Critical issues in the development of recognition of prior learning in international perspective

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Prior Learning: a Key to Lifelong learning
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Contents

- What is prior learning?
- What are the significant benefits of RPL?
- RPL’s role in educational, economic and social development
- ‘Good practice’ features of recognition processes
- Impact and outcomes
- Challenges
- Planning the way forward
What is prior learning?

Recognition of prior learning is the practice of making visible, reviewing and acknowledging the full range of competences (knowledge skills and attitudes) that adults have obtained in various contexts – formal, non-formal and informal, through various means in different phases of their life. Typically such learning involves achievement and performance in the workplace, community, artistic or other life activities, as well as learning through workshops and training programmes.
The Glass is always half filled rather than half empty: Benefits to individual adults

1. Creating new routes to qualifications for adults
2. Visibility of skills, knowledge and competences
3. Tapping untapped talent
4. Not starting from scratch
5. Motivator for resuming formal studies
6. Crisis – assessment is a good start before reskilling
Benefits to individual adults

1. It is about social recognition, whether learning outcomes have value and are used in society
2. Recognition does not necessarily mean a high level of formalisation, but it needs some continuum of outcomes from self-assessment (port-folio) to full certification.
RPL’s role in educational, economic, social development

- **Social**: social inclusion, poverty-reduction, personal empowerment
- **Education**: paving pathways to further education and training and qualifications,
- **Economic**: workforce development and employability generally,
- **In general**: Transition to the learning society and lifelong learning culture
In the educational context

- the education and training system broadly;
- re-entry into the formal school education;
- vertical mobility of adults beyond initial education
- meeting part of the requirements of new qualifications
Social inclusion and empowerment: tackling low levels of literacy and basic skills

- Increasing numbers with higher qualifications;
- Enabling the low qualified to take their qualifications “one step up”
- Increasing further learning opportunities in the light of improved literacy
- Targeting socio-cultural and educational inequalities as well as poverty directly
- RVA linked to career guidance
- Helping marginalised groups by making RVA a part of public employment services
‘Good Practice’ features of prior learning assessment and recognition

- Benchmarks or standards are developed/used that allow the candidate’s success, at least to some extent;
- Professionalising assessment based on learning outcomes;
- Combining traditional methods, tests with other methods allowing flexible procedures;
- Continuity from formative assessment to summative accreditation.
- Making explicit the key outcomes of formative recognition is important
- Introducing prior learning assessment alongside learning credits;
- Professional guider and counsellors are identified and trained to promote RVA and support candidates;
- Increased understanding and use of portfolio methods;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult literacy, numeracy, oral communication, ICTs</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Validation</th>
<th>Certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal learning (traditional)</td>
<td>Assessment at the end of the study</td>
<td>Validation by the education inst.</td>
<td>Full qualification or nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversified formal and non-formal learning (ICT classes, oral communication, tailor-made, alternance; different teaching approaches)</td>
<td>Diversification of assessment methods</td>
<td>Validation by a committee of stakeholders</td>
<td>Full or partial qualifications, or credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in personal activities: (On the job, in daily life)</td>
<td>Identification and assessment based on documentation</td>
<td>Validation against the qualification/learning outcomes</td>
<td>Full or partial qualification (credits) awarded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Impact and outcomes

- Higher rates of degree completion (USA)
- Increase in external students’ examination as an indicator of prior learning (Germany)
- Adults completing their upper secondary via RVA (Norway)
- Participation in education and training broadened and enhanced self-esteem (Mauritius)
- Infrastructure created: 70 accredited centres for assessment and certification of competences, with more than 2000 points of contact to provide services around the country (Mexico).
- Use and acceptance of portfolio for academic credit (USA);
- Greater appreciation of own skills through Portfolio and a basis to plan their future in a more self-confident and targeted way and are motivated to participate in further learning (Germany)
- Increase in participation of non-formal continuing education, and informal learning in enterprises (Germany)
- Enriched pedagogical practices and new concepts of teaching and learning (Portugal)
Challenges

- policy and legislation
- financing
- Interrelationships between the different sectors
- Raising awareness about the benefits of RVA
- Transforming the education system
- Improving the quality of adult education sector
- Capacity building of key actors
- National reference points do not in and of themselves generate RPL
Learning system
(NQFs; academic and professional standards)

Adult learner

Organisation:
Workplace; volunteer work; community; universities

RPL summative

RPL generic

RPL formative
In sum, the planning process for developing prior learning assessment in literacy and basic skills will require:

- Linking prior learning recognition to national frameworks and curricula standards as a currency for learning
- Advocacy and communication
- Targeting specific groups initially to create social effect
- Identifying areas where the need is greatest
- Clarifying the initial and on-going costs and how these will be funded
- Initial training of assessors
- Portfolio development
- Putting in place accreditation procedures most needed for the registration of education and training providers
- Maintenance of central register of qualifications attainable through RPL of literacy and basic skills
- Results-based evaluation and monitoring
Thanking You

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