



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
STATE DEPARTMENT
FOR VOCATIONAL AND
TECHNICAL TRAINING

RPL PRACTITIONERS

TRAINING MANUAL

RPL CAPACITY BUILDING SUBCOMMITTEE
RPL NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE



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7/1/2021

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Foreword



Kenya, like other countries in Africa, has a large informal sector whose integration into the national development agenda has not been well articulated. The Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) seeks to bring into the national database numerous skills, knowledge and competencies that are currently contributing to national development but have not been well understood, documented, recognised, assessed and certificated. In order to operationalize the RPL framework, a number of tools are required, the most important being the RPL Practitioners Training Guide in the sense that, the worth of the RPL certification will be determined to a great extent by the quality of the assessments by the RPL Practitioners. In addition, it is paramount that, the training of these RPL Practitioners is uniform across the country. It is for this reason that this Guide is extremely important to ensure reliability and validity of the RPL process irrespective of who delivers the training or where the training for RPL Practitioners is carried out.

The RPL Training Guide is anchored on the RPL Policy Framework and Implementation Guidelines. In addition, a Training manual, RPL Tools and Guides have also been developed for use alongside the manual.

This Training Guide on RPL targets RPL Practitioners (RPLP). It has been developed in a modular structure aligned to the key information that the RPLP needs to understand and internalize in order to enable them to run a credible assessment process. The Training Guide provides information, insights and learning through real-life examples benchmarked against best practices internationally. The assessors shall be drawn from experienced trainers and industrial players; with these two attributes, it is expected that the product of the RPL process shall be at par with the products drawn from the “best practices countries.”

This Training Guide adopts an inclusive approach where attention is given to individuals with special needs, women and girls. This is to mitigate barriers to education and employment experience by these sectors of society, especially when it comes to skills training, assessment and certification. Ultimately, the process seeks to address and overcome the obstacles and enhance inclusive employability and decent work for such

persons, facilitate transition to formal sector employment, improve access to training and education, encourage life-long learning, and promote dignity and self-esteem by recognizing existing skills for such vulnerable sectors of society.

I am delighted to note that the development of this Guide opens the door to full roll out the RPL process. It is my hope that all RPL players shall synergize their efforts to ensure the success of this noble process of Prior Learning, identification, assessment, Recognition and Certification. This success will lead towards “massification” of competencies which shall eliminate all forms of skills discriminations thereby making invisible skills visible in both the formal and informal sectors. It is anticipated that the adoption of RPL will change the economic fortunes of the Jua Kali sector, which is the most productive sector of the Kenyan economy but whose skills have hitherto, been invisible as a result of the non-recognition and certification.

Prof. George Magoha, CBS,
Cabinet Secretary,
Ministry of Education, Kenya.

Acknowledgements

Across the world, countries are increasingly recognizing the value of informal and non-formal learning, and many are establishing systems to acknowledge competencies gained through these modalities. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has emerged as an important policy area that has gained attention globally. Kenya is among the few countries in Africa that have taken the bold step of formally recognizing skills and experiences that are acquired informally and non-formally.

I would like to thank H. E Uhuru Kenyatta, the President of the Republic of Kenya for being a strong supporter of RPL. His rallying call to acknowledge the contribution of the informal sector to the country's economy has given great impetus towards preparation of an effective RPL System. Special gratitude goes to the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Prof. George A. O. Magoha and the Principal Secretary, State Department of Vocational and Technical Training, Dr. Margaret Mwakima for the great support and putting in place mechanisms to ensure effective roll-out of RPL in the country.

This RPL Practitioner Guide is a result of great team effort, valuable contribution and input from various stakeholders. I wish to very specifically thank individuals and institutions that participated in its development. Special mention goes to the Technical team whose representation was drawn from the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE), TVET-Curriculum Development Assessment and Certification (TVET-CDACC), National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Associations (KNFJA) and Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA).

Special thanks to the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the great support, providing expertise and facilitating several meetings that culminated in this important document.

I wish to call upon all stakeholders to continue supporting this worthy cause that is indeed a paradigm shift not just to the labour and education sectors but to the national economy at large. I urge all stakeholders to embrace this endeavour and work together in ensuring effective roll-out of RPL in Kenya.

**Dr. Juma Mukhwana, PHD, HSC, Director General / Chief Executive Officer,
Kenya National Qualifications Authority.**

Acronyms

| | |
|-------------|---|
| EOI | Expression of Interest |
| KNQF | Kenya National Qualifications Framework |
| NQA | National Qualifications Authority |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| POE | Portfolio of Evidence |
| QAI | Qualification Awarding Institution |
| RPL | Recognition of Prior Learning |
| RPLP | Recognition of Prior Learning Practitioners |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |

OUTLINE OF THE TRAINING GUIDE

Introduction to the course

The Training Guide on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has been developed with an aim of equipping RPL Practitioners (RPLP) with knowledge, skills and attitudes they will require to carry out various RPL assessment processes. It provides information, insights and learning through real-life examples from developing and developed countries. The Guide is designed for use in a training of RPL Practitioners session. It assumes that the RPLPs have limited understanding of RPL but are experienced Trainers and Assessors.

General outcomes of the course

It is expected that this Guide will facilitate building of capacities of RPL assessor to:

- a) undertake the RPL assessment process; and
- b) deal with any issues that may arise during the RPL assessment process.

Learning outcomes of the training

The aim of the training on RPL is to ensure that participants:

- a) appraise the concept of RPL;
- b) manage the RPL process;
- c) illustrate the benefits of RPL;
- d) demonstrate skills to carry out RPL assessment and certification; and
- e) demonstrate competencies of an effective RPL practitioner.

Structure of the training guide

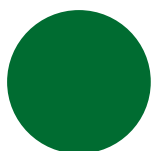
The training program is divided into five learning units. Introduction to RPL

- a) Introduction to RPL
- b) The RPL Process: Identification
- c) The RPL Process: Documentation
- d) The RPL Process: Assessment and Certification
- e) Competencies of an RPL Practitioner

Each Learning unit is structured as follows.

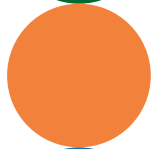
- a) **Introduction:** gives a brief description of the unit.
- b) **Learning objectives:** guides the trainer / facilitator in implementing the learning unit to allow participants to attain a given level of knowledge.
- c) **Unit outline:** provides an overview of the topics covered in the learning unit, training methods and allotted time as well as training materials required.
- d) **Key questions:** guide the trainee on the main issues that they need to master by the end of the learning unit.
- e) **Content:** includes descriptive text and tables and training materials/training resources materials for the session.

This Training Guide should be used together with the Training manual, RPL Policy Framework and Implementation Guidelines, RPL Tools, Guides and Manuals.



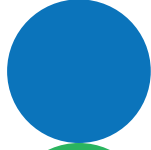
EXAMPLE

Practical applications of the strategies, steps and solutions discussed.



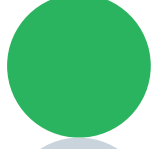
REFLECTIONS

Thought-provoking questions on issues related to RPL for brainstorming among participants.



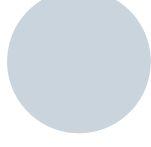
FACTS ON FILE

A focus on specific issues that concretizes concepts learnt.



DISADVANTAGED GROUPS INITIATIVES

RPL initiatives for various disadvantaged



SUMMARY

Summary of key facts on the topic of discussion

Several colour-coded boxes are used for emphasis throughout the training manual as detailed below;

Course requirements

The course targets subject experts who will be trained on the RPL assessment process. It is envisaged that the graduates of this course will play the role of RPL assessors. To be enrolled for this course, one should be a trade specialist for a period of not less than three years. The participant shall undertake both theoretical and practical training for a duration of 40 hours in an accredited training institution. In addition, the trainee shall participate in two assessment cycles before certification.

Training methods

The manual proposes a combination of methods for delivery of the training including technical presentation, insights acquired through analysis, group work and discussion, peer-based development of content, reflecting on examples.

The facilitator shall use a training method based on group size, knowledge of the participants and individual preferences.

Inclusivity of persons with special needs and gender mainstreaming

This training takes cognizance of the need to eliminate any form of discrimination in the RPL process. The need for inclusion of individuals with special needs, PWDs and marginalized populations such as women and girls who face additional barriers to education and employment shall be emphasized in the entire RPL process.

Evaluation and certification

Participants are expected to attend all sessions to qualify to be assessed and be certified. The assessment shall include theory and practice in key competency areas. A certificate of competency will be awarded by the Qualification Awarding Institution (QAI) upon completion of the residential and practical sessions.

Familiarisation

Successful training should always begin with a focus on participants. It is important to create an enabling environment for all participants and common rules at the start of the training. This training manual begins with an introductory session which helps participants get to know each other and the facilitator by completing a PreKaT Assessment to determine the entry behaviour, as well as the overall agenda of the training.

Familiarisation session training plan

| Topic | Time: Min | Activities | Resources |
|--|--|--|---|
| Welcome and introduction – Familiarization | 30 | Welcome Presentation: interactions with and among participants | Projector, screen (wall), laptop, flipcharts, marker |
| Expectations and overview of the training | 30 | Expectations: visualization, discussion Agenda and outcomes, ground rules, introduction of the ‘parking lot’ PreKat Assessment | Flipcharts, marker, coloured cards, pin board or whiteboard, wall, pins Prepared agenda Test papers |
| Total duration | 60 min (depending on number of participants) | | |

Learning unit summary table

| Code | Learning Unit | Sub-Unit | Time Allocation in Hours | |
|------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| | | | Knowl- edge | Practical |
| 1.0 | Introduction to RPL | a. Meaning of RPL and other Key Terms b. Guiding Principles of RPL c. Components of the RPL Process d. The Building Blocks of RPL e. Roles and Qualities of RPL Practitioners f. Benefits and Key Beneficiaries of RPL | | |
| 2.0 | The RPL Process: Identification | a. Awareness Creation b. Counselling and Facilitation c. Purpose and Methods of Analysis of Evidence in the Identification Stage d. Determining the suitability of the candidate for assessment and certification | | |
| 3.0 | The RPL Process: Documentation | Meaning of Documentation Purpose of Documentation The Portfolio of Evidence analysis Skill Gap Identification Preparation and Referral for Final Assessment for Qualified Applicants | | |

| Code | Learning Unit | Sub-Unit | Time Allocation in Hours | |
|------|---|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| | | | Knowl- edge | Practical |
| 4.0 | The RPL Process: Assessment and Certification | Meaning of assessment process Principles of Assessment Process Key Components for Assessment Range of Assessment Methods Final Assessment Assessment Plan Certification and Award of Qualification Process Documentation | | |
| 5.0 | RPL Practitioners Competencies | National Values RPL Practitioners' Competencies RPL Practitioners Code of Conduct Case Studies | | |
| 6.0 | Practical Assessment | Two Assessment Cycles | | |

PRE-KAT assessment

1. What is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?

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2. What are the other names for Recognition of Prior Learning?

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3. Can anyone apply for RPL/ Who qualifies for RPL?

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4. Who is eligible for RPL?

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5. What are the benefits of RPL in Kenya?

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6. Does RPL have the same requirements as other formal assessments?

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7. What is the cost of RPL?

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8. How long will RPL Process take?

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9. What are the key success factors in the implementation of RPL in Kenya?

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10. List the documents that are in place for the implementation of RPL in Kenya;

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11. What is involved in the RPL assessment process?

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12. Which institutions qualify to implement RPL in Kenya?

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13. What are the challenges that may face the implementation of RPL in Kenya?

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14. Explain in 400 words the rationale behind RPL in Kenya

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Learning Unit 1

INTRODUCTION TO RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

1.1 Introduction

This unit is intended to equip the participants with basic knowledge on the RPL context.

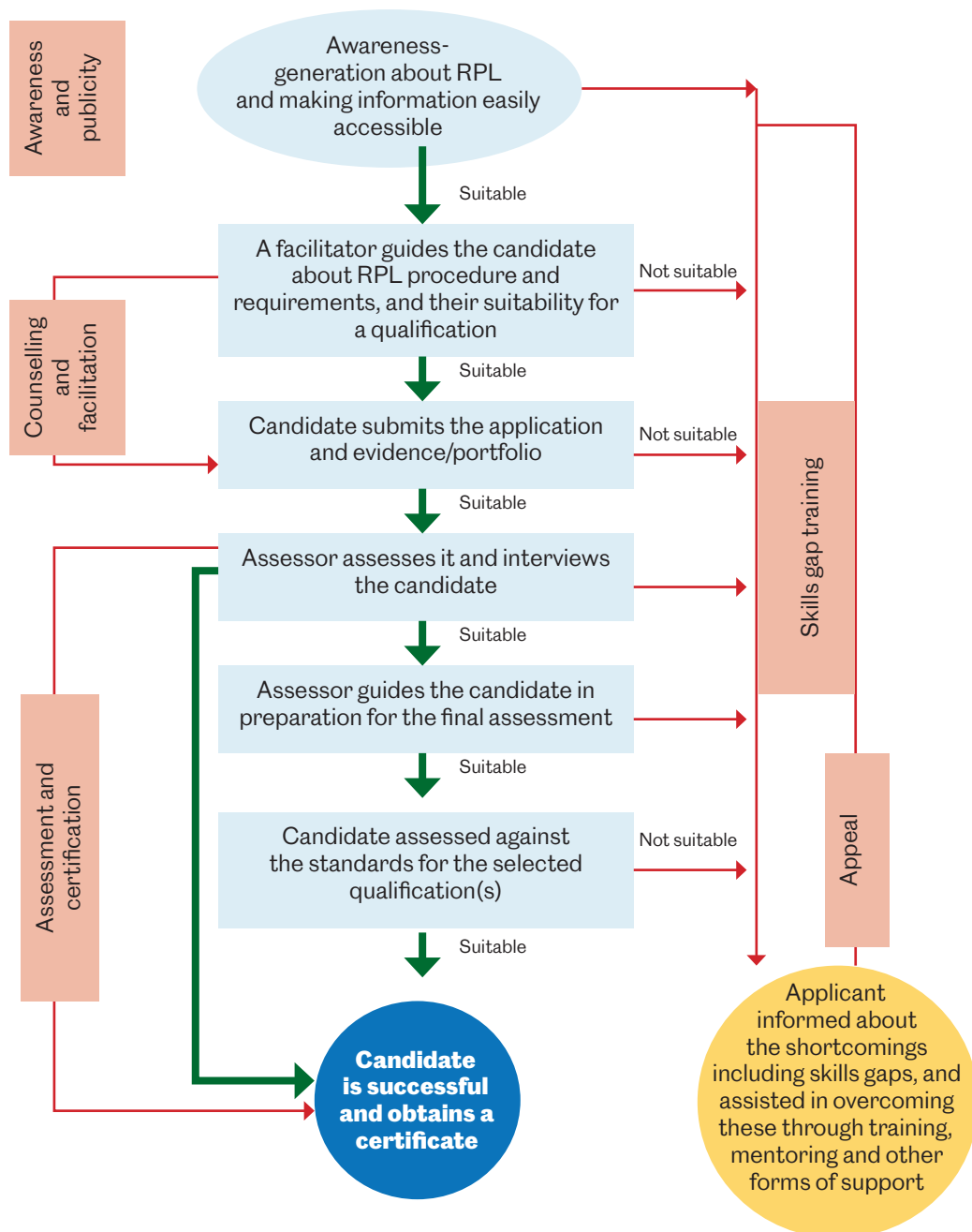
The core RPL process involves two key processes – counselling & facilitation and assessment & certification. These are supported by mechanisms such as awareness and publicity, quality assurance, appeals and skills gap training.

