in Canada to help immigrants. I was introduced to the College in the Philippines and then I (looked) on the website and I chose health sciences which is closer to my profession. (Victor)
In fact, more than half of the interviewees (n=5) met the admission requirements of their chosen programs. Two participants emphasized that the College accepted their previous credentials and international standardized English proficiency test scores (IELTS, TOEFL), and all they had to do was to go through an interview process to be considered for their programs. Jenny and Tony remarked:

Yes, I met the requirements of this (Nursing) program. I was a nurse and I had a letter from China. I (showed) it to them for proof. I also gave my IELTS scores for English too. That’s it and they said that I am accepted in my (nursing) program. (Jenny)

To meet all the requirements, I had to collect all my papers and my documents and the credential assessment and then I just applied through Ontario College. After that was the interview and then I got in (to the Practical Nursing program). First I collected the documents, then I put everything together and the English test that I did before coming to Canada to meet the requirements. Then I had an interview and that’s it. I got an e-mail saying that you (have gotten into the Practical Nursing program). (Tony)

Half of the participants (n=3) stated that they took the college English assessment test and were placed in their programs. For instance, Farah said, “They asked me to come for one interview. I had an English test (in writing). I (had) biology and math tests and I passed all of them to get into this program.” And Victor explained,
The academic requirement is easy, it is to have a high school diploma and 3 to 5 years work experience in the health field. I met the requirements. You also had to be proficient in English. So, I believe that I am proficient in the English language, so I believe that I satisfied the requirements for all the areas. I had all the requirements. (Victor)

Also, the participants of the study did not find any difficulties with the OCAS application process. Four ITI students found the OCAS application process to be simple and easy to follow. Juan explained, “For me it was somehow easy. I just had to give some information and that was it. They (asked) for the information and documents and that was it.” Sophie shared similar thoughts, “Oh, I just applied on-line. I applied by myself, and it (was) not too hard. I asked my daughter and my husband to help me with what does this sentence mean.” Two participants discussed that the college personnel assisted with the application process. Tony stated, “When I came to the College, I actually applied. They (told) me how to apply through OCAS. The application is very easy.”

Advising.

All six participants voiced their disappointment with the advising services. They felt that the advisors at the College lacked knowledge of the existing programs. The advisors failed to provide the necessary information; therefore, the respondents had to seek information elsewhere. The participants also indicated that there was inconsistency in the information they received from college personnel. Moreover, all of the participants
appeared to be unaware of the ITI advising services that existed at the College. The following participants shared their reflections:

When I first came here, I went to see an advisor and I (did not) have a good experience (with) the advisor. Because advisors don’t see what is good for me. I also find that advisors do not have enough knowledge to guide me. I said to them that I am a geologist and what should I do and they said I don’t know. They then sent me to another area where they advise and when I went there, I saw very young people in front of the computer. Maybe he was a student and he didn’t have enough knowledge. He said that this is a (student guide) and you can look at whatever you like. I studied that book and I did not find anything in my major… I lost confidence in an advisor. I think that they are not helpful. They don’t have the ability to counsel me and give me advice. They don’t have the ability to help people as advisors. So I made my own decisions. (Farah)

I think we need help for the students. As an immigrant student, I want to know how this program can be successful for immigrants. As an immigrant, I want to know how we can pass all the examinations and how do I successfully graduate from this program and what are the obstacles and barriers and challenges. They should tell the immigrant students. This advice is something that I (did not) know. I only learned about it on my own now as I am studying in the program. It is very hard this practical nursing program, it is very hard… If they can have a special office so that
they can help us and advise (the students) about the program. They can also have an open session about the program with advisors and graduate students. It is not the same as the orientation. At the orientation, we have already enrolled in the program. I am suggesting before enrolling into the program. It will be good to have (an) open session before you choose the program. (Tony)

However, half of the interviewees emphasized that the academic coordinators were instrumental in helping them with their academic study, and they praised them for their assistance. The following thoughts were shared:

The coordinators have all the information needed, so they know where I should apply, where I (have to go) for credential assessment, they told me everything. (Juan)

She (General advisor) directed me to a coordinator in the health and community services. So, I went there and presented my papers to the coordinator and right there and then she accepted me for the certificate program. I registered for the program right away. She was helpful. I presented my credentials and she was impressed (with) my credentials, because I am an international graduate and I had international experience. (Victor)

The coordinator gave me some advice for how to do things and where to go and how to get the license for the RN exam. Actually they gave some
advice (which) is important to my career. On the other hand, these courses also help me so much. The coordinator was very helpful. (Jenny)

**Credential recognition.**

The ITI participants explained that they were not aware of the credential recognition processes at the College. Two participants stated that they were not advised by College personnel about their eligibility to apply for transfer credits, advanced standings, or PLAR. Jenny stated, “No, I didn’t. I am not familiar with that…. Nobody told me about the transfer credit.” Similarly, Farah indicated, “No I have never used it (transfer credit) because I have never gotten any information about that. I didn’t know that.” On the other hand, half of the study participants (n=3) remarked that they applied for credential recognition, but they believed their previous educational qualifications were not evaluated appropriately. They thought that the college personnel lacked knowledge of foreign credentials. Two participants explained that they were aware of credential recognition process, but they chose not to pursue it, because their program of choice was unrelated to their profession. They explained that they wanted to take the courses at the College and gain knowledge about the field of study based on current and relevant information. They stated:

No I (did not) study this practical nursing at the college back home. I didn’t apply for any credit. I have heard about transfer credit, but it is only helpful for elective courses. In practical nursing, all the courses are mandatory for us. It doesn’t make sense for me to apply for transfer credits. (Tony)
I still would not request for it. I really want to (take) these courses; I want to be up to date, because I took these courses ages ago. I do know that I can request for transfer credits, but I didn’t bother to. (Victor)

**Program delivery.**

This part of the chapter examines how the College addresses the ITI students’ occupation-specific needs in the area of program delivery. The participants were asked questions about their programs, program evaluation, support services, and their participation in college policy development. Four areas of concern emerged: customized programming, participation in program and policy development, support services, and program evaluation

**Customized programming.**

Five of the six participants were placed in one-year fast-track programs or two and three-year diploma programs at the College. The fast-track programs recognize ITI students’ prior credentials, allow students to take advanced courses and continue to meet their occupation-specific needs in gaining additional skills and Canadian credentials. The participants indicated that the programs are for all students, not specifically for ITI students. Farah said, “The program has all kinds of students not only for new immigrants.” However, one participant was enrolled in a bridge-training program specifically customized for ITI students and felt that it was helpful in gaining an understanding about the Canadian culture and their profession. Bridge-training programs
are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and are designed specifically for ITI students to help them transition into the Canadian labour market. Juan explained:

It is a one year program that is specific to internationally trained immigrants…. this program is very helpful. For instance, one course called Employment Skill for someone who does not have any idea of the Canadian environment; it teaches you about working in the Canadian culture. It was based on learning Canadian professional skills based on the culture. It was very helpful for me because I learned about information about the Canadian culture. The program was excellent.

Five participants indicated that they passed the college English assessment test and were placed in college programs; however, they felt that they could benefit from taking English upgrading courses. They specifically spoke about improving their English communications skills which, they felt, was important in their daily interactions. Interviewees offered the following explanations:

Yes, I passed all the English requirements. I still think that I have communication barriers. Sometimes, when I talk to other immigrants in Toronto or other people, sometimes I don’t understand what they are saying. I am trying to improve. This summer I am going to take a few more English courses to improve my communication. (Tony)

The worst thing is the English part, perhaps they could put more hours to English in the program, because that is one of my weaknesses. We have
15 to 20 hours of pronunciation class and for me it was not enough. The conversation part is important. In order to do the English part well, you need to do all the parts in English, so I would recommend more time with English in the program. (Juan)

**Participation of ITI students in program and policy development.**

When participants were asked questions about the level of their participation in policy and program development, all six participants indicated that their participation would not have any impact on changes at the College. They stated that the College would not consider their input; rather, decisions would be made by college personnel. Tony observed:

I can talk, but the problem is that (it will not have any impact). If I go to the student service and I talk to them, I don’t think that they (care) about what I have to say. My voice or other students’ voice, they don’t listen. They only want to make money from us…. As students we are not the decision makers of their policy, we just follow them.

