

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

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Introduction:

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the assessment and certification process of formally recognizing the skills and knowledge that a person already possesses against a particular competency. RPL promotes adult learning, career development opportunity through evaluating skills and knowledge acquired outside the academic training for the purpose of identifying competence against a given set of standards, competencies, or learning outcomes. RPL is practiced for competence standing in a profession, trades qualifications, recruitment, performance management, career and succession planning.

RPL considers evidence of competence that may be drawn from any aspect of an applicant's professional or personal life. RPL has been the mainstay of all assessments conducted under national vocational education and training system. RPL is a very simple and straightforward process of assessing someone's skills or knowledge, regardless of where and how these were learned. RPL allows people to demonstrate that they are capable of undertaking specific tasks or working in certain industries based on evidence of skills and knowledge gained throughout their life. RPL is known as a criterion-referenced assessment and this criterion is outcomes-based.

Method of assessment:

Methods of assessing prior learning are varied and include: evaluation of prior experience gained through work, previous paid or unpaid employment, standardized exams or observation of actual workplace behavior. The essential element of RPL is that it is an assessment of evidence provided by an individual to support their claim for competence against a given set of standards or learning outcomes.

Starting of RPL in Bangladesh and project support:

Introducing RPL system in Bangladesh is the initiative of the TVET Reform Project, implemented by the Government of Bangladesh with the support of the ILO and funded by the European Union. The BSEP project (funded by Canada) is continuing the follow up actions on RPL through working towards reforming technical and vocational education and training in Bangladesh. STEP project is also supporting the RPL assessment.

RPL assessment process:

The RPL assessment is consistent with the national assessment process outlined in NQSAS Manual. This is done through accreditation of Assessment Centres. Applicant (or sponsor) pays necessary RPL fee. Applicant completes an RPL application form/self-assessment form available in the accredited Assessment Centre (AAC). The AAC advises the applicant on the types of

evidence that could be used to support their application. The applicant collects copies of evidence and a declaration of their authenticity from the document provider. Each piece of evidence should be clearly marked so that the Registered Competency Assessor can quickly understand which part of the self-assessment that it supports. One document can be referred to on as many occasions as are relevant. Once all the evidence is collected, the application form and evidence is delivered to the assessor. After review by the assessor the applicant will be interviewed and/or asked to undertake skills testing by the assessor to verify the legitimacy of the applicant's claims. The assessor will then make a decision on whether the applicant is competent against the units of competency they have applied for, and inform the applicant of the outcome. If the applicant is deemed as not yet competent or wishes to gain competency in additional units, they can do so through the normal pathways of institutional or workplace training and assessment

Regulation of RPL:

BTEB is regulating the RPL system and has planned training of one instructor/teacher and one industry representative for each of the occupations in the six divisional headquarters (180 in total) as Registered Competency Assessors and accredited under the NTVQF.

Achievement:

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program was launched in September 2014 and up to February 2015, 890 candidates appeared for RPL and 688 (77.3%) got accreditation of which and 162 (23.54%) were female. As of July 2015, about 4,200 workers have been assessed through RPL assessment. 33 RPL centers have been accredited. More than 100 experts from industry and institute have been provided assessor training and have been accredited. However, the following need to be addressed soon: (i) inadequate budgetary provision for RPL assessment; and (ii) inadequate number of assessment centers and accredited assessors.

A case study: Amin is a skilled welder working in the informal sector that wants to get a job in the formal sector but needs a Level 2 National Certificate in Welding. He has no paperwork to prove his skills and has trouble reading. He comes into the BTEB, gets an application form and submits it with photos of him welding and a letter from his employer. He is asked to do a skill test and is given credit for all units except for two specific literacy units, which he completes through a night class. He is given his Level 2 Certificate.

RPL history in other countries:

[RPL is known by many names in different countries. It is APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning), CCC (Crediting Current Competence), or APEL (Accrediting Prior Experiential Learning) in the UK, RPL in Australia and New Zealand, and PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) in Canada (although different jurisdictions within Canada use RPL and RCC (Recognition of Current Competence). France has a more sophisticated system in which assessment is known as 'Bilan de competences', 'Bilan des competences approfondi', or 'Validation de Acquis des Experiences (VAE)'. Regardless of the title, all are the same and all are RPL.]

[It was first introduced into the UK by Susan Simosko, a consultant with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, who adapted it as the central element of all competency-based

assessments. A similar process was adopted by all countries during the development of their own vocational education and training systems, some aligned solely with the need to assess competence in line with the needs of private and public sector organizations, and others as a critical element of the assessment of skills and knowledge in order to grant vocational qualifications. The RPL history in Australia dates back to 1993 when it was first introduced by the Australian Government as part of a National Qualifications Framework.]