1.2 Learning objectives

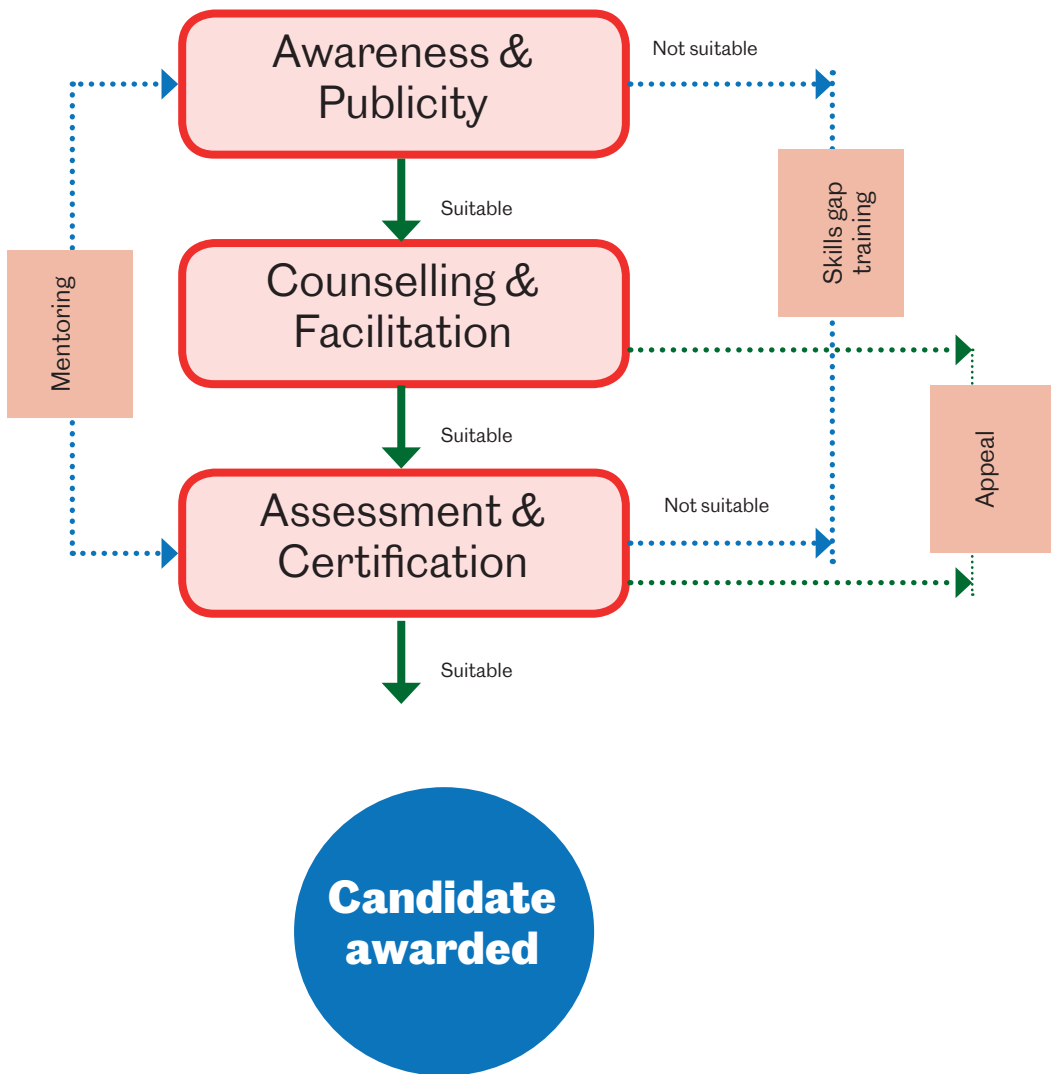
At the end of this learning unit, the participants should be able to:

- a) explain the meaning of RPL and other Related RPL terms;
- b) outline the guiding principles of RPL;
- c) describe the components of the RPL process;
- d) discuss the building blocks of RPL;
- e) differentiate the roles and qualities of RPL practitioners; and
- f) explain the benefits and key beneficiaries of RPL.

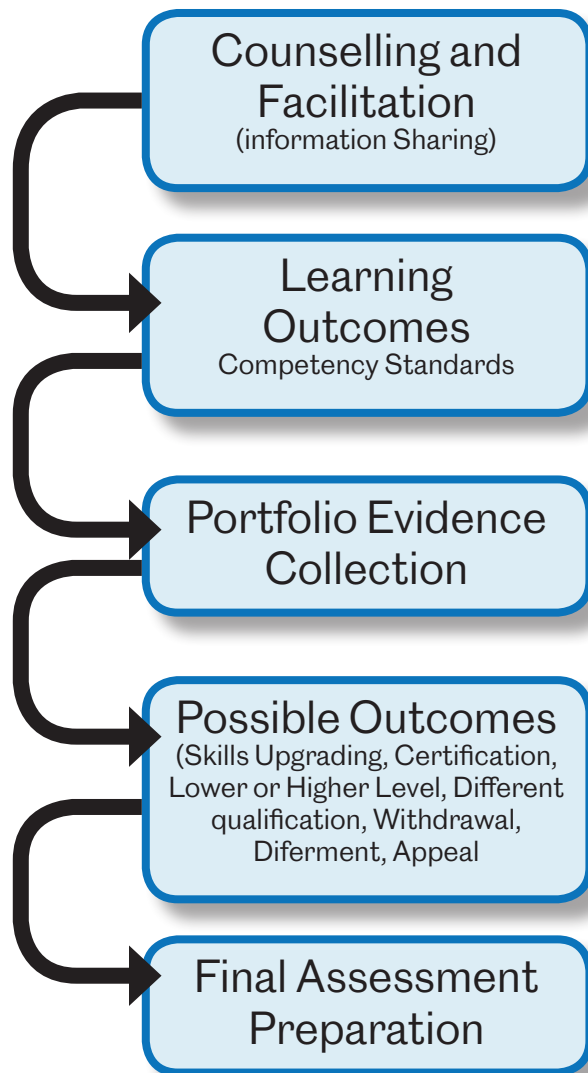
A generic flow chart that explains the RPL process



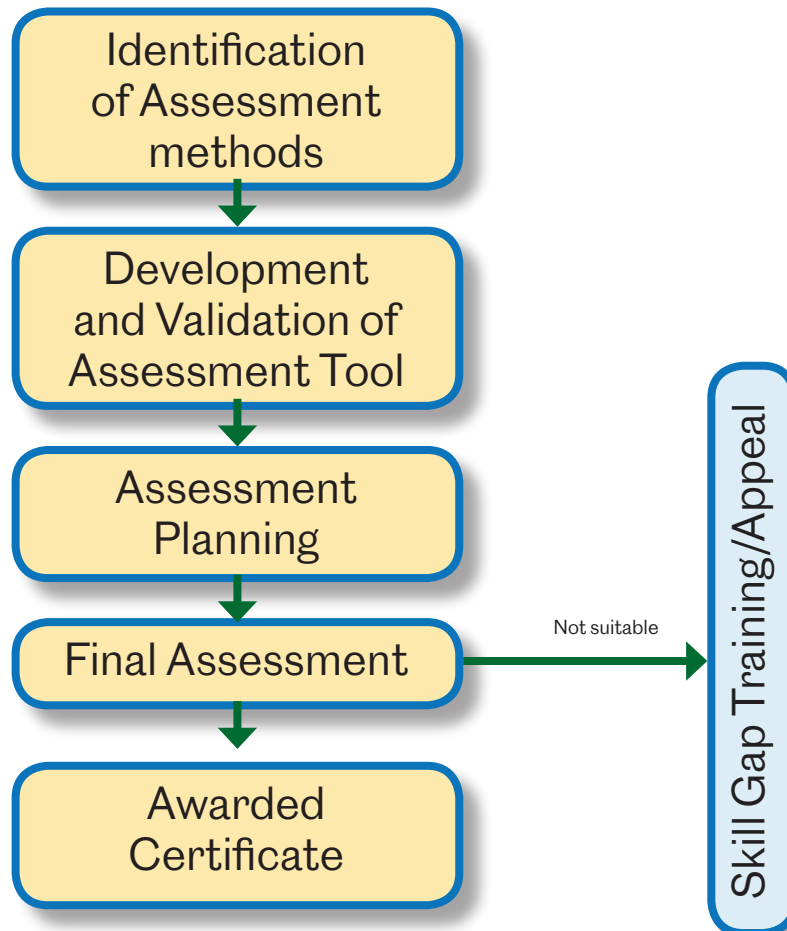
1.3 Simplified RPL process flow charts



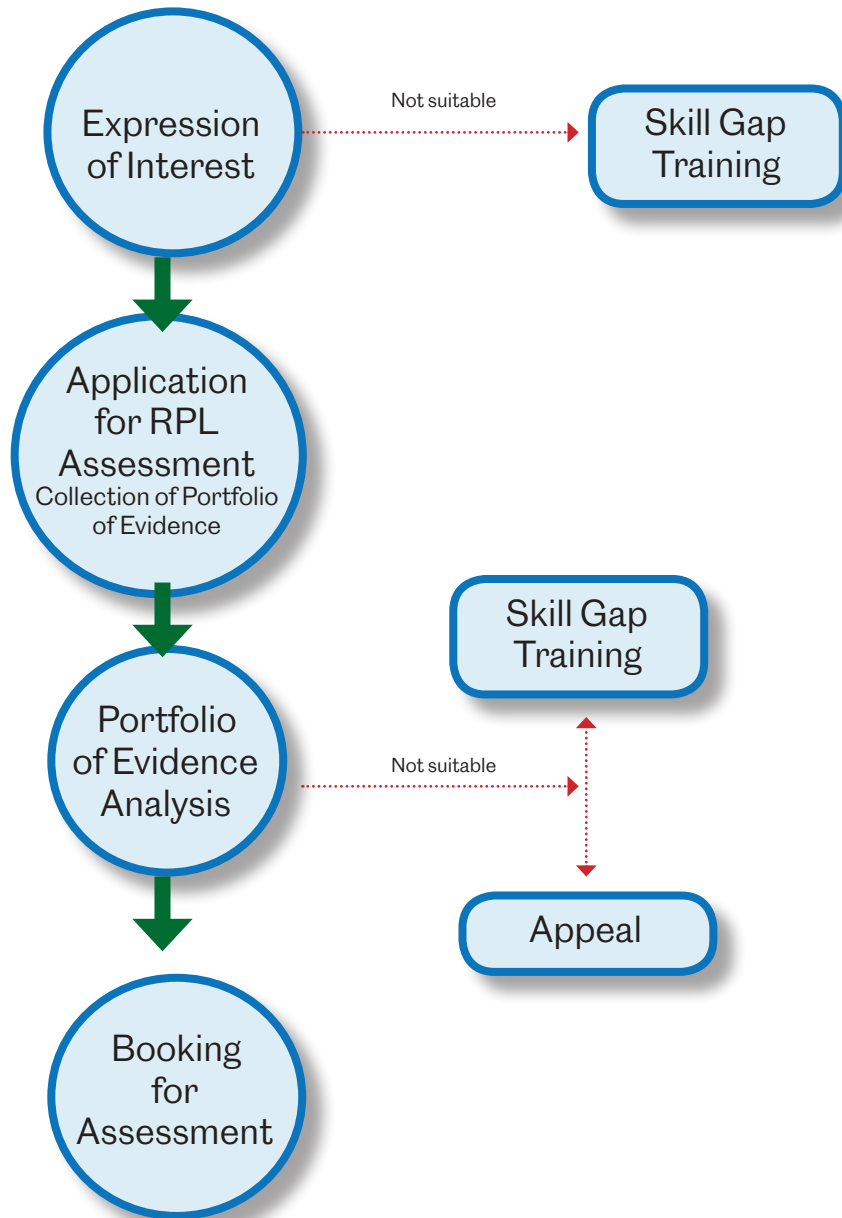
Counselling and Facilitation Flowchart



The RPL Assessment Process



Counselling and facilitation



1.4 Meaning of RPL and other related terms

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): RPL encompasses acknowledgement, assessment and certification of previously unrecognised skills and knowledge a candidate has achieved outside the formal education and training system. Further, RPL considers a person's prior skills and experiences, no matter where these were learnt.