**Support services.**

All six participants found the support services to be helpful, including the library, career counseling, and financial aid, among others. Juan stated, “I use the library; I use the career counseling office. I don’t think that anything is lacking in terms of services. I didn’t use any other services at the College.” Sophie also indicated, “The library system is very good. I often went there….I went to the career counseling office several times.”
Someone helped me to modify my resume, cover letter, and (practiced a mock) interview. They helped me a lot.” Five participants also discussed the importance of financial aid in assisting them with their education at the College. One participant also spoke about the bursary that she received from the College. Jenny said, “I applied for a special bursary and I got it. The money is very helpful, and I am very lucky. I received $2,500 per year. I (did not) apply to OSAP because I have a bursary.” The College has a specific department that is designated to serve ITI students, but half of the students (n=3) were not aware of the specific services that are offered in assisting them with their college education. Tony observed, “They have the International Center, but I have never been there. I don’t know what they are doing. I am not sure, I have never been there.”

Program evaluation.

Five participants ranked the College eight or nine out of ten when asked about their satisfaction with the College. The sixth participant did not want to rank the College; however, she indicated that she was satisfied with the College. The student participants were content with the program and services offered at the College and felt that the College offers high quality education. The following feedback was discussed by the respondents:

Based on my personal experience, I would (give it a) nine. Because my experience is that they are helpful. When you finish the program, people are getting jobs and that is important for us. I (will not) give them ten because of the English part, more time with English in the program. Other than this, I think the College does everything. (Juan)
I would give the College an eight because I am an immigrant and they have programs for us. They also have programs for immigrants for free. They give you an education that is high quality and you get so much information, I think the College is doing that. They are helping immigrants and they have access to programs for immigrants, but they are not aggressively advertising their programs like the private colleges.

(Victor)

Sophie observed,

The College has a good education system. That’s why I chose the College. They have lots of good professors, they have good teaching, and a good service center.

**Summary of ITI Students’ Interview Results**

This section summarizes the findings of the internationally trained immigrants’ experiences as students of Western College. The participants of the study expressed their opinions and views about how this particular college meets their occupation-specific needs. Generally, the students were satisfied with the programs and services offered at the College. Areas of improvement included advising services, credential recognition, and offering additional English courses.

**Comparative Analysis of ITI Students and College Personnel at Western College**

This part of the chapter presents the comparative analysis of the findings from six ITI students and seven college personnel from Western College. The perceptions and
experiences of the two groups of interviewees will be compared in order to discuss the College’s responsiveness to ITI students’ occupation-specific needs. Therefore, the analysis is presented in two main sections: admission practices and program delivery.

**Admission practices.**

The ITI students enrolled in programs at Western College indicate that the purpose for their enrolment is to gain Canadian credentials, which would help them in finding suitable employment. The college personnel recognized the increased number of ITI students who are accessing the College and Western College’s approach to making proactive changes in addressing ITI student needs. The data analysis indicates a connection between the College’s policies, their implementation, and, consequently, students’ admission experiences. For instance, the College has established pathways with other institutions locally and internationally; it recognizes foreign credentials through the OCAS application process, and it also accepts international English standardized tests. As a result, some of the student participants were able to meet the college requirements and enrol in their programs of choice. Western College also offers opportunities for ITI students who do not meet the admission requirements through accessing upgrading courses and programs. However, the College does not have any record of ITI student enrolment. Rather, the College only collects data on students who are born in and outside of Canada.

Analysis of the ITI advising services data indicates that there is a discrepancy between the perspectives of ITI students and college personnel about the services. While the college personnel stated that ITI advisors are “oversubscribed and under staffed,” all
six ITI student participants articulated that they had never heard about such services. In addition, ITI students mentioned the unhelpfulness of the college’s general advising services. The only college personnel who were able to assist them with their programs were academic coordinators. These data suggest there is a need for restructuring and streamlining advising services, which was identified by both college personnel and ITI students’ interviews.

In the area of credential recognition, the data indicate that more than half of the ITI student respondents were unaware of the existing credential recognition processes at the College. Similarly, the college personnel identified the lack of consistency in recognizing foreign credentials and expressed the need for a systemic process. Currently, Western College is taking a proactive approach to resolving this issue by allocating funds to upgrade their database in order to keep records of transfer credits and credential recognition. The College anticipates implementing the changes in the next few years.

Program delivery.

The analysis of program delivery shows that the College has established pathways with local and international institutions. The majority of the student participants came to know about the College and their programs through partnering organizations. While the college personnel respondents recognized that the College offers several short customized programs (bridge-training and occupation-specific language programs, and English upgrading courses and programs), the data suggest that the majority of the ITI participants were still enrolled in regular college programs. Even though there is a high demand for bridge-training programs, the data indicate that there seems to be insufficient
enrolment of ITI students in these programs. The College is in the process of evaluating the success of some of the bridge-training programs.

Both ITI students and college personnel agreed that ITI students do not participate in college policy or program development. All six ITI students indicated that they were convinced that their participation would not have any impact on program development or policy changes. College personnel, on the other hand, stated that the College does not single out specific student constituencies. Therefore, absence of student engagement in program development particularly in bridge-training programs raises concerns about program quality. In other words, do these programs meet the occupation-specific needs of internationally trained immigrants?

**Summary**

The data suggest that ITI students and college personnel were generally satisfied with these services. They highlighted the importance of financial aid with bursaries offered to ITI students. Moreover, the College established a department that specifically caters to immigrant and international students. Yet, half of the student interviewees indicated that they never heard of this department.

According to the college personnel, Western College is taking a proactive approach to addressing ITI student needs. The students expressed their satisfaction with the individual programs and the College in general. However, areas for improvement were also indicated: review of the bridge-training programs, restructuring advising services, improving career center services, and a separate area for credential recognition.
Chapter Six – Comparative Analysis between Eastern and Western Colleges

Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the comparative analysis of research findings between Eastern and Western Colleges in relation to the study using the conceptual framework of single- and double-loop organizational learning. The conceptual framework helps to answer the main research and sub-questions of the study. The main research question is: How responsive are the two participating GTA Ontario Colleges to ITI students’ occupation-specific needs? The three sub-questions are:

1. Based on their experience and satisfaction, how do participating ITI students perceive the value of what the College provides for them?

2. Based on their experience and their college’s policies and practices, how do participating college personnel perceive the value of what the College provides for the ITI students?

3. What successful policies and practices do the study colleges have in place to respond to the ITI students’ occupational training needs?

Examples from the data are included in this chapter to further discuss the organizational learning concept.

Conceptual Framework

Specific areas such as how organizations learn, the characteristics of good learning organizations, and how organizations can improve their learning are explored to examine the responsiveness of Ontario colleges in serving ITI students. According to
Morgan (1997), organizational learning implies that organizations are evolving systems that are continuously changing. The learning process in an organization is conscious or deliberate in improving or maintaining performance based on experience. As such, Argyris and Schon (1974, 1978) state that the members of an organization are catalysts of change in which they impact, initiate, plan, and implement change. Hence, learning is a “systems-level phenomenon because it stays with the organization, even if individuals change…organizations learn as they produce. Learning is as much a task as the production and delivery of goods and services….production systems be viewed as learning systems” (cited in Nevis, Ghoreishi, Gould, 1995, p. 2).

Current research on organizational learning focuses on the deficits that impede successful learning. Argyris and Schon (1974, 1978) emphasize on two types of organizational leaning, “double-loop learning (generative) as an important, often missing, level of learning in contrast with single-loop learning (corrective), which they have found to be more common” (cited in Nevis, Ghoreishi, Gould, 1995, p.3). In this context, a loop is referred to as a learning process and organizations are “complex arrangements of people in which learning takes place” (Nevis, Ghoreishi, Gould, 1995, p.3). These theories emphasize that learning occurs formally, informally, and unintentionally and, for transformational changes to take place, organizational learning is required. For Ontario colleges, organizational learning takes place when the quality of the learning process is based on reflection, evaluation, and analysis that could lead to successful outcomes.

