distinguish between private and public establishments, it is difficult to estimate the true economic importance of the private education and training services providers.

The analysis for this Overview therefore had to look outside traditional sources like Statistics Canada to gather a workable description of the industry. Inherent in this process are the sometimes inconsistent results among sources, depending on the assumptions made and their method of data collection. This is further compounded in foreign publications by their lack of a Canadian focus.

This lack of data and the necessity for alternative data sources are not unique to the training industry, but are prevalent in many service industries. Recognising the need for timely, complete and accurate statistical data to assess industry competitiveness, Industry Canada and Statistics Canada are continuing their efforts to improve the availability of services industry data.

And at the international level . . .

The transition to a knowledge-based economy is a global phenomenon. To remain competitive, countries must enable their labour forces to acquire and upgrade the skills necessary to work with the ever-changing technologies being used in the production of goods and services. Technological developments are creating new jobs, markets and business, and consequently are increasing the demand for continuing education and training.

A five nation case study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Oliver Bertrand, Human Resources and Corporate Strategy, Paris : OECD, 1988) provides a good illustration of this new work environment. This study reports general acceptance of the idea that the competitiveness of a nation is inextricably linked to labour productivity, which cannot be achieved without a more trained and flexible labour force. It notes a rapidly rising level of investment by firms in human resources, with increasing amounts being directed to in-house training. The OECD views human resources and skill formation as one form of "intangible investment" that contributes to organisational productivity. Continuous education and training provides employees with the skills and knowledge that permit companies to respond positively and in an innovative way to changing markets, changing competition and evolving technologies.