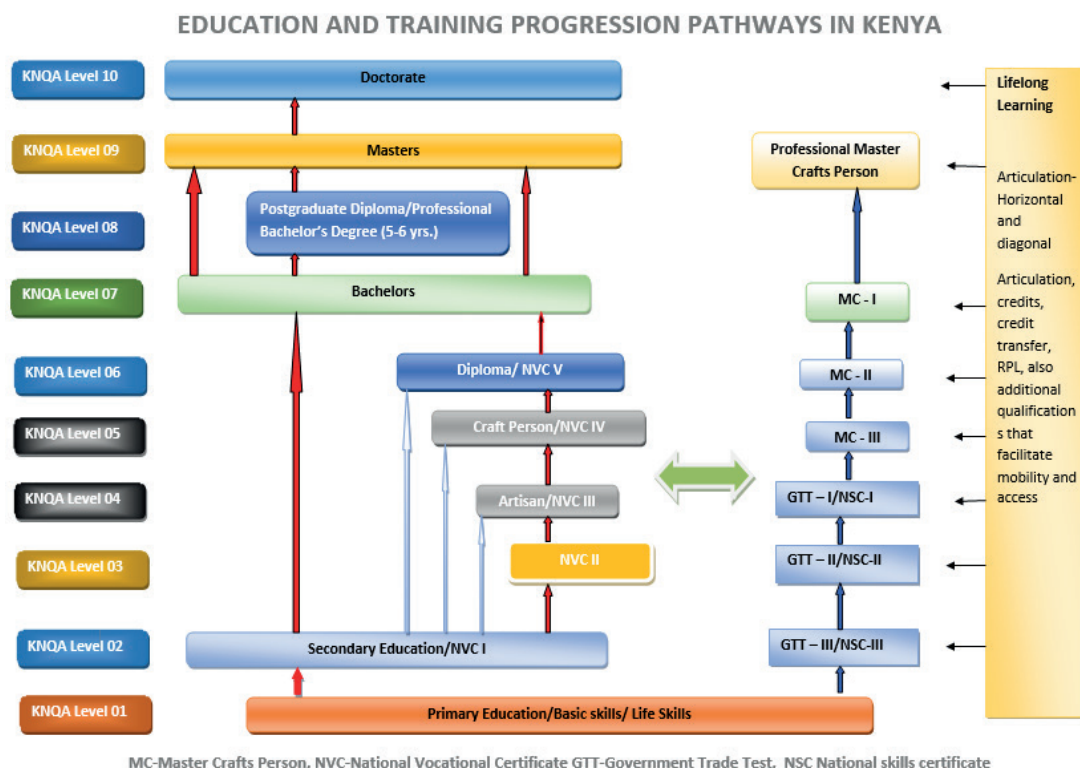
In broad terms, the process of RPL involves matching what you already know and you can do with the learning outcomes of the qualification. RPL leads the applicant towards either a full or part qualification¹

Qualification: A process and an outcome. A mirror / reflection of competencies.

Qualifications system: All aspects of a country's activity that result in recognition of learning. One feature of a qualification system may be an explicit framework of qualifications.

Qualifications framework: An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications, could be sectoral, national or international – a meta framework,

1 RPL Practitioner's Guide



according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achievement. This set of criteria may be implicit in the qualifications descriptors themselves or made explicit in the form of a set of level descriptors. The scope of frameworks may be comprehensive of all learning achievement and pathways or may be confined to a particular sector.

Competence: The ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context – education, work, personal or professional development.

a) Ability is an ability that extends beyond the possession of knowledge and skills. It includes, in each context:

- cognitive competence: involves the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially;

- i) **functional competence:** skills or know-how. The things that a person should be able to do when they work in each area;
- ii) **personal competence:** involves the know-how to conduct oneself in a specific situation; and
- iii) **ethical competence:** the possession of a certain personal and professional values.

Learning outcomes: What people have acquired; what they know; or what they can do. The key concept – at the centre of RPL and modern qualifications frameworks. What an individual has acquired and / or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or informal.

Formal learning: Structured in terms of content, scheduling, organization and financing.

Non-formal learning: Varies a lot – between formal and informal, with variations to allow for national, regional, local and sectoral specificities.

Informal learning: Not structured, never intentional.

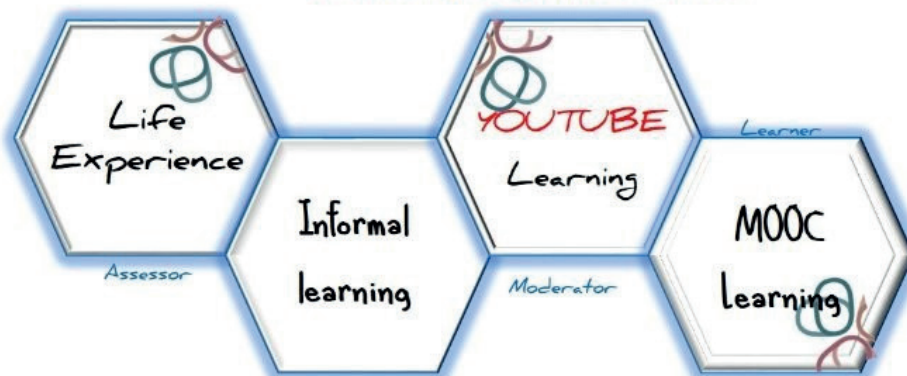
Life-long learning: Learning activity that is undertaken throughout life and improves competencies within personal, civic, social and / or employment-related perspectives.

Validation and recognition²: Validation is first about making visible the diverse and rich learning of individuals, this learning frequently takes place outside formal education and training – at home, in the workplace or through leisure time activities.

² Darryn Van Den Berg, Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa –
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-validation-competence-through-rpl-darryn-van-den-berg>

Validate your Life Learning Experiences

(#MakingLearnignCount)



Through recognition of prior learning

Assessment: The systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. It is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting and using information to increase students' learning and development.

Assessment serves as an individual evaluation system and to compare performance across a spectrum and across populations. The purpose of assessment is to gather relevant information about student performance or progress or to determine student interests to make judgements about their learning process.

Portfolio of Evidence (PoE): A collection of documents that you are required to compile to show competence against a set of learning outcomes and to an appropriate standard. The POE helps you, with support from your workplace Supervisor, to collect evidence systematically.

RPL Practitioner (RPLP): a person involved in RPL assessment process.

Skills audit: process aimed at identifying and analyzing the knowledge, skills and competences of an individual, including his or her aptitudes and motivations in order to define a career project and/or plan a professional reorientation or training project.

FACTS ON FILE

Validation is the heart of the RPL process. It entails confirmation by an authorized body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against prescribed standards and consists of the following three distinct phases: Identification, Documentation and Assessment & Certification.

REFLECTIONS

What are the different ways in which individuals learn or strengthen their technical skills? How might a system work to recognise and certify learning that takes place outside the formal training and education system?

DID YOU KNOW?

Prior learning is the knowledge or skills acquired in earlier study and work or through experience.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process of identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes against standards used in formal education and training. Thus, RPL provides an opportunity for people to acquire qualifications or credits towards a qualification or exemptions (from all or part of the curriculum or even exemption from an academic prerequisite for entering a formal study program) without going through a formal education or training program.

Different names for the same basic Idea³

This training manual uses the term RPL throughout. However, various terms are used throughout the world to refer to the same or similar process as highlighted below.

- a. RNFIL: recognition of non-formal and informal learning (OECD)
- b. RVA: recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning.
- c. VNFIL: validation of non-formal / informal learning (European Training Foundation)
- d. APEL: assessment of prior experiential learning (United Kingdom)
- e. APL: assessment of prior learning (United Kingdom)
- f. PLAR: prior learning assessment and recognition (Canada)
- g. RAC: recognition of acquired competencies (Quebec / Belgium).
- h. RVCC: recognition, validation and certification of competencies (Portugal)

³ Source: Adapted from Aggarwal (2015:3); Adaptation by Patrick Werquin

- i. VAE: validation des acquis de l'expérience (France)
- j. RPL: recognition of learning outcomes (European Commission)

REFLECTIONS

What are the different ways in which individuals learn or strengthen their technical skills? How might a system work to recognise and certify learning that takes place outside the formal training and education system?

The process emphasizes three key aspects.

- a) Processes related to: identification of non-formal and informal learning (including self-evaluation);
 - i) collection and presentation of evidence of learning;
 - ii) assessment and validation of the evidence; and
 - iii) issuing a recognised qualification if the claims are valid.
- b) The independence of the learning method.
- c) Highlights that only the learning that conforms to stands of qualification – part or full, is to be certified by an authorized body.

1.5 Guiding principles of RPL (further principles as copied from the RPL QA Manual)

- a) **Accessible:** responsive to applicant queries; cost efficient for both applicant and organization; timely in both frequency of assessment and gap filling options; adult learner-centred, voluntary, available and inclusive of all abilities and differences.
- b) **Consistent:** decision makers (RPLP) work together to ensure consistency in criteria, training, tools, procedures and outcomes. Definitions must be agreed across sectors to allow for transferability.
- c) **Fair:** RPL processes are unbiased and recognise a wide range of ways people learn. Therefore, applicants are allowed optional ways to prove learning. An appeal mechanism is provided. Policies and procedures of the organization align with the RPL principles.
- d) **Respectful:** non-discriminatory, culturally appropriate and inclusive; valuing uniqueness of the individual; using plain language to ensure all communication is clear.
- e) **Valid:** assessment methods align with the expected measure of achievement (competencies or learning outcomes).
- f) **Flexible:** assessment methods are time and cost efficient. A variety of effective assessment options are available.
- g) **Rigorous:** RPL assessment methods reflect the purpose for the required

learning; have equivalent expectations to traditional assessment methods; are conducted by subject matter experts; meet requirements of work or performance criteria.

- h) Transparent:** information uses explicit and plain language to be understood by all stakeholders. Policies, processes and criteria are complete, fully disclosed and accurate e.g. process steps are clear and simple to follow; reasons are given for any action needed to complete the process; methods of assessment and learning criteria are clearly stated; results of RPL assessment are provided, including gaps and achievements.
- i) Professionally supported:** all staff involved in RPL services receive initial and ongoing training for their RPL function (e.g. RPL Practitioners Training of Trainers TOT)

| Guiding Principle | What to do |
|---|--|
| a) Confidentiality: all information regarding RPL assessment of an individual should not be divulged to other unauthorized entities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Take steps to protect information – passwords for electronic files, locking hard-copy files securely ii) Create thorough policies and confidentiality agreements. iii) Ensure that you understand the law on data protectionDo not spread incorrect or untrue allegation about others that can damage reputations beyond repair and / or have long-term negative effects on peoples' lives iv) Passing on information that you have heard from a third party is bad. Sharing information that you have been told in confidence by someone is much worse v) Do as you would be done by |
| b) Non-discrimination: all applicants for RPL shall access all services impartially | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Respect cultural differences ii) Be professional in conduct and speech. iii) Refuse to initiate, participate or condone discrimination and harassment iv) Avoid culturally offensive humour. v) Familiarize and understand RPL Code of Conduct vi) Be proactive - report incidents of inappropriate, discriminatory, harassing or abusive behaviour |

| | |
|---|--|
| c) Inclusivity and Participation: this principle acknowledges participation of all stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Be aware of unconscious bias. ii) Promote equity to all stakeholders. iii) Model inclusive language. iv) Empathize. v) Create safe spaces. vi) Be accessible – the infrastructure. |
| d) Collaboration: the KNQA will coordinate and seek partnerships and linkages with all RPL stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Effectively and clearly communicate agreed goals / expectations / intentions ii) Build cohesion. iii) Foster a creative environment iv) Know one another v) Leverage on member strengths vi) Listen and learn to compromise vii) Overcome challenges and solve problems without assigning blame viii) Be open minded |
| e) Sustainability: the KNQA will promote RPL through multi-sectoral approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Capacity building ii) Efficient use of resources iii) Taking responsibility and learning from RPL related outcomes iv) Encouraging best practices at all times |

1.6 Components of RPL

1.6.1 Awareness creation (Refer to LU 2)

1.6.2 Counselling and facilitation (Refer to LU2)

1.6.3 Assessment and certification (Refer to LU4)

1.6.4 RPL Appeal process

QAIs must prescribe an appeal process so that candidates can ask for a review of the decision(s) made at any stage of the RPL process.

1.6.5 Skills gap training

This is the process of identifying the gaps between the competencies possessed by the RPL candidate and the desired competence standards and learning outcomes. Skills gaps can be identified at any stage of the RPL process – at expression of interest, application, analysis of portfolio or final assessment stages. The threshold for referral for skills upgrading after identification of gaps in the candidates shall be set by the respective QAIs. However, as much as possible, candidates should be assessed and certified for competencies they possess and awarded partial qualification or statement of attainment if the competencies they demonstrate are employable in the industry.

1.5.5 Quality assurance of RPL

To ensure the credibility and consistency of RPL certification, QAIs must specify quality assurance mechanisms as outlined in their quality assurance manual. The most frequently used are:

- a) establishing common standards;
- b) ensuring the availability of competent RPL practitioners;
- c) collaborating with employers' and workers' organization and other relevant stakeholders;
- d) developing assessment tools and methodologies;
- e) accrediting RPL Assessment Centres;
- f) inbuilt quality assurance mechanism in the RPL process;
- g) monitoring and evaluation frameworks;
- h) independent auditing of the entire RPL process; and
- i) disseminating results.

Please refer to the RPL Quality Assurance Manual for more details on quality assurance in RPL

1.7 The building blocks of RPL

The effectiveness of an RPL system depends on the way it is built. This section provides an overview of the building blocks and how to construct them. All the building blocks are equally important and there is no definitive way to develop a system.

Establishing a system is based on identifying specific needs-based objectives for RPL, to help address existing challenges. Remember that an RPL system does not function in isolation but is connected to the education and training systems of a country.

Successful systems do not rely exclusively on RPL but relate to a national qualifications framework (NQF). In Kenya, RPL is anchored on the Kenya National Qualifications Framework (KNQF). It is also important to note that a NQF is not a necessary precondition for RPL and many countries undertook RPL before having a NQF. However, if an NQF exists, RPL should connect with it.

The figure below shows the four building blocks of RPL systems. A fifth element, quality assurance, is placed at the centre of the four blocks, as it cuts across them all. Several of the building blocks, namely stakeholders, quality assurance and financing, are covered in more detail in the other learning units.



The table below describes the building blocks of an RPL system and the steps need to ensure that each building block is stable.

| Building blocks | Steps |
|-------------------------|---|
| Regulatory Framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Based on a needs analysis, define which educational sectors the RPL system should cover (for instance, general education and/or TVET, specific occupations/ trades only, secondary and/or higher education). b) Frame RPL in the national employment policy, and make it a priority in education and training policy. c) Integrate RPL into existing qualifications frameworks, as well as in policies and strategies for recognition of skills and qualifications (such as credit systems). d) Explore what sectoral approaches would be relevant (for instance, consider allowing a sector to design its own RPL process). e) Integrate RPL into relevant sectoral, economic and development policy, including migration policy. f) Match occupational and qualification standards. g) Synchronize national regulation with regional and local regulation if needed. |
| Institutional framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Define the institutions that are responsible for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all RPL processes, including awareness raising, guidance and counselling to applicants, and assessment. b) Assess the capacity of existing institutions in terms of the tasks that they are expected to perform to allow the RPL system to function effectively. c) Strengthen capacity if needed, or create new institutions if necessary, such as to provide counselling and facilitation to applicants. d) Build capacity of RPL Practitioners to ensure that they will be regularly retrained. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Stakeholder ownership and commitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify all stakeholders, such as government institutions, education and training providers, employers' and workers' organizations, potential beneficiaries and make sure they are aware of the benefits of RPL and their role within an RPL system. b) Keep supporting social dialogue to ensure that RPL's potential benefits to employers and workers are fully exploited. |
| Financing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conduct cost-benefit analysis to define the scope of the RPL system in relation to the educational and labour market needs of a country. b) Determine and implement equitable cost-sharing arrangements (such as Government funding, training levy or other employer contribution, applicant fees). c) Ensure that funding is sustainable. |
| Quality Assurance Cross Cutting measures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Design assessment methodologies around profiles of applicants that are likely to use the system, including those from disadvantaged groups. b) Establish standardized RPL processes and methods at the sectoral level, including standards and quality codes. c) Ensure that information about RPL is available where applicants can easily access it, and that counselling and facilitation methods suit applicants' needs. |

1.6.1 REFLECTIONS on the RPL building blocks

- a) Why do we need RPL?
- b) Who do we need it for (which sectors of education and economy)?
- c) What do the stakeholders need? (workers, potential applicants, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, training institutions, chambers of commerce and professional associations)
- d) Which stakeholders must be involved? (key stakeholders)
- e) Which stakeholders would we like to involve in making the system work better?