Single-loop learning is “correcting an action to solve or avoid a mistake…(and) looks at technical or external causes” (Talisayon, 2011, p. 1). It is based on the belief
that organizations can achieve desired outcomes without significantly changing existing practices. Therefore, the learning cycle is unidirectional and linear. Usually, the objectives are set and general performance is observed. Evaluations may take place; however, they do not necessarily influence change in policies and practices.

Double-loop learning, on the other hand, is based on the belief that organizations are evolving and are continuously changing systems. It is correcting also the underlying causes behind the problematic action. Underlying causes may be an organization’s norms and policies, individuals’ motives and assumptions, and informal and ingrained practices that block inquiry on these causes. Double-loop learning requires the skills of self-awareness and self-management, and the willingness to candidly inquire into why and what went wrong. (Talisayon, 2011, p.1)

Organizations achieve proficiency by questioning and reflecting on the appropriateness of the process, outcomes, and planned actions. Strategies are reviewed on an on-going basis, and output is based on feedback, analysis, and reflection that impact organizational change. “Reflection here is more fundamental: the basic assumptions behind ideas or policies are confronted… hypotheses are publicly tested… processes are disconfirmable not self-seeking” (Argyris, 1977, p. 103).

In this study, the single- and double-loop learning concepts are applied to examine the responsiveness of two study sites, Eastern and Western Colleges to ITI students’
retraining needs. The following domains are used to determine the organizational learning process:

- What do the findings suggest about the learning process and adequacy of program delivery and services for ITI students?

- What do the findings suggest about the depth, salience, and spread of the resulting actions?

Based on the selected domain, examples of single- and double-loop learning from the two study colleges are presented in the charts below (Tables 12 & 13).

This section examines examples of programs and policies and practices at Eastern and Western Colleges in terms of their relationship to single- and/or double-loop organizational learning framework based on the research findings and the criteria for the study. It appears that Eastern College tends to exemplify predominantly single-loop learning with some elements of double-loop learning. Western College, on the other hand, appears to be an example of a combination of single- and double-loop learning. The data presented indicate that ITI students at Eastern College are not perceived and understood by college personnel or college policies to have specific needs; rather, they are seen as being part of the larger student population. This understanding of the ITI students may obscure the possibility of the College offering sufficient support for ITI students. Respectively, Western College generally recognizes ITI students’ distinctive occupation-specific needs and has made commitments towards improving its policies and practices. However, there are inconsistencies that have been identified in Western
College’s responsiveness to ITI students. In this section of the chapter, specific examples will be used to support the analysis of organizational learning at Eastern and Western Colleges outlined in the chart above.
Table 12

First Domain for Determining Single- and/or Double-Loop: What do the findings suggest about the nature of the learning process for ITI students? (Examples of Single- and Double-Loop Learning)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Eastern College</th>
<th>Western College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridge-Training Program</td>
<td>College recently began to offer small number of bridge-training programs in one discipline</td>
<td>College has offered several bridge-training programs for a number of years in many disciplines and is in the process of developing a new bridge-training program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Delivery</td>
<td>Bridge-training programs are created based on industry demand</td>
<td>Bridge-training programs are created based on both ITI student and industry needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hesitant in developing new bridge-training programs because they are government funded and do not bring any financial gain to the College</td>
<td>College continues to allocate funds for the development of ITI programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None of the ITI study participants were aware of bridge-training programs</td>
<td>Majority of the ITI study participants were unaware of bridge-training programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentals Program</td>
<td>Most ITI student participants are primarily placed into fundamentals programs which are not specific to ITI students and impede students’ program completion</td>
<td>Most ITI student participants are primarily placed into regular and fast-track college programs that are not specific to ITIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Eastern College</td>
<td>Western College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation-Specific Language Training</td>
<td>College offers occupation-specific language training programs with high enrolment</td>
<td>College offers occupation-specific language training programs with high enrolment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and retention; there is no record of employment success of ITI students after</td>
<td>and retention; there is no record of employment success of ITI students after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>program completion</td>
<td>program completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None of the study participants were aware of them</td>
<td>None of the study participants were aware of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Upgrading Programs and Courses</td>
<td>ITI participants take additional English courses which prolong their program</td>
<td>ITI students expressed the need for additional English courses which they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>completion</td>
<td>believe could help them in their language acquisition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Eastern College</th>
<th>Western College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pathway Agreements</td>
<td>College has not established pathways with local and international institutions</td>
<td>Established pathways with local and international institutions for ITI students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITI Service Department</td>
<td>College does not have a specific department that offers ITI programs and services</td>
<td>College has a specific department which offers programs and services to immigrant students. However, half the study participants were unaware of the department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies/Practices</td>
<td>ITI Advising</td>
<td>Credential Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College offered ITI advising for several years until the end of CIITE funding. The positions no longer exist</td>
<td>College has established credential recognition processes, but they lack consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College maintains ITI advising positions even after the completion of funding for positions from CIITE. However, the ITI advising is not known to ITI students</td>
<td>College has established credential recognition processes, but they lack consistency. Also, ITI students are able to submit their credential through OCAS (Record of Education and Employment)</td>
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Table 13

Second Domain for Determining Single- and/or Double-Loop Learning: What do the findings suggest about the depth, salience, and spread of the resulting actions? (Examples of Single- and Double-Loop Learning)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Eastern College</th>
<th>Western College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of and reflection on</td>
<td>College evaluates the success of the programs through Key Performance Indicators, surveys, student satisfaction, enrolment, financial viability, graduation, and employment rate, yet there are no specific changes at the College that impacts ITI students including the success of the bridge-training programs has not been evaluated.</td>
<td>College evaluates the success of the programs through Key Performance Indicators, surveys, student satisfaction, enrolment, financial viability, graduation, and employment rate, yet some changes have been made to impact ITI students including the success of the bridge-training programs. Currently, the College is reviewing low performing bridge-training programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs, policies and their</td>
<td>The occupation-specific needs of ITI students have not been evaluated.</td>
<td>Continuous evaluation of ITI students’ occupation-specific needs ITI student participants lack ESL support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect on practices</td>
<td>College does not have a mechanism to keep track of ITI students as a distinct student constituency, only categorized by domestic and international students.</td>
<td>College keeps track of students who are born in Canada and outside of Canada, but this practice is not specific to ITI student constituency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of and reflection on</td>
<td>College does not recognize ITI students as separate student constituency; rather, they are treated as all students.</td>
<td>College allocates funds and makes a continuous effort in addressing ITI students’ occupation-specific needs. Each service at the college is responsive to ITI students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First Domain for Single- and Double-Loop Learning

The first domain describes the evidence of the learning process and adequacy of program delivery and services for ITI students in the areas of program delivery, policies and practices, and training and support available to college personnel in serving ITI students.

Program delivery.

This area highlights the different programs offered at Eastern and Western Colleges in responding to the ITI students’ retraining needs. The programs in context are the bridge-training programs, fundamentals programs, occupation-specific language training programs, and English upgrading programs and courses. The development and the offering of these programs to ITI students could be considered as examples of single- and/or double-loop learning.

Bridge-training programs.

Bridge-training programs are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and are designed specifically for ITI students to help them transition into the Canadian labour market. “They assess your existing skills and competencies, compared to Ontario employer expectations. They provide training and Canadian workplace experience without duplicating what you have already learned” (Ontario Canada, 2011, p. 1). These programs are short (generally one year in length) and have field-specific admission requirements.
The bridge-training programs for ITIs that are offered by Eastern College are fairly recent and offered only in one discipline. The college personnel participants indicated that these programs are not financially viable to the College; therefore, the College is hesitant to develop new bridge-training programs. These programs were created based on industry demand and the College’s ability to compete with other GTA Ontario colleges. One college personnel participant (Tracy) explained that the College decided to offer bridge-training programs because it was the only College in the GTA that was not offering them. This practice seems to reflect single-loop learning in which it “involves following routines and some sort of preset plan – and is both less risky for the individual and the organization, and affords greater control” (Infed Org, 2011, p. 5).