1.8 Roles and qualities of RPL Practitioners – Refer to the guide on RPL Practitioners

RPL practitioners are the personnel in one or more aspects of RPL provision, including policy development, advisory, portfolio building, skills course design and facilitation, assessment and moderation of RPL through administration, monitoring and evaluation and research and development.

1.8.1 Categories of the RPL Practitioners

- a) Policy Makers
- b) RPL Counsellors
- c) RPL Assessors
- d) RPL Coordinators
- e) RPL Verifiers

1.8.2 Qualities of a good RPL Practitioner

- a) **Integrity:** the convictions of a person of integrity determine what they will say and do at any given time. They intentionally direct their conduct according to their understanding of what is right and wrong. Authenticity marks the heart of integrity. Their internal character remains consistent regardless of external conditions. A person of integrity does not claim to be perfect, instead, they are quick to acknowledge their own mistakes and faults. Their sincerity comes from a pure motivation to do what is right even when it might be inconvenient. Times of crisis particularly test a person's integrity.
- b) **Analytical:** an analytical person wants to gather and consider information at length before making a big decision. Even in small choices, they will tend to look to the numbers or data for guidance rather than making an off-the-cuff choice. They like to get to the bottom of things -- curiosity is one of their strongest motives. They want to know what holds the world together.
- c) **Competent:** has both the knowledge to recognise and the authority to correct.
- d) **Visionary:** Broad understanding of the trade area and its application in the industry. A person who has a clear idea of how the future of skills areas should look like. They understand what the candidate needs to do to reach that destination and they guide the candidate in the right direction.

REFLECTIONS

How can each of the RPL Practitioners make the RPL assessment process a success?

1.9 Benefits of RPL

RPL has the potential to improve employability, mobility, life-long learning, social inclusion and self-esteem. The following are some of the overall benefits of RPL.

- a) Promoting social inclusion and equity for disadvantaged groups.
- b) Encouraging life-long learning to create a competent and adaptable workforce that can meet the challenges of a fast-changing labour market, address skills shortages and gaps as well as allow for holistic development.
- c) Providing access to higher education / upward mobility / career progression.
- d) Meeting regulatory requirements of some sectors in terms of employing qualified personnel.
- e) Improving efficiency and flexibility in education systems by allowing alternative learning pathways – workplace, non-formal and informal learning as well as fast tracing the acquisition of qualifications.
- f) Enhancing migrant workers' skills portability and their mobility.
- g) Fostering employability and thus better, decent jobs.
- h) Contributing to transition from the informal to the formal economy.

1.9.1 Who is RPL for?

The beneficiaries of RPL are diverse as shown below.



DID YOU KNOW?

RPL is for any applicant who has acquired relevant competencies through work experience, informal or non-formal learning, but who does not have a related qualification/certificate. RPL can allow an applicant to:

- a) progress within a company;
- b) change jobs or sectors;
- c) obtain a salary increase;
- d) save resources (time and money) by having some units / credits recognised as part of a new qualification (including tertiary education); and
- e) start working in a foreign country (recognition of foreign qualifications).

TARGETING THE DISADVANTAGED

a) Women: They often take on vital tasks outside the formal and paid economy, e.g. as home carers, taking care of children, the elderly and the sick, whereby they acquire and apply important competencies of care work. RPL can provide an opportunity for such women to move more readily into the labour market after the situation at home has changed or compensate for time lost in education and training. Unfortunately, RPL is more common in male-dominated trades, notably in the construction sector, again disadvantaging women.

b) Older workers: They might not have acquired or needed a qualification earlier in their life but worked in the same job for a long time. They may be confronted with the need for qualification to continue working or find another job. RPL Counsellors can make older workers aware of RPL processes and guide them through the system.

c) Migrant workers: Given the magnitude of international migration, migrant workers are frequently victims of competencies underutilization or competencies waste, both in terms of lower employment rates and over qualification for the jobs they do. Even when migrant workers are employed, they are much more likely to be in occupations in which skills requirements are lower than their educational attainment and/or professional qualifications, compared with their national counterparts.

d) Returning migrant workers: In many instances, they acquire additional competencies while abroad, which are not recognised in a corresponding qualification and thus impede their ability.

TARGETING DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

RPL for migrant workers: Importance of the legal framework – examples from Germany and Sri Lanka.

In 2012, Germany passed the Federal Recognition Act to improve the assessment and recognition of professional and vocational education and training qualifications acquired abroad. It simplifies and standardizes procedures for the evaluation of foreign professional or vocational qualifications and opens up such procedures to target groups not previously entitled to pursue such a route to foster integration into the German labour market.

The key objectives of changes to migrant skills recognition in Germany are:

- a) to improve utilization of migrants' skills within the German labour market;
- b) to reduce skills bottlenecks perceived by employers; and
- c) to make the skills recognition process for migrants in Germany easier, faster and more transparent.

(Braňka, 2016b).

Sri Lanka put in place a National Labour Migration Policy focusing on low-skilled migrant workers, in particular, female domestic workers with limited capacity, knowledge and access to information and services. The policy aims to ease the return and reintegration of migrant workers by creating opportunities for “skills transfer, productive employment and conflict-free social integration”.

Under this policy, the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment provides services to returning migrants and their family members, including recognition of skills (ILO, 2016b).

The examples show that migration requires both countries of origin and countries of destination to implement relevant policy responses. Returning migrants often face the same problem on their return to their own country as when arriving at their destination.

REFLECTIONS

Why is RPL important?

FACTS ON FILE

Awareness creation is critical during RPL. The more the target beneficiaries know about RPL, the more they will be interested in taking part in the process.

Awareness creation will also help demystify some of the myths and fears about RPL.

1.9.2 Specific benefits

| Stakeholder | General benefits |
|-------------------------|---|
| a) Cross cutting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Entry/Re-entry to job market ● Promotion of employability – formally or informally ● Income earning ● Career mobility ● Career progression ● Global recognition ● Promotes recognition of undocumented skills and competencies ● Quickest way to upskill and upgrade qualifications ● Identification of missing skills and filling of gaps ● Promotes matching of skills ● Eliminates unnecessary training for already acquired skills ● Helps in identifying employee skills gaps and match with opportunities ● Promotes social inclusion and self-esteem |
| b) Industry / Employers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cost of recruitment and selection will reduce ● More efficient ways of filling vacancies ● Reduces skills mismatch and skills gaps ● Reduces employee training time ● Employee retention ● Reduced recruitment and training costs |
| c) Government / MDAs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Job creation ● Skilled manpower ● Transfer of skills ● Mobility ● Visibility of competencies ● Foreign investment ● Database of skills ● Occupational mobility ● Factors of production – human capital |

| | |
|---|---|
| d) Potential candidates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourages life-long learning ● Promotes entry-re-entry into employment / employability ● Promotes adaptability for a fast-changing labour market ● Contributes to identification of capacity gaps and individual training needs ● Promotes skills mobility ● Promotes social inclusion and self esteem ● Provides motivation to re-enter formal training ● Facilitates transition from the non-formal (Jua Kali) to formal employment |
| e) Regulators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eliminates quacks ● Promotes professionalism ● Meeting regulatory requirements |
| f) Professional bodies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visibility of competencies ● Regulation of occupations ● Database of practitioners ● Occupational mobility |
| g) Refugees / Asylum Seekers / Migrants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employability ● Mobility ● Re-entry to the job market ● Career progression ● Transfer of skills back home ● Social inclusion and equity |
| h) Trade Unions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better bargaining powers on CBA ● Increased membership |

Key Questions to be answered

- What is RPL and why is it important?
- What are the key RPL terms, concepts and underlying key ideas?
- Why is it important?
- What are the key drivers of RPL?
- What are the building blocks of RPL?
- Who is RPL for?
- What are the potential benefits, including for the different stakeholders?
- What are the main steps of the RPL process?
- What profiles of applicants may benefit from RPL?

1.9.3 Table: Potential benefits at the Economic and Educational Level

| Potential benefits at the economic and educational level | |
|---|---|
| Increased employability of population for a healthier labour market | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improved ability of employers to identify new hires and fill their vacancies. b) Potentially reduced unemployed and inactivity. c) Reduced pressure on the labour market as alternative pathways to employment become available. d) Reduced skills mismatch issues. |
| Increased labour mobility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Facilitated movement of individuals to a better job. b) Increased ability of employed people to change career and employer. |
| Improved access to formal education and training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reduced time and financial resources needed to obtain a qualification, making it more affordable and accessible for applicants to further their educational attainment. |
| Strengthened qualifications systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reinforced qualifications system providing a bridge between the informal and formal economy. b) Strengthened life-long learning framework as RPL creates new opportunities for achieving a qualification. |
| Potential benefits at societal level | |
| Social inclusion and recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Enhanced capacity of societies to empower disadvantaged groups. b) Improved visibility and use of existing human capital. |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| More motivated labour force | a) Empowered labour force, as opportunities for decent work and life-long learning open up to more individuals, including groups disadvantaged in the labour market. |
| More interest in life-long learning | a) Expanded opportunities for individuals to embrace life-long learning and benefit from it in terms of labour market outcomes. |
| Potential benefits at personal level | |
| Psychological benefits | a) Strengthened self-esteem, confidence and motivation to work and learn, including among those formerly discouraged (Werquin, 2010a). b) Reduced costs of education, including in terms of time investment required to attain a qualification. |

1.10 Different forms of recognition

Recognition of prior informal learning can be undertaken by a learner for personal and career development or to support the transition between informal and formal learning or for gaining credit (for entry to and / or credit within formal programs of study).

RPL for personal / career development focuses on formative recognition (supporting a continuing learning process through identifying a learning pathway). Formative recognition may result in a mapping or a notional levelling of an individual's learning within the context of the KNQF as part of an education guidance or personal development planning process.

RPL for credit, focuses on summative recognition (to gain entry to, or credit within, a formal program of study). Summative recognition will involve a formal assessment of prior informal or experiential learning as part of the credit rating process.

The provision of both forms of RPL should take place within the context of clearly defined quality assurance mechanisms.

It is important to ensure that a learner clearly understands the process and possible outcomes of both RPL routes before he or she makes the decision to proceed.

1.11 The key premises of RPL

- a) Recognition is given for learning, not for experience alone.
- b) The learning that is recognised should be transferable and not just context-specific.
- c) Credit awarded as a result of RPL is of the same value as credit gained through formal learning.

This should be clearly understood by learners, learning providers, employers and receiving institutions.

1.11.1 Link between the two forms of Recognition

For some learners, the process of formative recognition may be a preparatory stage to summative recognition. The process of identifying learning through reflection and considering how evidence of this learning can be provided is common to both forms of recognition. Recognizing comparability between the outcomes of informal and formal learning.

All RPL processes contain an element of reflection and identification of the learning gained through experiential or informal learning which can be related to:

- a) A set of core or subject-specific skills or national occupation standards within a community-based learning or workplace training context (for recognition for personal / career development);
- b) the core learning skills required to successfully undertake a program of formal learning (for bridging to support the transition between information and formal learning);
- c) the entry requirements to a formal program of study (for recognition for entry); and
- d) the outcomes of a formal learning program or qualification (for recognition for credit within a program or towards a qualification).

1.12 Suggestions for further reading around Learning Unit 1

International Training Centre of ILO (ITC-ILO) 2006. “Glossary of key terms on learning and training form work” (Geneva, Switzerland)

Werquin, P. 2008. “Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in OECD countries: A very good idea in jeopardy”, *Lifelong Learning in Europe*, Vol. 3, pp. 142–149.

Werquin, P. 2012. “The missing link to connect education and employment: Recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes” *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 25, No. 3, July, pp. 259–278.

Videos

GQ Australia: An introductory video on RPL can be accessed here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-evjVsEM3Q>

CEDEFOP Conference: How to make learning visible: Strategies for implementing validation of non-formal and informal learning, 28 and 29 November 2016, Thessaloniki. A video with highlights of the event is available here. Messages from participants from various countries are available here.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/videos/how-make-learning-visible-messages-participants>

Learning Unit 2

THE RPL PROCESS: IDENTIFICATION

2.1 Awareness and publicity creation

This process builds awareness and interest about RPL in potential candidates, employers and other stakeholders. Awareness is created about what RPL is, the benefits, whom to contact, the process, estimated costs, timeframe, eligibility requirements and the available assistance. The publicity and awareness building takes place on different platforms including websites, social media, print media, focus group discussions, radio and TV as well as fairs and education institutions.

Learning objectives

By the end of the unit, the participant should be able to do the following. Demonstrate competence in creating awareness on RPL.

- a) Demonstrate competence in creating awareness on RPL.
- b) Demonstrate ability to counselling and facilitate an RPL candidate.
- c) Evaluate the appropriate method to use to analyse a candidate's competencies.
- d) Evaluate the suitability of the candidate for assessment and certification.

2.1.1 Specific to the RPL Practitioners

Awareness creation will focus on information sharing during the Counselling and Facilitation session. It will focus on the following.

- a) The RPL Process and what you will be doing.
- b) The regulations.
- c) The requirements of RPL – cost, time, POE – refer to section B of the application form.
- d) Guide the candidate to how to apply for the relevant skills area, level and competency as per the learning outcomes.
- e) Advise on portfolio of evidence collection.

- f) What to expect.
- g) Expected timelines.
- h) Qualification specific learning outcomes.
- i) What you may need to be successful.
- j) How to ask for assistance of support if you need any.
- k) What to expect as an outcome – competent, not competent, skill upgrading.
- l) How to appeal.

2.2 Counselling and facilitation

During this process, candidates interested in the RPL obtain detailed information and orientation from an RPL Practitioner appointed by a Qualifications Awarding Institution. The RPL Practitioner assesses candidates' suitability for a specific qualification (full or part), provides the necessary information about learning outcomes and competency standards required for the qualification and the nature of evidence required. The candidate also obtains an application form and documents detailing the RPL process and its requirements. The RPL Practitioner and the information should help a candidate in deciding whether to apply for RPL, and for which qualification and at what level.

2.2.1 Specifically, the RPL counsellor will do the following.

- a) At screening level, use the Expression of interest Form.
- b) Explain that RPL is a continuous engagement throughout the process.
- c) Advise on collection, development and presentation of portfolio of evidence.
- d) Give recommendations at every stage of the process.
- e) Advise on possible areas of counselling – reference to a checklist.
- f) Identify skills gaps and recommend how they can be filled through training.
- g) Prepare candidate for assessment.
- h) Necessary skills – refer to the counselling skills learning unit
- i) Guide the candidate on how to apply – use of application form as well as the level to choose in a trade / skill area based on learning outcomes / competence standards.

2.2.2 Identification / suitability of competencies

Aligning existing competencies to the applied for qualification by discussing with the candidate to gauge suitability as per the provided learning outcomes.

2.3 Purpose and methods of analysing PoE (refer to Unit 3)

2.3.1 Purpose of analysis

- a) Placement
- b) Advisory

2.3.2 Methods of analysis

- a) Skills audit
- b) Structured interviews
- c) Observation in simulated conditions

2.3.4 Determining the suitability of the candidate for assessment and certification

- a) Document identification
- b) Document analysis
- c) Interpretation of evidence and statements

Learning Unit 3

THE RPL PROCESS: DOCUMENTATION

Learning objectives

By the end of this learning unit, the participants should be able to do the following. Explain the meaning of documentation in the RPL context.

- a) Explain the meaning of documentation in the RPL context.
- b) State the purpose of documentation stage.
- c) Outline the importance of Portfolio of Evidence (PoE).
- d) Demonstrate ability to guide a candidate to prepare a PoE and compile the necessary documentation/evidence in a recommended format.
- e) Evaluate the PoE along the recommended parameters.
- f) Prepare candidate for the final assessment.
- g) Utilise the appropriate tools to document the RPL process

3.1 Meaning of documentation

Documentation is the process of making visible the individual's experience or gathering evidence proving the achievement of selected learning outcomes (certificates, documents attesting to completed internships, work samples, videos, recommendations and job descriptions). It is conducted with the support of a counsellor for purposes of producing an individual development plan and undertaking further learning. This is presented to a third party -- the Assessor.

3.2 Purpose of documentation stage

- a) Gather evidence to prove that the candidate has achieved the required learning outcomes, including the knowledge, skills and competencies distinguished at the identification stage.

In the absence of already existing evidence, the RPL Counsellor can use the following strategies to document what the candidate claims to know.

- i) Record the candidate practically performing the tasks.

- ii) Competency-based / learning outcome-based interviews and the same is recorded – especially in a knowledge-based qualifications.
- b) Preparation of evidence to be presented at the assessment stage (e.g. evaluated during assessment or presented to a potential employer in a portfolio).
- c) Analyse evidence and statements prepared by the candidate to select those that:
 - i) confirm the learning outcomes required for the qualification being sought by the candidate; and
 - ii) meet the requirements regarding the form and criteria specified by the awarding body.
- d) Documenting RPL related feedback provides valuable information that helps improve the process. It also helps inform future decisions related to RPL e.g. budgetary plans or the impact of RPL on the society.

3.3 Portfolio of Evidence

A Portfolio of Evidence is a collection of relevant documents that candidates are required to compile to showcase their competencies against a set of learning outcomes and / or performance standards. It is tailored for a specific qualification that you are applying for. It could include anything from your CV, testimonials, work samples and recommendation letters.

3.3.1 Importance of PoE

Your portfolio tells your story about the skills, knowledge and attitudes that you possess and how your journey related to the qualification you are applying of has been. The PoE is important in helping you effectively apply for a qualification, earn trust and respect of the RPL Practitioners as well as help you get the relevant career progression advice.

The PoE should be developed along the candidate's achievements and can be used as a:

- a) record of achievement to date;
- b) basis for career development;
- c) proof of competence;
- d) resource of abilities;
- e) reference tool for appraisal; and
- f) record of continuing professional development.

The POE can also be used to:

- a) clearly demonstrate competencies against learning outcomes / performance standards;
- b) focus the assessment for qualification applied for;

- c) help in the identification of skills and knowledge gaps; and
- d) bring together evidence for more than one learning outcome / performance standards.

3.3.2 Preparation of a PoE (Refer to POE guidelines / simulation / observation)

- a) Involves collection and collation of historical, indirect and direct evidence to justify their possession of skills for a given trade at a given level.
- b) The nature and amount of evidence required is dependent on the level of assessment with the higher levels requiring more evidence.
- c) The RPL Counsellor interviews and guides the candidate on the specific evidence that they require for their level based on the candidate's declared experience and the PoE Preparation and Assessment Guide.
- d) The candidate is guided on how to consolidate and present the evidence in a portfolio format.
- e) The required evidence is documented in the required section of the candidate's RPL Application Form.
- f) The RPL Counsellor retains the original candidate's RPL Application Form while a duplicate copy should be issued to the candidate to guide preparation and consolidation of evidence.
- g) The date and place of submission of the PoE should be agreed with the candidate.
- h) The RPL Counsellor advises the candidate in detail the parameters within which assessment of the PoE will be carried out including authenticity; sufficiency; validity and currency.

3.3.3 Types of Evidence (also refer to the Assessment Guide)

There are three different types of evidence that can be collected to prove competency.

- a) **Direct evidence:** This is evidence that is witnessed first-hand by the RPLP and includes observation of workplace performance, oral exam, work samples and presentations.
- b) **Indirect evidence:** This is evidence that can be reviewed by the assessor and includes writing assignments, portfolios and completed pieces.
- c) **Supplementary evidence:** This is additional evidence that supports a claim of competence such as training records, third party reports and work journals.

3.3.4 Rules of evidence

There are four main rules of evidence which are closely related to the principals of assessment and highlight the important factors around evidence collection. These rules are:

- a) **Validity:** This rule is based on the RPL Practitioner being confident that the learner has the skills, knowledge and attributes required in the module or unit of competency and assessment. Essentially, it means that the assessment process does what it claims, assesses the competency of the individual learner.

To meet evidence validity, assessment should cover the broad range of skills and knowledge required for competent performance and must not expect anything above or beyond unit requirements.

- b) **Sufficiency:** This is based on the RPL Practitioner being confident that the quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence allows judgement to be made on an individual's competency. When determining sufficiency, the RPLP should establish that standards are in line with the relevant industry.

The RPLP can choose to attend the workplace of a candidate or watch an unedited video of a role play at a simulated workplace, to view them in action while referring to a comprehensive checklist. This checklist would provide detail about the tasks that are to be completed and what is considered sufficient evidence.

Simply asking the candidate about how they would do a task or using auto marked questions, a simple explanation or tick box is not always sufficient and could result in non-compliance.

- c) **Authenticity:** This is based on the RPLP being confident that the evidence presented in assessment is indeed the work of the candidate. While ensuring authenticity in a face-to-face assessment is straight forward enough, this can present a unique challenge where distance learning is concerned. Strategies to enhance authenticity include having candidates sign declarations stating that all evidence submitted is their own.
- d) **Currency:** This is based on the RPLP being confident that the evidence presented in assessment demonstrates current competency. The assessment evidence must be from the present year or very recent past. This will vary between industries and in some cases, units will provide guidance about what is considered current. Generally, evidence collected more than two years ago is not considered current; however, it can be accepted in some instances.

RPL assessment tools should enable the RPLP to be confident about the validity, sufficiency, authenticity and currency of the collected evidence. The importance of following these rules when it comes to Assessment should not be understated. If evidence collection is not valid, sufficient, authentic and current, it can lead to certification of under qualified individuals and compromise the whole process.

3.4 PoE assessment

PoE assessment is carried out mostly for two main reasons – placement and advisory. In placement, the evidence will guide the RPLP to advise the candidate on their suitability to the qualification applied for thus fitting them in the right qualification based on the evidence provided. While the advisory part happens when the RPLP uses the evidence provided to advise the candidate on any skill gaps that may have presented themselves during the analysis.

The RPLP will determine the suitability of the candidate for assessment and certification through;

- a) document identification;
- b) document analysis;
- c) interpretation of evidence and statements; and
- d) feedback process.

Some of the methods that the RPLP can use to analyze the PoE are:

- a) skills audit;
- b) structured interviews;
- c) observation in simulated conditions; and
- d) theoretical tests or questionnaires.

| Stage | Steps |
|------------------------------|---|
| Awareness and publicity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Potential applicants are aware of RPL as an opportunity. ii. General information about the RPL system is in place, related requirements, steps to take, assistance available and where to obtain it is readily accessible. iii. The steps of an RPL process are clear and transparent to all stakeholders, as is information for potential applicants. iv. The steps of an RPL process are clear and transparent to all stakeholders, as is information for potential applicants. |
| Counselling and facilitation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Counselling is available to provide potential applicants with more detailed information about the RPL process. ii. Potential applicants can obtain guidance on the specific RPL steps and their requirements. iii. RPL Counsellors perform an initial assessment (pre-screening) as well as PoE analysis. iv. RPL Counsellor offers guidance on skills gap training if needed. |

REFLECTIONS

What kind of information do the candidates need to have to help them make informed decisions about RPL?

FACTS ON FILE

An RPL Communication Strategy has been developed to guide this process.

3.4.1 Assessment Parameters – refer to Assessment Guide for more details

3.4.1.1 Authenticity

- a) Can the evidence be attributed to the candidate?
- b) The evidence has to be verified as the candidate's own work, and in the case of a group result, that he/she has made a contribution.

3.4.1.2 Sufficiency

- a) Is there enough evidence? Can the candidate repeat the performance?
- b) The use of various sources of evidence and a variety of assessment activities assist in ensuring that the evidence is sufficient to meet all the criteria and the applicable range statements.

3.4.1.3 Validity

Does the evidence relate to the respective National Occupational Standard?

3.4.1.4 Currency

- a) Is the evidence related to current competence?
- b) Currency refers to the applicability of knowledge, skills and understanding in the present Circumstances.

3.4.2 Compiling evidence of learning outcomes: key components for assessment of RPL

The following are the key components for the assessment of RPL. Evidence: presented in a form prescribed in the Assessment Guide. The individual will have to demonstrate evidence of the learning outcomes or competencies acquired.

- a) **Competent RPL Practitioners:** to inform the applicant and guide the compilation of evidence.
- b) **Accessible services:** counselling and facilitation that can adapt to cater for the diverse needs of applicants, including disadvantaged groups.
- c) **The actual competencies** of the applicant and how they are documented.

Regardless of context and whether the application is for an occupational title, employment, credit or qualification, clear criteria for both applicants and assessors are necessary. Similarly, the purpose of an assessment must be clear. Both applicants and organizations / institutions need to be aware that assessments are based on specific learning or performance-based outcomes.

In short, RPL should be:

- a) transparent;
- b) valid; and
- c) reliable.

3.4.3 Skills gap identification

Identify of skills gap

Guidelines on thresh-holds for upgrading/referrals

3.5 REFLECTIONS

- a) How do you package the information to the candidate in a manner that ensures they get all the relevant information?
- b) How do you effectively guide the candidate to enable them lock in the skill and level to apply for?
- c) How do you perform a skills audit in a manner that ensures you get the right competency gaps?
- d) Which interviewing techniques can you put to play to ensure you gather the correct and necessary information?

TARGETING DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

This identification phase of the RPL process provides an opportunity to address the challenge of disadvantaged groups – special needs people, persons living with disability. This could be done by ensuring the RPL Counsellor is able to speak to the need at hand e.g. if dealing with a hearing-impaired person, the RPL Counsellor can use sign language or if dealing with a person using a wheelchair, then ensure access to facilities is provided via ramps or other interventions.

EXAMPLE

Norway recommends the use of clearly defined and described steps and stages that can be recognised by all stakeholders as this is important for building confidence in the system, including.

- i) Counselling and facilitation
- ii) Description / mapping of competencies – including documentation from formal and informal learning, from practical work experience
- iii) Assessment or validation
- iv) Recognition of competencies

3.6 Preparation and referral for final assessment for qualified applicants

- a) The exam booking and booking procedures for final assessment.
- b) The date and place of final assessment.
- c) The requirements for final assessment.
- d) The methodologies, procedure and processes for final assessment.
- e) The expected outcomes from the assessment process (full certification,

partial certification, statement of attainment or referral for skills gap training).

- f) The expectations from the candidates, assessors and centre managers.
- g) The RPL appeal process.
- h) Quality Assurance and Preparation by the QAI.
- i) Type of certification.
- j) Levels of certification.

3.7 Tools for documenting an RPL process

Types of tools

- i) Assessment guide
- ii) Monitoring tools

FACTS ON FILE?

- a) Methodology used in documentation
- b) Analysis of evidence and statements.
- c) Allows the candidate or counsellor to select the relevant evidence in a format that enables it to be presented to the assessment stage.

REFLECTIONS

- a. What is a learning outcome?
- b. How does the learning outcome inform the skills to be exhibited?
- c. How does the learning outcome inform the evidence to be collected?
- d. How do I prioritize the key evidence to be collected?
- e. How do I guide the candidate compilation of the portfolio of evidence?
- f. How do I evaluate the portfolio of evidence?
- g. When do I refer the candidate for skills gap training?
- h. How do I prepare the candidate for the RPL final assessment?
- i. How do I document the RPL process for each assessment conducted?

Learning Unit 4

THE RPL PROCESS: ASSESSMENT & CERTIFICATION

4.1 Introduction

Once the RPL Counsellor is satisfied, the candidate will be advised on the nature of the final assessment. If the RPL Counsellor is not satisfied, the candidate will be told of their shortcomings and advised on to how to overcome those.

The objective of the assessment is not only to award a qualification but also to steer the candidates' personal and professional progress as well as providing them with the tools to do that (Paulet 2013).