For Eastern College, offering bridge-training programs as Bob indicated is “less risky” because the College has not invested any funds for program development or delivery. However, developing bridge-training programs presents the evidence of responsiveness to change in college student demographics which, in turn, supports double-loop learning. These programs that were selected for ITI students are in high demand and over-subscribed.

Western College, on the other hand, has offered several bridge-training programs over a number of years in many disciplines and is currently in the process of developing a new program. These programs are developed based on both ITI students and industry needs. The College continues to identify new bridge-training programs and allocate funds for the development and delivery of them. There is awareness among college personnel that ITI students’ occupation-specific needs are different from the direct entry
students from high school. Therefore, the College takes a proactive approach in offering different bridge-training programs. This process could be considered as an example of double-loop learning because the College continuously finds mechanisms to reflect on and evaluate its practices in order to improve programs for ITI students. The College recognizes an influx of ITI students accessing their college education, and the need for the relevant organizational changes to stay competitive in the market.

Regardless of the fact that bridge-training programs are developed and offered for ITI students at both colleges, the majority of ITI student participants were not even aware of them. It appears that Eastern and Western Colleges both follow the “old” routine by placing ITI students in regular certificate and diploma programs. Therefore, many of the participants did not even explore the bridge-training program option.

Fundamentals/Foundational programs.

Fundamentals/foundational programs are offered to students whose English and mathematics skills do not meet college entry requirements. Some Ontario colleges refer to these programs as fundamentals and others refer to them as foundational programs. These are college upgrading certificate programs that provide foundations for students to enhance their English, mathematics, and specific program skill areas. These programs are offered to high school graduates and mature students and are not specific to ITI students. After completion, students are able to enrol in their chosen college programs.

According to the data, at Eastern College, the majority of the participants were primarily placed into fundamentals/foundational programs, which prolonged program
completion. One of the student participants (Danny) mentioned that the College placed immigrant students into fundamentals/foundational programs without considering their prior credentials. When questioned about student placement in the fundamentals/foundations program, college personnel were not able to provide any adequate response. This example reflects single-loop learning in which organizational actions are predictive and recurring, and college personnel have consciously accepted and believed in this approach (Argyris and Schon, 1974). For Eastern College, the absence of a proper selection process hinders placement of ITI students in an appropriate course level or program and reflects unchanged practices.

In contrast, at Western College, none of the participants were placed into fundamentals/foundational programs. Rather, they were in regular certificate, diploma and one year certificate programs, which could be considered single- and double-loop learning. Placing ITI students in regular college programs could be viewed as single-loop learning, while placing them in fast-track programs could be seen as double-loop learning. Regular certificate and diploma programs are designed for direct entry students while fast-track programs recognize ITI students’ prior credentials and allow students to take advanced courses. Even though fast-track programs are not designed for ITI students, these programs continue to meet their occupation-specific needs in gaining additional skills as well as Canadian credentials.

*Occupation-specific language training (OSLT).*

Occupation-specific language training (OSLT) programs are funded through Citizenship and Immigration Canada and are offered at 13 Ontario colleges. These
programs are developed for ITIs who are “permanent residents or protected persons” (Colleges Ontario, 2011, p. 1) of Canada. The eligible students would have to achieve Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 6 to 8 in their English proficiency. The objective of the program is to enhance ITI students’ industry related English communication skills and their understanding of Canadian workplace culture. These programs are offered within a short period of time, 180 hours in length (Colleges Ontario, 2011).

According to the college personnel participants, the OSLT programs at Eastern and Western Colleges had full enrolment. They articulated that the curriculum is interactive and emphasizes the enhancement of students’ listening and speaking skills. The college personnel also observed that ITI students gain confidence and a greater appreciation for learning about a diverse workplace. However, the findings in this study indicate that none of the student participants and only some of the college personnel at either college were aware of the OSLT programs. Though the data do not specify why the study participants were not informed about the OSLT programs, it is obvious that ITI students at these two colleges were not receiving critical information needed to make informed decisions about the potential programs of their choices. In this instance, it appears that both colleges adhere to single- and double-loop learning. The colleges’ success in offering OSLT programs with high enrolment and retention could be considered double-loop learning. However, there is a lack of communication regarding the choice of programs offered to ITI students at each college. Moreover, the college personnel have indicated that there is no system in place to keep a record of employment success of ITI students after program completion, which could be viewed as single-loop
learning. In this particular case, the two colleges continue “to carry on its present policies or achieve its objectives…without questioning the underlying policies and goals as well as its own program” (Argyris, 1977, p. 116).

*English upgrading programs and courses.*

At Eastern College, most of the study student participants were placed in either fundamentals or English upgrading programs or courses because they did not meet the college English standards. In fact, the College requires students to take English assessment tests and does not accept international English language proficiency tests. Also, the college personnel participants stated that the English assessment test was North American based; therefore, ITI students were not familiar with some of the expressions. Many students stressed that taking English upgrading programs or courses delayed completion of their programs and, consequently, prolonged finding suitable employment. In contrast, most student participants at Western College were placed in diploma or fast-track programs, and they expressed the need for additional English courses which they believed could help them in their language acquisition.

These examples from Eastern and Western Colleges could be perceived as single-loop learning because neither of the colleges took into consideration the unique needs of ITI students for appropriate program placement. In order to exhibit double-loop learning, the two colleges would have to question their assumptions and practices. “What needs to be adjusted now is not just the action strategy but the governing value itself” (Jae Paul, 2003, p. 38). For instance, at both colleges, ITI students should be assessed for their English skills and placed appropriately in upgrading courses and programs.
Policies and practices.

Establishing pathways from other institutions for ITI students.

From the findings, it is evident that the majority of the study student participants at Western College learned about their programs through local post-secondary institutions and community agencies in Toronto or from international education institutions with which the College has established pathway agreements. The established agreements provide ITI students with advanced academic standings based on their prior education. The qualified students are placed into their programs without any additional requirements. This example describes double-loop learning in which the College has a different strategy to initiate, plan, and implement pathways for ITI students to access Western College’s programs and provide credential recognition.

Eastern College, however, has many agreements with local and international institutions, but they are not specifically focused on providing pathways for ITI students. None of the student participants accessed the College through any of the college affiliations. Most participants learned about the College through their family and friends. This could be viewed as evidence of single-loop learning in which Eastern college has not established agreements with educational institutions similar to those at Western College. Argyris (1977) explains that this trend characterizes organizations that become comfortable with familiar routines and are unable to identify emerging problems. Such organizations do not usually reflect on their practices. In this particular example, Eastern College has not identified the ITI student population as a niche market, therefore, has not been able to establish policies and practices to support their needs.
**Specific department serving ITI students.**

At Western College, a specific department is designated to offer programs and services to ITI students, recent immigrants, and international students. The department provides ITI specific advising, OSLT, bridge-training programs, and English upgrading programs. The findings of this study indicate ineffective communication between the department and the target student population because half of the study participants were unaware of the existence of this department. This could be viewed as an example of both, single- and double loop learning. On the one hand, there is a proactive approach from the College to serve ITI students, even though not all areas of the College are aware of the services that are offered to ITI students through this department.

Eastern College views ITI students as part of the collective college student population; therefore, it does not offer specific programs and services for these students. This practice could be considered single-loop learning in which it lacks Argyris’ and Schon’s (1974) theory of action. They state:

> Human agents make sense of the contexts within which they function by constructing mental representations or concepts of them and these, in turn, guide the designing of action. By monitoring the relative effectiveness of action, therefore, human agents also monitor the adequacy of their constructions of the contexts in which such actions takes place. (cited in Greenwood, 1998, p. 1048)

In this example, Eastern College personnel have not identified or taken any action towards meeting the needs of ITI students. Therefore, the College has not allocated funds
or developed plans, policies, and practices to ensure that ITI students’ educational needs are met.