A vital difference exists between countries in the last stage of assessment: in some countries, such as Tanzania and South Africa (for artisans), final trade test is compulsory, but this is not the case in France, Australia and Mauritius. Where compulsory, the test/examination is the final step of the assessment. If not, the assessor(s) can declare a candidate successful based on the evaluation and interview. The QAI then awards the certificate to the successful candidate. Some QAIs carry out moderation of assessment results in line with their internal practice before declaring results and awarding certificates.

| Stage | Steps |
|------------------------------|---|
| Assessment and certification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Assessor reviews the evidence / portfolio submitted. ii. RPL Assessor carries out final assessment, test or demonstration against existing qualification standards to facilitate award of qualification. iii. Decision on the final assessment and information on shortcomings, if applicable (and potential re-skilling, mentoring, etc. for another assessment) iv. Appeal by applicant against decision, if relevant. v. Award of qualification / certificate / credits / units / exemptions. |

Learning objectives

At the end of this learning unit, the participants should be able to do the following. Explain the meaning of assessment process.

- a) Explain the meaning of assessment process.
- b) Identify the objectives of assessment.
- c) Outline the principles of assessment.
- d) Explain the key components of assessment.
- e) Determine the range of assessment methods.
- f) Conduct final assessment.
- g) Develop an assessment plan.
- h) Describe the RPL certification and award of qualification process.
- i) Document the assessment and certification process accordingly.

4.2 Meaning of assessment process

It is a process of collecting evidence and judging it to decide on whether a candidate possess knowledge, skills and attitudes to perform work activities to the standard expected in the workplace in line with the Learning Outcomes and as per the KNQF Level descriptors.

4.2.1 Objectives of assessment

- a) Award a qualification.
- b) Advise or to steer the candidates' personal and professional progress.
- c) Provide the applicant with the tools to bridge the identified gaps.

4.2.2 Key Components for assessment

- a) **Evidence:** presented in a form prescribed in the Assessment Guide. The individual will have to demonstrate evidence of the learning outcomes or competencies acquired.
- b) **Competent RPL Practitioners:** to inform the applicant and guide the compilation of evidence.
- c) **Accessible services:** counselling and facilitation that can adapt to cater for the diverse needs of applicants, including disadvantaged groups.
- d) **The actual competencies of the applicant:** and how they are documented.

4.3 Assessment methods

REFLECTIONS

What are the assessment methods applied in RPL?

Different assessment methods and tools can be applied in the RPL process. For example, RPL in higher education for credits might require a test while in the TVET, work observation or a specific trade test might apply.

To ensure parity of qualifications (formal and those acquired through RPL), the same assessment methods should apply for non-formal and informal learning as for formal learning. However, assessment procedures can and probably should differ since evidence of competence has to be established. Assessment tools and methods must be adapted, combined and applied in a way that reflects the individual specificity and non-standardized character of non-formal and informal learning. Tools for assessment need to be fit for purpose (CEDEFOP, 2015:58)

LINKS

Video: Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GR9YxfP59Ec>.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GR9YxfP59Ec>

Which methods of assessment are named?

4.3.1 Range of assessment methods

- a) **The analysis of written or e-portfolio of evidence and statements:** This involves examining the documents and products of a candidate in terms of how the candidate provides the evidence of achievement of selected learning outcomes.
- b) **Presentation:** the method consists of preparing, presenting and discussing a specific learning outcome/s in front of a panel of assessors.
- c) **Debate:** offers the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate their depth of knowledge as well as their communication skills.
 - i) **Structured debate** is an organised and moderated (directed) discussion of a group of candidates who exchange arguments on a selected learning outcome/s.
 - ii) **An unstructured debate** takes place in a group and the participants have great latitude in their participation because they are not assigned specific functions, nor are they required to present their positions in a specific manner.
- d) **Interviews** are used to clarify issues raised in documentary evidence presented and/or to review scope and depth of learning.
 - i) **Structured interview** consists of asking a series of standardized closed-ended questions and analysing the answers.
 - ii) **Unstructured interview** is an exchange of questions and answers in a free-flowing conversation between an assessor and the candidate seeking recognition of competencies.
- e) **Theoretical Tests**
 - i) **Written tests** require written statements from candidates.
 - ii) **Oral tests** require spoken responses from candidates.
- f) **Simulation and evidence extracted from work:** applicants are placed in a situation that fulfils all the criteria of the real-life scenario.
- g) **Observation in real-life conditions:** assessment of candidates in actual conditions of doing the tasks specified in the description of a qualification.
- h) **Declarative methods:** candidates' personal identification and recording of their competencies and verification of the self-assessment third party.
- i) **Tests and examinations** to identify and validate informal and non-formal learning through, or with the help of, examinations in the formal system.

| Box 11: Nature of evidence for RPL as recommended by Queensland State, Australia | | |
|---|---|--|
| Direct Evidence | Indirect Evidence | Historical Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Workplace observation · Demonstration of skill · Samples of work · The materials or tools with which the candidate works · Referees' reports · Videos · Audio files · Photos · Published works, such as operational manuals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Industry awards · Job specifications or position descriptions · Curriculum Vitae or Resume · Rosters or timesheets · Budgets · Visual presentations or written speeches · Letters or memos from the workplace · References/letters of support · Evidence of committee work · Reading lists · Workplace training records | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Written references from past employers · Log books and other records of performance · Certificates or qualifications · Letters of support · Assignments, reports and documentation from previous courses · Past competency based assessments · Record of academic results · Course attendance record · Scrapbooks · Magazine or newspaper articles. |
| Source: Queensland Government, 2014. | | |

Not all countries use the same assessment methods. For example, in Kenya, the most common is the portfolio method. A portfolio is a collection of evidence prepared by a candidate in support of their claim of meeting the requisite skills and competencies of a formal qualification. The nature of evidence recommended by various QAIs includes certificates and awards; letter of recommendation; samples of work; videos and photographs of work activities; skills logbooks; details of formal training; records of seminars, conferences and workshops attended; resume and performance appraisals, testimonials from current and previous employers and job descriptions.

Assessment tools and methods must be:

- valid (assess the desired competencies);
- reliable and consistent (various RPLP use the same assessment tools and methods and obtain the same results);
- transparent (candidates and RPLP are aware of the assessment tools and methods as well as competence standards);
- equitable and flexible (candidates' needs are considered – time, place and method);
- manageable and achievable (the assessment should be possible within the time and resources available); and
- fair (allowing for appeal).

Moreover, evidence gathering needs to comply with the rules of evidence, which require it to be;

- Valid:** covers key competences of a qualification.

- b) Sufficient:** allows RPLP to make decisions on the level of competency.
- c) Current:** contemporary.
- d) Authentic:** examples of the candidate's own work.

The range of assessment tools and methods include the following. Written or e-portfolio: to enable a more structured, interactive approach to building evidence, mixing and applying several tools (including those listed below).

- a) Written or e-portfolio:** to enable a more structured, interactive approach to building evidence, mixing and applying several tools (including those listed below).
- b) Mapping:** against level descriptors or qualification standards for large amounts of credit or program modules.
- c) Use of level descriptors:** to enable the articulation of prior information learning in learning outcomes that are more relevant to this type of learning.
- d) Presentation:** formal and informal which can be used to check the ability to present information in way that is appropriate to both subject and audience.
- e) Simulation and evidence extracted from work:** where applicants are placed in a situation that fulfils all the criteria of the real-life scenario to have their competencies assessed through observation.
- f) Tests and examination:** identifying and validating informational and non-formal learning through or with the help of examinations in the formal system e.g. written examinations.
- g) Structured interviewing:** as an evidence source.
- h) Panel of interviewers** to test applicant's knowledge.
- i) Use of technologies:** e.g. web/videoconferencing, video and podcasts or virtual reality.
- j) Workplace-derived artefacts:** to demonstrate competencies.
- k) Employer reference / evidence**
- l) Work based learning simulation or practical tasks.**
- m) Record of volunteer learning and experience.**
- n) Assessment on demand** such as an exam or assignment.

Not all methods are always applicable or necessary. Depending on the qualifications or parts thereof and standard to be reached, a combination of assessment methods might apply, such as:

- a) Records and references from previous employers;
- b) Workplace observation and oral examination; or

- c) A written test or portfolio only; or
- d) A trade test simulation and oral examination.

Each assessment tool or method has its strengths and weaknesses. Combining traditional methods and tests with other methods such as practical demonstration can allow for relatively flexible procedures (Singh, 2015).

| Nature of evidence for RPL as recommended by Queensland State, Australia ¹ | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Direct evidence ✓ Workplace observation ✓ Demonstration of a skill ✓ Samples of work ✓ The materials or tools with which the applicant works ✓ Referee's reports ✓ Videos ✓ Audio files ✓ Photos ✓ Published works such as operational manuals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Indirect evidence ✓ Industry awards ✓ Job specification or position descriptions ✓ Curriculum vitae or resume ✓ Rosters or timesheets ✓ Visual presentations or written speeches ✓ Letters or memos from the workplace ✓ Reference / letter of support ✓ Evidence of committee work ✓ Reading lists ✓ Workplace training records | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Historical evidence ✓ Written reference from past employers ✓ Logbooks and other records of performance ✓ Certificates or qualifications ✓ Letters of support ✓ Assignment, reports and documentation from previous course ✓ Past competence-based assessments ✓ Record of academic results ✓ Course attendance record ✓ Scrap books ✓ Magazines or newspaper articles |

In some cases, methods such as requiring applicants to create large portfolios, for example, will prove inappropriate. Practical demonstrations and / or oral questioning might be a preferable method.

While assessment methods need to comply with existing standards to guarantee comparability and quality, the assessment methods should be designed as far as possible to accommodate the individual applicant's needs. Innovative assessment methods for RPL are still required with the following qualities. Less time-consuming, more cost-effective and simpler but still credible; and

- a) Less time-consuming, more cost-effective and simpler but still credible; and
- b) Considering the context in which each applicant's learning has been acquired and their individual characteristics (Aggarwal, 2015).

Overall, a combination of methods can be beneficial, as they can build on each other and create complementarity. A one-size-fits-all approach to the use of assessment methodologies, however, is not possible, as assessment in different sectors requires different efforts. For example, within a trade that falls under TVET, a practical test, which demonstrates specific skills, might be necessary (trade test), whereas documentation of certificates and evidence might be sufficient for credits in higher education.

One of the more widely used assessment methods for RPL is the learning portfolio method. Other methods include interviews, context-based observations, 360-degree assessments, simulation and questionnaires.

Examples of Assessment Methods

| Country | Assessment method |
|-----------------|--|
| South Africa | <p>Uses the portfolio, publications, references and various testimony -- and evidence-based methods, but in an extraordinarily open and dynamic system. These methods are examples, rather than prescribed. There is no all-inclusive list of assessment methods.</p> <p>Assessments must be fair, valid, reliable and workable and are organised in three stages in which they are planned with applicants, carried out and then reported on. In practice, this approach may be further subdivided to distinguish between applications, their admissibility, preparation for assessment (identification), assessment (assembling evidence), judgement, moderation and a final report.</p> |
| The Netherlands | <p>Has chosen interviews, context-based observations and 360-degree assessments, in addition to the portfolio, justifying the choice on the grounds of cost, desired quality and the number of applicants to be assessed. It is regarded as a pioneer from the point of view of its assessment technique, as applicants are entitled to have their learning outcomes recognised in whichever of the four possible ways they prefer.</p> <p>The process of recognizing non-formal and informal learning outcomes is a real personal development plan in the Netherlands.</p> |
| Scotland | <p>Has the greatest number and most varied range of methods in use. Traditional methods exist alongside less traditional ones, which are very promising. Among them are simulation and observation of practice, mapping of learning outcomes, profiling, curriculum vitae (Europass or other kinds), learning portfolios, certified voluntary activity, assessment on request (examinations or homework), structured interviews, oral assessment and personal projects.</p> |

| | |
|----------|--|
| Slovenia | Uses the learning portfolio to record the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired. Applicants receive assistance from a counsellor, which may be followed by an examination that tests skills and knowledge whose levels are not made clear by the portfolio. Practices vary widely depending on the institution concerned, and at its discretion, and the examination may be written or oral. If oral, it may comprise a discussion, an interview, reasoning with reference to a document, product evaluation, practical tests, a demonstration, simulation or role playing. |
| Belgium | Applies a two-stage procedure in tertiary education: an initial portfolio-based assessment and then a real-situation assessment. Successful completion of the first stage is a precondition for proceeding to the second. |
| Canada | For over half of its applicants (54 per cent), Canada uses the “challenge” (examination), followed by the learning portfolio (23 per cent) and the demonstration (23 per cent). |

Source: Selection taken from Werquin (2010: 47f).

TARGETING DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Benefits for disadvantaged groups: RPL certificates for Syrian refugees in the construction sector – Jordan. The ILO has partnered with the Government of Jordan to help Syrian refugees and Jordanians working in the construction sector to upgrade their professional expertise and obtain accredited skills certificates. Through ILO support, the Ministry of Labour and the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to ease the process of issuing work permits to Syrian refugees in the construction sector. Applicants for the new work permits must hold an RPL certificate, which is obtained through the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA).

The RPL certificate is obtained through a course, which includes the following elements:

- a) Four weeks of practical and theoretical work in professions such as floor layering, painting, plastering, plumbing and interior decoration. The course also includes sections related to occupational safety and health, in which workers receive practical instruction on workplace health and safety measures and requirements.
- b) Other stages of the recognition process include:
- c) Monitoring and coaching visits by trainers to workers at their work sites on working days.
- d) Workers apply for the theoretical testing and practical assessment based on CAQA instructions to obtain the RPL formal certification.

The RPL certificate also benefits employers, as it helps them to match job requirements to workers with the right skills, and the mandatory insurance coverage improves protection of workers.

4.3.2 The Portfolio method

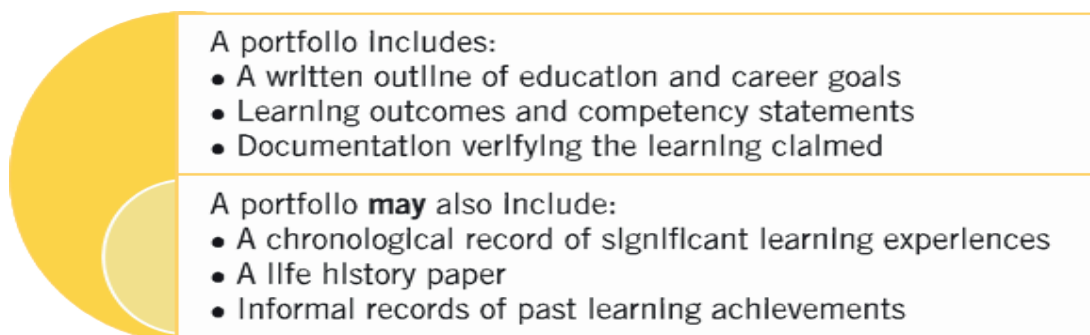
The portfolio method is widely applied in RPL across countries. This section explores the portfolio method and what it implies with more detail.