**ITI advising.**

The ITI advisor positions were funded by Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project at a number of Ontario colleges. Both Eastern and Western colleges were successful in securing funding for these positions until March 2011 when the project came to its completion. The colleges were left to decide whether they wanted to allocate funds to pursue with ITI advising. Eastern College decided not to continue to offer ITI advising services because the College perceived the benefits to only be received by a minimal student constituency. This decision left ITI students to seek advice from a college advisor who might not have extensive knowledge of foreign credentials and therefore could not advise them appropriately. This practice fosters single-loop learning in which Eastern College’s focus is on providing advising which is common to all students. Eastern College’s decision to terminate the ITI advisor positions indicates that the College would have to seek other resources and means to achieve the same end. As Greenwood (1998, p. 1049) states, “This level of response, (i.e., merely to change the actions intended to lead to the same outcomes)” is short sighted and applies to a ‘one size fits all model’.

Western College on the other hand, decided to formalize and expand the ITI advisor positions within the College. The College recognizes the benefits of ITI advising to internationally trained immigrant students and continues to allocate funds. According to the college personnel participants, the decision to continue offering ITI advising
services was based on discussions with staff, students and data from the CIITE project. The data indicated that a large number of ITI students were accessing the advising services; therefore, the College supported funding for these services. This could be interpreted as an example of double-loop learning in which the College was able to incorporate strategies to fund advising positions. Conversely, the data also indicated that none of the study student participants were aware of the ITI advising services which suggests single-loop learning practices. It appears that there is a disconnect between the services that the College offers and the information that the ITI students receive.

**Credential recognition.**

Both colleges offer credential recognition, using transfer credits, prior learning assessment recognition, and advanced standing. Transfer credits are granted to students based on previous and relevant courses that they have taken at other institutions. Prior learning assessment recognition is offered to students who have previous education, and/or work experience, and extensive knowledge in the related subject area. The students are then asked to write a challenge exam or to submit a project for that particular course. Advanced standing is given to students who have successfully completed a program or courses from the same or another institution and they are given credits towards the first year of their new program.

At Eastern and Western Colleges, the study college personnel and ITI student participants agreed that there needs to be a consistent approach across the College in evaluating credentials. Most ITI study participants believed that their previous educational qualifications were dismissed by the College; therefore, they had to start
from the beginning. The college personnel at both colleges indicated that their college is
in need of a streamlined process in evaluating student credentials. This practice could be
viewed as single-loop learning in which credential recognition is offered to students;
however, the appropriate process and training for college personnel has not been
developed to assess foreign credentials fairly.

Western College has established recognition of foreign credentials through the
Ontario Colleges Application Services (OCAS). Because OCAS is affiliated with
institutions that evaluate foreign credentials, it offers credential recognition services for
ITI students through the Record of Education and Employment (REE). As a result, the
students receive their acceptance from the College knowing what courses have been
recognized. This practice allows ITI students to make an informed decision about their
program of study and determines the time of program completion. Argyris and Schon
(1974) state that double-loop learning is essential in creating approaches, policies, and
practices that would assist the organization and ITI students in achieving their goals. In
the case of Western College, the ITI students are informed in advance of recognition of
their credentials, which, in turn, helps the students to make appropriate decisions and
complete their programs in a timely manner.

Lack of enrolment data.

According to the findings, neither of the colleges has any mechanism in place to
track ITI student enrolment. Eastern and Western Colleges keep track of overall numbers
of full-time and part-time students. Only recently, Western College began to gather data
about students who were born in and outside of Canada. This process allows them to
identify the number of immigrant and non-immigrant students at the College, but it does not help to identify ITI students per se. Also, based on the college personnel’s observations, there is a large influx of ITI students accessing the College. This trend is reflected in the monthly data collected through the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project for students who accessed ITI advising services. However, the data collected presented total number of ITIs who used the ITI advising services including clients interested in general information. The lack of enrolment data on ITI students could be considered single-loop learning because the College does not have accurate information to make changes to existing policies and practices that can benefit ITI students.

Training and support for college personnel.

College personnel and ITI student participants from both colleges stated that faculty coordinators and ITI advisors did not have the knowledge and understanding of foreign credentials; therefore, ITI students’ credentials were not assessed appropriately. The study participants indicated that the training and process could be more streamlined for faculty coordinators who approve transfer of credits from external academic institutions. At Eastern College, the college personnel indicated that the College had not provided any training for ITI advisors. Instead, they attended training through the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project several years ago, and there was no continuation of training in this area. The lack of training for staff at Eastern college could be seen as an example of single-loop learning in which the organization does not recognize “the necessity for ‘actionable’ knowledge to be instilled in
practitioners in order for professional development initiatives to have lasting effects” (Jae Paul, 2003, p. 37).

However, Western College personnel agreed that the College continuously offers support for ITI advisors by organizing meetings to share information about ITI related policies. The College recognizes the necessity to keep their staff informed of current and relevant information that can assist them in helping ITI students. In this regard, Western College exemplifies double-loop learning in which it embeds on-going changes in immigration policy, professional accreditation requirements, and the labour market considerations into their policies and practices. However, there is absence of process and training for credential recognition for faculty coordinators which signifies single-loop learning practices.

Second Domain Used to Determine Single- and Double-Loop Learning

The second question focused on what the data suggest about the depth, salience, and spread of the resulting actions. Specifically, the colleges’ evaluation of and reflection on programs, policies and their effect on practices were examined.

Evaluation of and reflection on programs, policies, and their effect on practices.

Both colleges evaluate the success of their programs through Key Performance Indicators, student satisfaction surveys, student evaluations, enrolment data, financial viability, graduation rate, and employment rate so that the College can continue to gain feedback on their programs and services. At Eastern College, the feedback from these
evaluations affected practices within the entire College but did not bring any changes to programs and services offered to ITI students. This is because the College does not recognize ITI students as a separate student constituency; rather, they are seen as part of the larger student population. This could be viewed as a case of single-loop learning in which evaluations take place, but they do not influence change in policies and practices for ITI students.

Western College adheres to similar evaluation mechanisms as Eastern College. Nonetheless, the College has implemented some changes which have an impact on ITI students. For instance, the College no longer receives CIITE project funding for ITI advising; however, it decided to continue funding this area because there is an obvious recognition and need for these specific services for ITIs. In addition, Western College evaluates the success of their bridge-training programs and continues to evaluate ITI students’ occupation-specific needs for further program development. The College is currently reviewing low performing bridge-training programs to assess the current industry demand and ITI student occupation-specific needs. These are considered to be examples of double-loop learning in which student and employer evaluations impact change.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the analysis of single- and double-loop learning at Eastern and Western Colleges as it relates to their understanding and responsiveness to ITI student needs. Much of the Eastern College’s learning appears to be single-loop, including areas of program delivery and policies and practices. Only the College’s
bridge-training program reflects double-loop learning and occupation-specific language training programs exhibits elements of both, single- and double-loop learning. On the other hand, much of the Western College’s organizational learning is a combination of single- and double-loop learning with a clear distinction of double-loop learning in some of the areas of bridge-training programs and established pathway agreements with local and international institutions. In terms of collecting enrolment data of ITI students, Western College, similar to Eastern College, adheres to single-loop learning.

Currently, Eastern and Western Colleges are in the process of working on various restructuring initiatives. For instance, both colleges are restructuring their advising and credential recognition services. Funds are also allocated to update the database in order to keep records of transfer credits and credential recognition. These initiatives are college-wide and benefit all students.

Overall, the majority of the ITI student participants at both colleges were satisfied with the program and services offered at the college and felt that their college offered high quality education. They believed that college education would help them in enhancing their English language skills, learning about the Canadian culture, and eventually finding suitable employment.
Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the study, implications for practice, and recommendations for further practice and research. These are derived from the analysis of the data collected.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine how responsive participating Ontario GTA colleges are in addressing Internationally Trained Immigrant students’ occupation-specific needs. This study focused on two GTA colleges because a large number of immigrants have settled in the GTA (Lewkowicz, 2008) and are accessing Ontario colleges (Alboim and the Maytree Association, 2002; Kelly, 2007). These colleges are considered to be some of the most culturally diverse post-secondary institutions that serve critical mass of ITI students. The decision to select these two colleges was also based on high number of internationally trained immigrants who were assumed to access the ITI Advising Services according to the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) monthly reports. Eastern and Western colleges also provide a number of programs and services that are offered to ITI students: bridge-training programs, occupation-specific language training programs, English upgrading programs and courses, fast-track programs, fundamental programs, and ITI advising services.

Internationally trained immigrants access Ontario colleges because they are often denied recognition of their foreign credentials by professional associations, which impose regulatory requirements that underrate international work experience and education (Alboim & Cohl, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Lum, 2007; Reitz, 2006, 2007). Moreover, ITIs face challenge of employment requirements of having Canadian work experience and
occupation-specific language skills (Lewkowicz, 2008; Alboim and Cohl, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Rasheed, 2009; Walters, 2006). Therefore, ITIs turn to Ontario colleges for retraining that will give them the opportunity to either make their foreign credentials more usable or to acquire new Canadian credentials so that they are able to secure employment.

I conducted a qualitative document analysis and interviews as the main methods of data collection. The document analysis focused on the colleges’ policies and practices and the interviews involved 27 participants altogether: 13 ITI students, seven at Eastern College and six at Western College, and 14 college personnel, seven at Eastern College and seven at Western College over a six month period during winter, 2011.

The main research question and sub-questions were addressed using the conceptual framework selected for this study: single- and double-loop organizational learning (Argyris and Schon (1974, 1978). Using the single- and double-loop organizational learning theory, the study found that Eastern College tends to exemplify single-loop learning with some components of double-loop learning. ITI students at this college are not perceived as a unique group of students with specific employment and training needs; rather they are seen as part of the larger student constituency. This vision might have impacted the college’s decision to not offer specific programs and services for ITIs. Western College, on the other hand, seemed to exemplify a combination of single- and double-loop learning. Generally, the College recognizes ITI students’ occupation-specific needs and continues to work towards improving its policies and practices. However, there is a lack of communication and disconnect between what the College does for ITI students and the programs and services ITI students are able to
access at the College. Hence, it was noted in this study that the importance and needs of ITI students differed at each college.

**Implications for Practice**

Given the fact that this study only focused on two GTA Ontario colleges and examined the experiences of 27 study participants, there are challenges in outlining the limits to implications for practice. However, based on the analysis of the findings and areas of strengths and weaknesses that were identified from the experiences of ITI students and college personnel, perspectives for further practice are provided to enhance Ontario colleges’ responsiveness to ITI students’ occupation-specific needs. This information might also benefit colleges if they compare their offerings to the study colleges. In addition, this research provides an opportunity for Ontario colleges to reflect, analyze, adapt, modify, and implement changes to their current policies and practices. The following are some implications that are identified:

- In relation to current practice, it was noted in this study that the emphasis of responding to ITI students’ employment needs varied between Eastern and Western Colleges. For these colleges to have a good understanding of their ITI student constituency, they should consider collecting enrolment data based on the kind of students accessing their programs. Currently, the Colleges have data on domestic and international students or students born in or outside of Canada, but these data do not specify different categories of student population, including ITIs. This change in the data collection process would provide the two study colleges, other Ontario colleges, and other post-secondary institutions with
information as to how to identify their students, and prioritize the allocation of funds for further development of specific programs and services.

- The articulation agreements between Western College and local or international institutions have been found to be helpful for ITI students to transition into the College. These agreements provided students with advanced standing and seamless entry into the College which, in turn, allowed them to enhance their education without spending any extra time taking upgrading courses. Similar agreements should be considered between institutions to provide continuous pathways and access to students’ chosen programs.

- Inconsistencies among colleges in their recognition of international standardized English proficiency test scores (IELTS and TOEFL) for admission and placement have impacted ITI students in different ways. At Eastern College, ITI student participants were expected to take the college English assessment test, regardless of the fact the students have immigrated to Canada from an English speaking country. Western College did not request all ITI students to take the college assessment test. Based on their IELTS and TOEFL scores, they were placed in college programs. It appears that there is a need to establish processes that are consistent within and among Ontario colleges and across post-secondary institutions. For instance IELTS and TOEFL scores could be considered for admission, and all students are expected to take English placement test in order to place them appropriately in English courses.
This study outlined the need for designing programs that are tailored to ITI students while recognizing their previous education and work experience. These programs could focus on courses that would assist them with their retraining while gaining Canadian credentials in a short period of time. It was found in the study that further development of bridge-training and fast-track programs in different disciplines would serve a large group of ITI students’ educational needs. Also, alternate delivery methods such as on-line, in-class, day, evening, and weekend offerings would allow ITI students to pursue employment while studying. In addition, incorporating placement or practicum components into the curriculum would help them gain Canadian work experience. Similar delivery models could be considered for other student population who are not ITIs.

The participants also believed that the advisors were unable to provide consistent and relevant information to assist the ITI students. On-going training for college personnel on programs and services for ITIs and other student constituency would help advisors to serve their students more efficiently.

This study identified the need for consistent and streamlined approach across the college in evaluating foreign credentials. The ITI study participants believed that their credentials were dismissed and devalued at both colleges. The Colleges should select specific college personnel who could be trained to evaluate foreign credentials. This approach could lead to substantial improvements in this area.
The ITI student participants believed that the college personal were not aware of their retraining needs. It would be helpful to deliver workshops and training for staff to identify the needs of ITI students.

This study has identified the gap in communication between the ITI students and the college regarding programs and services offered to them. ITI student participants were unaware of advising services and programs that were offered to them at both study colleges. Therefore, there are several recommendations provided to narrow the gap:

1. Create ITI student handbooks on specific bridge-training, fast-track, occupation-specific language training, and English upgrading courses for students. Also, include information on credential recognition, advising, and other services that could help ITI students.

2. Increase marketing and promotional materials across the college so that ITI students are aware of programs and services.

3. Streamline communication among college personnel on new and existing programs and service offerings to ITI students.

The Colleges have several mechanisms in place to evaluate their programs and courses. However, there are none that evaluate ITI student satisfaction. Therefore, the Colleges should consider developing a mechanism to evaluate specifically ITI student satisfaction with their programs, academic success, and employment rate after graduation.
● The study indicated that establishing an ITI student club could help ITI students to network and integrate into the college environment.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This section identifies the recommendation for further research:

● This study focused on only two out of 24 Ontario colleges, selected purposefully for their large concentration of ITI students. Hence, the findings from this study do not reflect the student demographics and immigrant settlement patterns in different regions in Ontario. Though very informative, the findings cannot be generalized beyond these two study colleges. Conducting a comparative study with a similar focus, which includes colleges across Ontario could provide a different perspective.

● The findings in this study were based on 27 participants, 13 ITI students and 14 college personnel. Sample participants from each study college could have been larger. Instead of a qualitative approach, a mixed-method research design could have incorporated a larger sample size.

● Each component that was researched in this study (admission process, advising, credential recognition, customized programming) could be examined in more detail along with a comprehensive analysis that could provide colleges to reflect on their current practices.

● A longitudinal study to follow-up with current research participants to explore their success in gaining employment, career advancement, and their earnings
could provide valuable information about the importance of accessing Ontario college education for retraining purpose.

- Also, conducting a comparative research across countries that accept large influx of immigrants (United Kingdom, America, and Australia) to examine their colleges’ best practices in responding to ITI students’ occupational needs could inform Ontario colleges to re-examine their policies in responding to ITI students.

- This study focused only on the role of the Ontario colleges in assisting ITI to be integrated into the Canadian work-force. However, it is recognized the colleges have only a very limited impact on the primary problem which is the recognition of foreign earned credential by the Canadian professional credentialing associations which may be more concerned about protecting their own interests than opening up entry to practice for foreign trained professionals. A study focused on identifying what the main barriers are in those contexts and how these might be broken down without sacrificing the safety and quality of professional services is critically important.