FACTS ON FILE

A portfolio is an organised collection of materials providing evidence of the competencies that were acquired through experience instead of formal learning. The portfolio allows the applicant to contribute actively to the collection of evidence and contains a combination of tools, which strengthen the overall validity of the process. Many countries have introduced the portfolio as a central element in their recognition approaches (CEDEFOP, 2015).

When a portfolio is created, it contains all the applicant's relevant information on what has been learned and how, when and where. Portfolios might include CVs, references from employers or supervisors (current or past), performance appraisal documents, references from colleagues, photographs of completed work or videos of work in progress. Business competencies can also be included and proven with evidence if an applicant was self-employed.

Figure: Content of a portfolio



Source: ILO (2017b: box 19).

4.3.3 Challenges related to the portfolio method and strategies to address these

REFLECTIONS

What challenges can the portfolio method create?

There are several challenges related to the portfolio method. The main challenges can be identified as follows:

- a) **Lack of guidance in preparing the portfolio:** this was identified as the major obstacle in the preparation of portfolios by the CEDEFOP (2008) inventory.
 - i) *Strategy to address the challenge:* gathering groups in claimants together specifically to share experiences and to learn from one another thus enabling all participants to proceed with the preparation of their own portfolio for RPL with greater assurance. Such sessions can be complemented with individual tutorials (CEDEFOP, 2015:61).
- b) **Language, complexity for those with little formal education:** this can be further impediment to the successful completion of portfolios. The seemingly complicated task of putting a portfolio together, or simply the perceived magnitude of the effort required often overwhelms and discourages applicants. In addition, some applicants may lack the necessary writing skills for written examinations. Bowman et al. (2003) also lamented the fact that the existing RPL evidence guides and process remain too academic and jargon-ridden for many potential applicants (Aggarwal, 2015).
 - i) *Strategy to address this challenge:* qualified RPL Counsellors offering active and simple guidance, with relevant skills in the local and native languages of the counties. The RPL Counsellors are also usually aware of the requirements and possibilities for translation (in the case of foreign paperwork of migrants or returning migrants).
- c) **No demonstrable evidence (availability of paperwork, particularly for those from the informal economy or refugees):** the portfolio method can be very demanding in terms of collecting evidence and completing documentation, particularly for applicants in the informal economy and / or with limited formal education or migrants and refugees.
 - i) *Strategies to address challenge:* with the growing use of portfolio methods, applicants can now turn to simpler ways of providing evidence, requiring only a few pages to demonstrate their ability to meet standards, where possible. Discussions are ongoing in many countries on how methods of portfolio assessment might be improved to increase openness and transparency and to better enable applicants to describe their current competencies and motivations (Singh, 2015).

d) **Costs and difficulties of translating the paperwork – particularly applicable to migrants**

Upon successful assessment of the PoE, the candidate should be advised and guided by the RPL Counsellor on:

- i) The nature of the final assessment; and
- ii) If the evidence did not meet the required parameters, the RPL Counsellor must inform the candidate of their shortcomings and advise them on how to overcome them.

REFLECTIONS

In general, we have seen that a good portfolio for assessment, in the eyes of the Assessors, is characterized by being easy to assess because it is focused on specific matched learning outcomes. (CEDEFOP, 2015:61).

Some countries concentrate on making the portfolio method more user-friendly, using ICT for e-RPL or e-portfolio presentation and providing extensive support to applicants. One recent trend is the use of digital portfolios. These so-called e-portfolios offer the possibility of combining text, audio, graphic and video-based presentation of information. They also offer increased capacity to accumulate data, which can provide the audience with greater insights into the achievements and successes of the learner.

However, digital portfolios carry potential risks, for example the technological novelty of the product can overshadow the purpose of the portfolio and learning to use the technology itself could subsume the learning opportunities of portfolio construction. Further, developing a digital portfolio risk including unnecessary information and material that is not wholly derived from the candidates' own efforts (CEDEFOP, 2015: 61).

The approach to assessment is also being transformed, with RPL assessors counselling and facilitating applicants during the process and using a combination of methods. For example:

- a. Deloitte Consulting used an innovative methodology e-portfolio (or e-RPL) as an alternative to a hard copy portfolio to certify the skills of workers with low levels of education in South African's grain silo industry.
- b. European guidelines on RPL recommend organizing group sessions for applicants on preparing portfolios, the latter often being a major challenge for individual applicants. These group sessions may be complemented with individual tutorials (CEDEFOP, 2015).

LINKS

Watch the video on e-portfolios for RPL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTcqG-5mb0>

Reflect on the benefits of an e-portfolio relayed in the video.

EXAMPLE

Example e-portfolio Athabasca University, Canada Centre for Learning Accreditation (CLA)

The CLA provides the option of an e-portfolio in addition to submissions of a portfolio on paper. The website also provides a sample e-portfolio for prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) – visit <https://www.athabascau.ca/prior-learning/e-portfolio.html>

REFLECTIONS

What is portfolio method?

What are the main challenges related to the portfolio method?

EXAMPLE

Japan employs a type of portfolio that resembles a CV, which is used to list non-formal and informal learning in the employment sector.

One of the tools employed in Portugal is a biographical and narrative-based assessment that allows applicants to present their experiences in a less formal manner.

In Australia, there is an increasing use of e-portfolios for gaining recognition or credit towards a formal TVET qualification. Online self-assessments are useful for enabling applicants to gauge the likely outcome of applications to regulated professions or courses (Singh, 2015:169).

TARGETING DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Canada Holistic Portfolios

Education in Canada falls under provincial jurisdiction. Therefore, approaches to recognition differ widely between provinces – and recognition of qualifications must be negotiated between provinces.

To redress existing systemic inequalities, RPL in Saskatchewan was developed applying a different approach to assessment and portfolios: holistic portfolios. This approach helps to assess prior learning of individuals who lack the ability to identify or express their experience (informal or non-formal learning) as learning outcomes.

The holistic portfolio approach is based on a narrative and reflective approach through which the applicant is guided. It is also called ‘a journey of self-discovery’.

As part of the reflective process, applicants often redefine their narrative of life, experiences and implicitly their competencies in practice. It is therefore a process of extracting important knowledge, which helps applicants to (re)gain a sense of identity and supports healing through the documentation of traditional knowledge. This approach is particularly important for indigenous populations and Canada’s first nations. In Saskatchewan, it was undertaken with first nations’ healthcare employees, to support their career pathways.

After the foundation is built with the narrative, reflective documentation, focusing on the individual’s strengths, talents and attitudes, a holistic portfolio is built. Applicants in this process can decide on their own headings and emphasis throughout. The process of putting together this kind of portfolio leads to reflections and realization of the knowledge (transferable) skills and attitudes, compiles evidence and ultimately, provides insights into what the applicant wants to do. After completing the process and the holistic portfolio, the applicants can proceed to formal assessment.

As in other assessment methods, the holistic portfolio approach requires and includes training of the RPL Practitioner. RPLP also need to develop their own portfolio as part of their training. A facilitator’s guide was developed – called “A journey of self-discovery”, including guidance on activities and value-based exercises to guide reflection and extract traditional knowledge.

The implementation of the holistic portfolio approach allowed interesting observations.

The approach seems to be motivating in a workshop where elders were included who did not have to compile a portfolio, the elders ended up creating portfolios so that their traditional knowledge could be documented.

While the completion rate of evidence files for assessment was low, the holistic portfolios had a high completion rate.

The process helped to unify families.

The holistic portfolio approach might also be beneficial for refugees and migrants.

4.4 Final assessment

The assessment shall be done as per the procedures of the QAI who shall determine the following.

4.4.1 Purpose of the assessment

- a) **Formative assessment:** assists and supports learning by advising the learner about the quality of performance and the learner's rate of progress towards the achievement of the competency standard.
- b) **Diagnostic assessment:** helps learners and their supervisors to determine their education and training needs.
- c) **Summative assessment:** determines whether a unit of competence or learning outcomes have been achieved for the purpose of formal recognition of training.
- d) **Recognition of prior learning:** determines whether a person has achieved standards of competency which have not yet been formally assessed and recognised so that they may gain entry into the job market, access business opportunities or credit in recognised course.

4.4.2 Principles of assessment

- a) **Valid:** competency standards assessments are valid when they assess what they claim to assess.
- b) **Reliable:** use of methods and procedures which engender confidence that the competency standards and their levels are interpreted and applied consistently from learner to learner and context to context. Without reliable assessments, there can be no comparability of credentials.
- c) **Flexible:** appropriate to the range of delivery modes, sites of delivery and needs of learners. There is no single approach or set of approaches to the assessment of performance in a competency-based system.
- d) **Fair:** it does not disadvantage particular learners. If learners understand clearly what is expected of them and what form the assessment will take and if the assessment places all learners on equal terms and the assessment procedure supports their learning, then the assessment should be fair.

4.4.3 Assessment methodologies during the Final Assessment

May include but not limited to the following.

- a) **Observation:** assessor observes a learner carrying out a particular task and may be complemented by questions.
- b) **Demonstration and questioning:** where the observation consists of a structured practical demonstration and the RPLP can see both the process and finished product.

- c) **Pen and paper tests and essays:** often used to measure the extent of knowledge and often complements the practical demonstration.
- d) **Oral tests:** can be used as an adjunct to practical demonstration or to test speed and accuracy or recall when these are essential to the development of knowledge.
- e) **Projects:** these are used on a largely unsupervised basis. The finished project is used as evidence from which the RPLP makes a judgement.
- f) **Simulations:** including computer simulations.
- g) **Role playing:** where actual tasks and conditions are similar to real life situations.
- h) **Portfolios:** evidence of skills achieved in the past in line with the assessment requested for.
- i) **Work samples:** provide a similar source of evidence.
- k) **Computer-based assessment:** can take the form of question and answer, or be interactive so that the RPLP can seek further responses or clarification.

4.4.4 Summative assessment

Using good quality written assessment tools helps to ensure that nothing important is left out of the assessment activity. It also allows different assessors to use the same tools, which makes the assessment process more consistent between RPLP and the outcomes more reliable.

The development of Assessment tools is done by QAIs but RPLP may be involved to:

- a) check the tool for compliance with the standards and the competency unit it relates to;
- b) make adjustments to suit local conditions or the needs of the candidate the RPLP is assessing;
- c) design own assessment tool from scratch, either because no suitable assessment tool exists or the context being assessed is unique to own situation; and
- d) validate the assessment tools being used and bring them up to date with any industry changes or competency modifications that have occurred as well as any improvements identified in your validation sessions.

FACTS ON FILE

The difference between tools and instrument?

An assessment tool is the overarching document that defines all aspects of the assessment process and performance criteria. It includes: reference to the competency unit (units) to be assessed;

- a. the target group, context and conditions for assessment;
- b. the tasks to be administered to the candidate;
- c. an outline of the evidence to be gathered from the candidate;
- d. the evidence requirements used to judge the quality of performance; and
- e. the administration, recording and reporting requirements.

An assessment instrument is a component of the larger assessment tool, setting out the specific criteria for aspects of evidence.

A good assessment tool should enable an RPLP to collect at least three different types of evidence to determine a candidate's competence.

4.5 Assessment tools

The primary reference document for your assessment tool will be learning outcomes. Also pay attention to the following.

- a) Elements and performance criteria.
- b) Range of conditions.
- c) Assessment requirements when developing assessment tools.
- d) Safe operating procedures (SOP).
- e) Company documents such as work procedures, risk assessments, production sheets, maintenance logs and quality control forms.
- f) Industry documents such as codes of practice, manufacturer's operator manuals and industry guidelines.
- g) Company personnel to find out about known problems or issues that the company has experienced in areas such as quality control, breakdowns, accidents, incidents or near misses.

In the end, the assessment tool provides the RPLP with a comprehensive set of checklists and benchmarks for measuring the candidate's ability to apply their skills and knowledge to the task that the competency describes.

4.5.1 Putting the assessment tool together

- a) **Planning:** collecting all the necessary information and determining what

the assessment requirements are and how the procedure will be conducted.

- b) Designing and developing:** the following components should be included in the assessment tool.
- i. Context and conditions:* where you identify the target group and their work environment, conditions under which the assessment will take place, materials and equipment needed and all parties who need to be involved in the process.
 - ii. Assessment tasks and evidence requirements:* where you provide instructions to the candidate and the RPLP on the tasks that will be administered (such as practical demonstrations and written tests) and other forms of evidence to be collected (such as third-party reports and portfolios of completed work).
- c) Evaluation criteria:** also called the ‘decision making rules’ where you specify the benchmarks of performance that will apply such as compliance with relevant learning outcomes or company procedures.
- d) Checking quality:** once you have written up a final draft of the assessment tool, you should review it and carry out a trial run to make sure it works smoothly and meets the requirements of the competency. This process should involve workplace personnel who have expert knowledge and experience in the skills being assessed, as well as training personnel who have a sound understanding of competency standards and evidence requirements.
- e) Developing assessment plans:** an assessment plan is a documented procedure for carrying out a formal assessment. It is particularly useful if there are several RPLP using the same assessment tool. This is because it helps to ensure that they are maintaining a consistency in approach across all the candidates being assessed. The assessment plan may be done as part of the assessment tool itself or separate plan that acts like a summary document.
- f) Reviewing assessment tools:** once you have developed a draft version of an assessment tool, you need to cross check it against the learning outcomes to make sure that you have covered everything. The best way to do this is to ‘map’ the learning outcomes line by line across to the assessment tool.

Note that although the individual points from the competency do not necessarily need to be reflected in all three forms of assessment, you must cover them all in at least one form of evidence and preferably in more than one where possible.

It is important to physically ‘trial’ your draft assessment tool with other RPLP to check that you have got all the steps in the right sequence and that you have covered everything that needs to be included. This also helps you to identify any working that might be unclear.

g) Carrying out an assessment: as an RPLP, you need to make sure that the person you are about to assess will be able to do their best without external problems getting in the way of their performance. That way, you will know that the demonstration they show you is a true reflection of what they can do without their performance being influenced by other factors. Give the candidate the details of the process in advance including:

- i) assessment arrangements;
- ii) length of time of assessment;
- iii) how it will be conducted;
- iv) purpose of the assessment;
- v) conditions under which the assessment will take place;
- vi) possible assessment outcomes;
- vii) financial implication;
- viii) social implications;
- ix) benefits to accrue from the recognition and outcomes of the assessment;
- x) opportunity for reassessment;
- xi) skills upgrading opportunities; and
- xii) the appeal process.

h) Putting the candidate at ease: some candidates get nervous before an assessment event, especially if they do not know the RPLP. Below are some tips on how to put the candidate at ease and help them to mentally prepare for the events.