**Implications for Ethical/Social Justice Issues**

Internationally trained immigrants are marginalized and disadvantaged where systemic barriers hinder their seamless settlement into the Canadian society (Alboim and the Maytree Foundation, 2002; Alboim and Cohl, 2007; Adamuti-Trache and Sweet, 2007; CIITE, 2004; 2007, 2008). One of the greatest challenges faced by ITIs is gaining recognition and acceptance of their credentials from the professional regulatory bodies and/or credentialing associations in Canada. The Canadian government, credentialing
professional associations and employers have not developed policies and practices for ITIs to provide simplified and direct entry into their professions. Hence, the certifying bodies still act as very stringent gate keepers to entry to practice and thereby marginalize ITIs from gaining suitable employment and hinder their settlement in Canada. This practice could be viewed as social oppression. According to Hardiman and Jackson (1996), social oppression is based on the actions, behavior, and attitudes of social groups. The condition of social oppression exists when an agent group “the oppressor” holds the power to determine what is acceptable, and the target group “the oppressed” is not valued and discredited by the dominant group.

Applying this framework to the professional credentialing bodies, accrediting bodies play the role of the agent or the oppressor, and ITIs are the target or the oppressed. “Within this framework, the existence of social oppression may exist at both the individual and the institutional level either of which would have an impact on the immigrant experience” (Kelly, 2007, p. 49). For example, an internationally trained immigrant may have certain expectations when they immigrate to Canada. The Canadian government invites ITIs to settle in Canada based on the point system which recognizes their educational and employment background. However, upon arrival, ITIs are faced with the reality of exclusionary policies and practices of professional associations and employers continue to disadvantage ITIs in finding appropriate employment. The lack of credential recognition could be interpreted as the professional accrediting associations not having made a conscious attempt to address this issue in order to continue their decision making power, however well intentioned, in their perceived responsibility for protecting the public.
In addition, Freire (1970) states the oppressors continue to ensure that they always have more wealth and materialistic goods even at the cost of oppressed having less or, in some instance, nothing. Freire describes the relationship between the oppressors and oppressed as a “prescription” (p. 47) where

every prescription represents the imposition of one individual’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed into one that conforms with the prescriber’s consciousness. Thus, the behaviour of the oppressed is a prescribed behaviour, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor (p. 47).

The oppressed have accepted their position in society and are fearful of their freedom. These guiding principles are set by the oppressor to ensure domination and the oppressed remain disadvantaged and devalued. Hence, the oppressor and the oppressed are both causes and manifestations of dehumanization. Through the lens of Freire’s concept of social oppression, Canada could be viewed as a country that continues to invite highly trained professionals to fulfill menial jobs. Even though the issue with accrediting bodies has been on-going, the Canadian government has not made any attempt to rectify it. Funds are allocated to programs for immigrant settlement, which is a “band-aid” solution and does not provide sustainable resolution. In order to meet internationally trained immigrant occupational needs, the Canadian government, accrediting professional associations, and the employers need to collaborate on developing and implementing social inclusionary policies and practices. In other words, for internationally trained immigrants, who have chosen to settle in Canada, recognizing
their foreign credentials, providing employment, and offering opportunities to enhance their occupational-training needs would allow them to build pathways for successful settlement in Canada. This would enable ITIs to contribute maximally to much needed human resources that would benefit all of Canadian society.

**Conclusion**

This research critically examined the responsiveness of two GTA Ontario colleges in their current institutional practices to the changing internationally trained immigrant student constituency. This study has given me the opportunity to meet with ITI students and college personnel to learn from their experiences and perspectives. The ITI students whom I met during this study articulated that they were accessing the college education because they believed that it was the “right” path to a successful life in Canada. The college personnel recognized the changes in their student constituencies and they are currently working towards helping ITI students achieve their goals.

My hope is that by addressing the main research question in this study, the colleges would gain valuable information, understanding, and knowledge about Ontario colleges’ current policies and practices impacting ITI students’ lives. Moreover, I also believe that this study could guide the Ontario colleges and government officials in exploring opportunities and implementing changes that are relevant to ITIs’ student satisfaction and success, not only for their benefit, but also for all Canadians.
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Appendix A

Interview guide for internationally trained immigrant students

1. What is your country of origin?
2. When did you immigrate to Canada?
3. What was your level of education prior to entering Canada?
4. How long did you work in your occupation prior to entering Canada?
5. How long have you been a student at this college?
6. What program are you taking at the college and what is your reason for taking a college program?
7. How did you learn about your program of interest offered at this college?
8. How did the college assist you with the admission process?

Probing questions:

a) What advice and direction did you receive from your college regarding the program of your choice, and did you find the advice helpful?
b) What was your experience with meeting the college admission requirements?
c) Was the Ontario Colleges Application relevant to your academic credentials?
d) Were you required to take English upgrading courses prior to entry into your program? Why?
e) Were you qualified for Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) or/and transfer credit and do you think that it was implemented fairly?
f) Based on your experience, how do you think that the college could better assist you in your admission into the program?

9. How helpful (or not) do you think taking the college program is/will be to achieving your academic and training goals?

Probing questions:

a) Was this program specific to ITI students?
b) What were your best and worst experiences taking this program? Please give me a specific example of each.

10. How did the support areas (i.e., financial aid and library) assist you with your education?

Probing question:

a) What other supports services would have been helpful to you and why? What would you recommend for ITI students?

11. Do you think that you have an opportunity at your college to openly express any of your concerns or contribute to the decision making process at the college?

12. Are there any thoughts you would like to share about how the college can meet your occupation-specific needs?

Thank you for providing me with information and insight about your college experiences. If you wish to have the transcript of this interview, I would be happy to e-mail it to you.

Thanks again for your time and cooperation.
Appendix B

Interview guide for college staff

1. What are the areas that you are responsible for?

2. How does your portfolio relate to serving internationally trained immigrant students?

3. How does your college address the needs of ITI students?

   Possible probing questions:

   a) How has the number of internationally trained immigrants accessing your college programs changed over the years?

   b) How does your college assist ITI students with the OCAS application process and has there been any revision of the OCAS application process specifically in addressing ITI credentials?

   c) What kind of advising services do you offer to ITIs and what prompted your college to start offering advising services specific to ITIs?

   d) Do you recognize foreign credentials through PLAR and transfer credit processes? If yes, when were they established and have they been effective?

   e) Does your college recognize IELTS or TOEFL scores, or are the students expected to take college mandated language assessment test?

   f) What support services do you have available for ITI students i.e., financial, counseling, library and are you aware of what services that the ITI students use the most?

4. How does the college inform ITI students of the college programs?

   Possible probing questions:

   a) Do you offer customized programs that are specific to ITI students and how are these programs different from regular college programs?
b) How did the college rationalize its decision to implement these programs and how does your college measure success of your programs for ITI students?

5. What does your college do to keep abreast of changes in students’ needs?

   Probing questions:

   a) How did the college rationalize its decision to implement specific programs for ITIs and how does your college measure success of your programs for ITI students?

   b) How does the college measure the success of your support services for ITI students?

   c) How do you review and evaluate your existing practices pertaining to ITI students’ needs?

6. Have you implemented any new practices specific to ITI students?

7. Do ITI students have an opportunity to contribute towards policy making process at your college?

8. Is there anything else you would like to share about how the college helps meet ITI students’ occupation-specific needs?

Thank you for providing me with information and insight to your college policies and practices in responding to internationally trained immigrant students’ occupational specific needs. If you wish to have the transcript of this interview, I would be happy to e-mail it to you.

Thanks again for your time and cooperation.
Appendix C

Information letter for internationally trained immigrant student who is currently enrolled in a college program

Date: X

Title of Study: Internationally Trained Immigrants and Ontario Colleges

Researcher: Meera Mather, Doctoral Candidate

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Nina Bascia, Professor

Dear Student,

This research study is part of my completion of Doctor of Education at the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. This research is under the supervision of Dr. Nina Bascia, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education. I am requesting your participation in the study titled *Internationally Trained Immigrants and Ontario Colleges* which will explore your experiences as an internationally trained immigrant (ITI) student at your college. The research will be conducted in two Greater Toronto Area colleges. The primary purpose of this study is to gain information and insights on how Ontario colleges within the Greater Toronto Area respond to internationally trained immigrant students’ occupation-specific needs.

Your institution has given permission for this study to be conducted. You will be participating in an interview which will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time without any explanation or penalty of any kind. All data collected at that point will be destroyed and not included in this study. You are also free to not answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The interviews will be audio-taped with your permission. When reporting the research findings, pseudonyms will be used for the names of individuals and colleges. Please be assured that all information will be kept in confidence and secure once the audio-tapes of the interview have been transcribed, analyzed, the information you provided will be stored under lock and key in a secure
location, accessible only to me and my supervisor. All raw data will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of this study.

You will receive a copy of the transcript of your interview within 30 days by e-mail for you to review and suggest any changes you wish to be made. Any section which you request to have deleted from the transcript of your interview will be removed. After this study has been completed, a copy of my thesis will be available at the OISE library.

Your time and effort are greatly appreciated and your perspective will help college leaders and staff, government officials, and policy makers to gain a better understanding on how to improve educational practices for internationally trained immigrant students.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact me at mmather@centennialcollege.ca or (905) 426-5547. This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at University of Toronto (File # X) and at your college (File #X). If you have any questions regarding ethics please contact the REB office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 978-4649.

Sincerely

Meera Mather, Doctoral Candidate
Appendix D

Information letter for college personnel

Date: X
Title of Study: Internationally Trained Immigrants and Ontario Colleges
Researcher: Meera Mather, Doctoral Candidate
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Nina Bascia, Professor

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your consideration to participate in my study titled Internationally Trained Immigrants and Ontario Colleges. This study is part of my completion of Doctor of Education at the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. This research is under the supervision of Dr. Nina Bascia, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education. The primary purpose of this study is to gain information and insights on how two Ontario colleges respond to changes in internationally trained immigrant (ITI) students’ occupation-specific needs. The research will examine your experiences as an Ontario College personnel in working with ITI student occupational training needs.

Your College has given permission for this study to be conducted (REB File # X). You will be participating in an interview which will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time without any explanation or penalty of any kind. You may also not have to answer a question that you do not wish to answer. The interviews will be audio-taped with your permission. When reporting the research findings, pseudonyms will be used for the names of individuals and colleges. Please be assured that all information will be kept in confidence and secure at all times. Once the audio-tapes of the interview have been transcribed, analyzed, the information you provided will be stored under lock and key in a secure location, accessible only to me and my supervisor. All raw data will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of this study.
As interviewee, at your request the transcript of your interview and a summary of the findings will be provided. After this study has been completed, a copy of my thesis will be available at the OISE library.

Your time and effort are greatly appreciated and your perspective will help college leaders and staff, government officials, and policy makers to gain a better understanding on how to improve educational practices for internationally trained immigrant students.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact me at XXX. This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at University of Toronto (File # X) and at your College (File # X). If you have any questions regarding ethics please contact the REB office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 978-4649.

I am available to meet with you or conduct a telephone interview at your earliest convenience. Also, if you are aware of any college personal at your College who directly influence ITI students’ educational needs and success, please provide their names and contact information.

I greatly appreciate your help and support with my study.

Sincerely,

Meera Mather, Doctoral Candidate
Appendix E

Consent form for internationally trained immigrant student to participate in the research study

Date: X

Title of Study: Internationally Trained Immigrants and Ontario Colleges

Researcher: Meera Mather, Doctoral Candidate

________________________________________________________________________

I understand the nature and purpose of this research study indicated in the title above and as described in the Information Letter.

I understand that my participation in any part of this study is voluntary; participation or non-participation will not affect my progress in this program now or in the future. I am free to refrain from responding to any question(s) that I do not wish to answer and I may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or penalty. If I do withdraw, data collected from me will not be included in the study findings. No physical or psychological harm of any kind is expected.

I agree to be interviewed in person, or by telephone regarding my experiences as an internationally trained immigrant (ITI) student in the areas of admission processes, program delivery and support services offered at college and I agree to permit the interview to be audio-taped.

I understand that all data collected will be kept in confidence and secure and accessible only to the researcher and her thesis supervisor.

I understand that I will not be identified or identifiable in any reporting of the findings. A copy of the findings will be made available to me upon request.

Signature: ________________________ Date: ______________________________

Contact Information:

Telephone #: ______________________________

E-mail Address: ______________________________

Please keep a copy of the signed consent form for your records.
Appendix F

Consent form for college personnel to participate in the research study

Date: X

Title of Study: Internationally Trained Immigrants and Ontario Colleges

Researcher: Meera Mather, Doctoral Candidate

I understand the nature and purpose of this research study indicated in the title above and as described in the Information Letter. I understand that I am free to participate or not participate in all or some of the parts of this study.

I understand that my participation in any part of this study is voluntary; I am free to refrain from responding to any question(s) that I do not wish to answer and I may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or penalty. If I do withdraw, data collected from me will not be included in the study findings. No physical or psychological harm of any kind is expected.

I agree to be interviewed in person, or by telephone regarding my experiences as a college administrator in the areas of admission processes, program delivery, and support services offered at this college and I agree to permit the interview to be audio-taped.

I understand that all data collected will be kept in confidence and secure and accessible only to the researcher and her thesis supervisor.

I understand that I will not be identified or identifiable in any reporting of the findings. A copy of the findings will be made available to me upon request.

Signature: ______________________  Date: ______________________

Contact Information:

Telephone #: ____________________

E-mail Address: _____________________

Please keep a copy of the signed consent form for your records.
Appendix G

Poster to recruit internationally trained immigrant students

Internationally Trained Immigrant College Students Required for Research

IF you are an internationally trained immigrant who has:

- attained post-secondary education and gained employment training in a country outside of Canada
- enrolled in a full-time, three-year or shorter college level certificate or diploma program

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study that explores how your College responds to internationally trained immigrant students’ occupational-training needs.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 30-45 minutes interview.

For more information or to volunteer for this study please contact:

Meera Mather

at

(333) 333-xxxx

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through University of Toronto (File # X) and at your College (File # X)
Appendix H

Examples of Collaborative and Joint Programs Offered at Ontario Colleges

Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree
Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree
Bachelor of Science Degree in Applied Biotechnology
International Development Management Studies
Honours Bachelor of Administrative Studies Degree
Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry
Honours Bachelor of Science Environment Studies Degree
Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree in Film
Appendix I

Examples of Fast-Track Programs offered at Ontario Colleges

Journalism Program (2 years/ 4 semesters)
Social Service Worker Program (11 months/ 3 semesters)
Ontario Recreation and Leisure Program (1 year/ 2 semesters)
Power Engineering Technology – Mechanical Program (2 years/ 4 semesters)
Early Childhood Education (1 year/ 2 semesters)
Pharmaceutical and Food Science Technology Program (1 year/ 2 semesters)
Architectural Technology (4 semesters)
Appendix J

Examples of Fundamental Programs offered at Ontario Colleges

Design and Communications Fundamentals Program

Pre-Health Foundations Program

Business Fundamentals Program

Emergency Services Fundamentals Program

Art and Design Foundations Studies Program
Appendix K

Examples of Bridge-Training Programs offered at Ontario Colleges

Bridging to Green Careers
Career and Work Counsellor Program
College Teacher Training Program
Construction Management Program
Early Childhood Educator Program
International Massage Therapy Bridging Program
Mobile Systems Integration Bridging Program
Pathways to Sustainability and Energy Program
Appendix L

Examples of Occupation-Specific Language Training (OSLT) Courses offered at Ontario Colleges

Business: Entrepreneurship and Sales and Marketing
Business: Accounting and Finance
Health Care - Nursing
Automotive Trades
Construction – Skilled Trades
Technology