- i) Greet the candidate and have a brief informal chat about what you will be doing.
- ii) Describe the process that you will be following step-by-step and ask the candidate if they have any questions.
- iii) Advise them on how long the process is likely to take.
- iv) Ensure there is minimal interruption from others.
- v) Compile relevant records as per QAI requirements.
- vi) Forward the assessment record and outcomes to the QAI.

i) Providing feedback: your job as an RPLP is not just to tell them the outcome but also to talk about their level of performance. This is particularly the case where you have assessed them as ‘not-yet-competent’. How do you tell the candidate this?

- i) Be precise about what they did wrong or the areas they need to improve in.
- ii) Clearly explain the level of skill they need to achieve to be assessed as ‘competent’.

- iii) Indicate whether part of all the assessment event will need to be repeated.
- iv) Arrange another time for re-assessment or advise them that you will talk to their supervisor about arranging for another time.

j) The validation process: validating the assessment event you have conducted, the decisions you have made and the tools you are using is like carrying out a quality control check. This process helps to ensure that you are using sound practices and making accurate and consistent decision.

- i) Feedback from candidates at the end of the course on what they believed to be the good and bad points.
- ii) Personal reflection on parts that went well, and those that did not.
- iii) Feedback from work colleagues.
- iv) Feedback from supervisors.

k) Moderation vs validation: moderation is a more informal process allowing RPLPs to share their views, discuss problems and suggest changes to improve the ‘reliability’ of the assessment process and tools – that is, working to ensure that all the RPLPs would come to the same decision using these tools.

Validation is a formal process, like an audit, where assessment processes and tools are evaluated against set benchmarks to determine their effectiveness and validity.

Moderation sessions are meetings you hold with other RPLPs where you compare assessment tools and decisions with each other.

These sessions are sometimes called validation sessions because they help to verify that the techniques and tools you are using are giving valid results.

l) Supporting the process: Moderation can be supported by:

- i) creating an environment that promotes effective ‘learning’;
- ii) ‘facilitating’ the process of learning for people who are acquiring new skills on the job at their own pace, as opposed to attending an organised training course;
- iii) providing literacy and numeracy support to learners who may not have the ‘core skills’ needed to undertake the training successfully;
- iv) ensuring that all workplace health and safety requirements have been met, both at a legislative and company level and that any identified risks have been properly controlled;

- v) ensuring that other legislative responsibilities have been met such as the learner's right to privacy and protection from harassment or discrimination; and
- vi) translation of questions / interpretation for candidates who might not understand English.

4.6 Preparation and referral for final assessment for qualified applicants

- a) The exam booking and booking procedures for final assessment.
- b) The date and place of final assessment,
- c) The requirements for final assessment.
- d) The methodologies, procedure and processes for final assessment.
- e) The expected outcomes from the assessment process (full certification, partial certification, statement of attainment or referral for skills gap training).
- f) The expectations from the candidates, assessors and centre managers.
- g) The RPL appeal process.
- h) Quality Assurance and Preparation by the QAI.
- i) Type of certification.
- j) Levels of certification.

4.7 Key Components for assessment

- a) **Evidence:** presented in a form prescribed in the Assessment Guide. The individual will have to demonstrate evidence of the learning outcomes or competencies acquired.
- b) **Competent RPL Practitioners:** to inform the applicant and guide the compilation of evidence.
- c) **Accessible services:** counselling and facilitation that can adapt to cater for the diverse needs of applicants, including disadvantaged groups.
- d) **The actual competencies of the applicant:** and how they are documented.

REFLECTIONS

RPL should be:

Transparent , Valid, Reliable, Flexible, Fair

EXAMPLE

Norway recommends the use of clearly defined and described steps and stages that can be recognised by all stakeholders as this is important for building confidence in the system, including the following.

- a. Counselling and facilitation.
- b. Description / mapping of competencies – including documentation from formal and informal learning, from practical work experience.
- c. Assessment or validation.
- d. Recognition of competencies.

REFLECTIONS

What are the key components for assessment of prior learning outcomes?

What assessment methods exist and might be applicable?

What is portfolio method?

What are the main challenges related to the portfolio method?

4.8 Certification and award of qualification process (as per QAI)

- a) Certification
- b) Award of Qualification

4.9 Documentation of the assessment and certification process (as per QAI)

- a) Stages of documentation
- b) Types of documentation

4.10 Suggestions for further reading

Yang, J. 2015. Recognition, validation⁴ and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning in UNESCO member states (Hamburg, Germany, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning).

LINKS

Video: Improving skills and job prospects for Jordanian and Syrian construction workers (ILO). Available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=NldRUkRthfs

Video: Background to the situation: Syrian refugee crisis puts pressure on Jordan's labour market (ILO). Available online:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PxcyRarpAk>

Video: Using an e-portfolio for RPL (Australian Flexible Learning Framework). Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSTcqG-5mb0>

Learning Unit 5

POST-RPL SUPPORT

Support provided to candidates, employers, institutions and RPL Practitioners.

5.1 Candidates

Support provided to candidates leads to better, improved decent work opportunities and enables the RPL candidates realize their full potential.

Support that can be provided includes the following.

- a) Identification of gaps where one is unable to meet all the learning outcomes and recommending skills gap training to the candidate. Where possible, provide the linkages to the institutions offering the gap training required by the candidate.
- b) Encourage life-long learning.
- c) Recommend further studies.
- d) Provide career advice.
- e) Advise on employment opportunities through an Employment Service Centre.
- f) Provide guidance for self-employment opportunities – entrepreneurial hubs / incubation centres linkages / linkages to financing and or markets.

5.2 Employers

The workplace is one of the best environments an RPL candidate can hope for. However, it could provide challenges for the Assessor as well as Managers involved in the process.

Support that can be provided includes – guiding the Manager on the following.

- a) How to prepare the candidates for a successful outcome including preparing the assessment areas to be more RPL-friendly for ease of Portfolio of Evidence collection as well as assessment.
- b) Prepare both the workplace and the colleagues to minimize interruptions.
 - i) If there are any policies and procedures in place, the candidate should be provided with the same in advance.

- ii) If tools and equipment are to be used, other colleagues should be notified of the same.
- c) Appreciate the flexibility and sensitivity related to RPL practices – they should have an open mind and not let their current perceptions affect the RPL assessment outcomes.
- d) How to complete observations meaningfully – what to look for and how to capture the evidence.
- e) How to promote RPL at the workplace to encourage more staff to apply for the same.
- f) How to use the RPL outcomes to build talent and retain staff.

5.3 Institutions

At the institutional level, feedback can be provided to the RPL Coordinator either by the candidate or the RPLP.

Feedback provided could affect the following areas.

- a) The need to have policies that are RPL-friendly e.g. not focusing too much on academic orientation while assessing through RPL, having age restrictions, insisting on literacy levels – RPL can be assessed in any language that the candidate is comfortable with).
- b) RPL tools may not be fit for purpose.
- c) Quality assurance process while undertaking the RPL assessment.
- d) Success rates and lessons learnt.
- e) Data collection to inform RPL related decisions.

5.4 RPL Practitioners

RPL assessment is unpackaged differently from the traditional assessment that RPL Practitioners may be used to. Hence, there is need to provide continuous feedback to ensure that the RPLPs continuously improve on their services to the RPL process.

Support that can be provided includes – better practice in the following areas. Preparation for the RPL process.

- a) Preparation for the RPL process.
- b) Preparing candidates for the RPL assessment.
- c) Providing support to the candidates, employers and institutions.
- d) The implementation of the RPL process.
- e) RPL assessment.

It may also be advisable for the RPLP to attend both short and long-term courses as part of their continuous professional development based on the feedback given.

Learning Unit 6

RPL PRACTITIONERS' COMPETENCIES

6.1 Introduction

The Unit focuses on RPL Practitioners' competencies at the identification, documentation and assessment stages. The unit is intended to equip the trainee with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will enable them to undertake the Assessment process.

6.2 National Values

6.2.1 Meaning of National Values

Standards that guide an individual on how to respond or behave in a given circumstance.

6.3 National Values

- a) Responsibility,
- b) Respect,
- c) Excellence,
- d) Care and Compassion,
- e) Understanding and Tolerance,
- f) Honesty and Trustworthiness,
- g) Being ethical.

REFLECTIONS

What are the National Values as stated in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010?

What are the implications of not observing values during the RPL process?

6.4 RPL Practitioners competencies - Effective communication skills

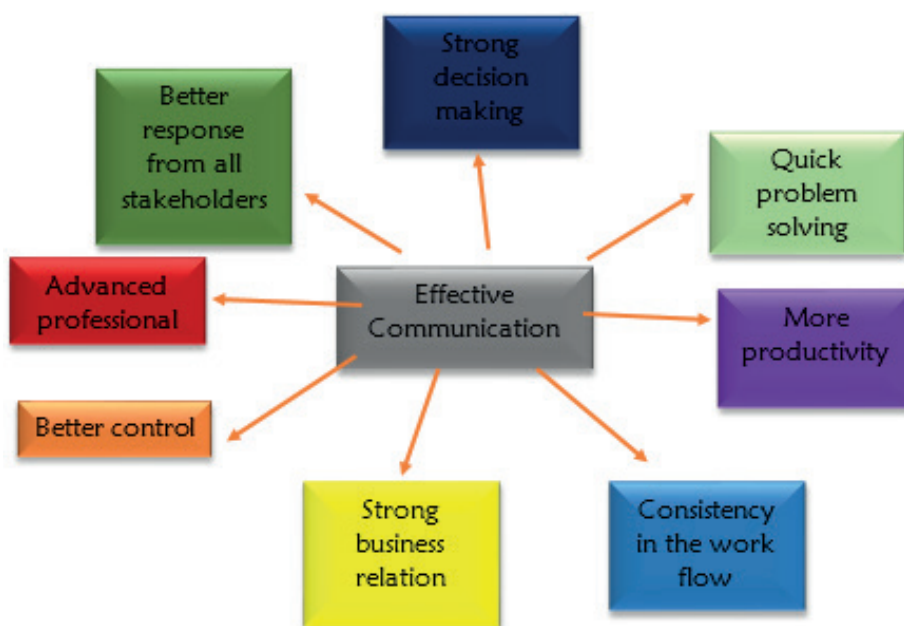
There are four basic skills required by an RPL Practitioner. These are communication, counselling, analytical and Assessment skills. Without these skills, an RPL Practitioner

would find it difficult to successfully conduct an assessment. These skills like any other, are built over time and it is important to be open-minded, receptive and patient to acquire them.

Communication is the art of transferring information from one place, person or group to another and ensuring that the message is understood. Every communication involves (at least one sender, message and a recipient). The term requires an element of success in transmitting or imparting a message, whether information, ideas, or emotions.

Communication today is very important both in the business world and in private life. Successful communication helps us better understand people and situations. It helps us overcome diversities, build trust and respect and create conditions for sharing creative ideas and solving problems. Developing strong communication skills becomes one of an RPLP's top priorities.

In this modern time, we receive, send and process large amounts of messages every day. However, successful communication is far more than sharing information, it is also an understanding of the feeling behind this information. Successful communication can deepen relations in personal life or professional life. In personal life, they can help us understand people better and situations that happen daily. Developing communication skills can help us avoid conflicts, compromise and help in better decision making.



An effective communicator understands their audience, chooses an appropriate communication channel, hones their message for a particular channel and encodes the message effectively to reduce misunderstanding by the recipient(s). Feedback from the recipient(s) to ensure that the message is understood and attempt to correct any misunderstanding or confusion as soon as possible.

Effective communication involves minimizing potential misunderstanding and overcoming any barriers to communication at each stage in the communication process.

The elements of communication include: conception of the message;

- a) conception of the message;
- b) sender of message;
- c) encoding of message;
- d) channels/medium of communication;
- e) the message;
- f) the recipient/audience;
- g) decoding; and
- h) feedback.

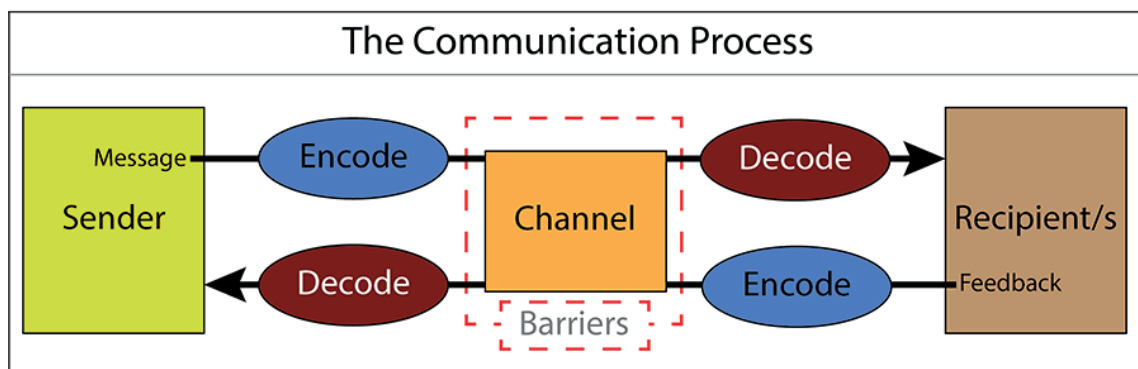
Different skills are therefore required at every stage. Such skills include:

- a) message creation;
- b) channel selection;
- c) correct use of channel;
- d) decoding; and
- e) sending of feedback.

Receivers can use techniques such as Clarification and Reflection as effective ways to ensure that the message sent has been understood correctly.

6.4.1 Communication process

A communication entails three parts: the sender, the message, and the recipient. The sender 'encodes' the message, usually in a mixture of words and non-verbal communication. It is transmitted in some way (for example, in speech or writing), and the recipient 'decodes' it.



6.4.2 Channels of communication

A communication channel is a medium or method used to deliver a message to the intended audience. Examples of communication channels;

- a) **Mass media:** such as television, radio, newspapers.
- b) **Mid media:** activities, also known as traditional or folk media such as participatory theatre, public talks, announcements and community-based surveillance.
- c) **Print media:** such as posters, flyers and leaflets.
- d) **Social and digital media:** mobile phones, applications and social media.
- e) **Interpersonal Communication:** door-to-door visits, phone calls, discussions.

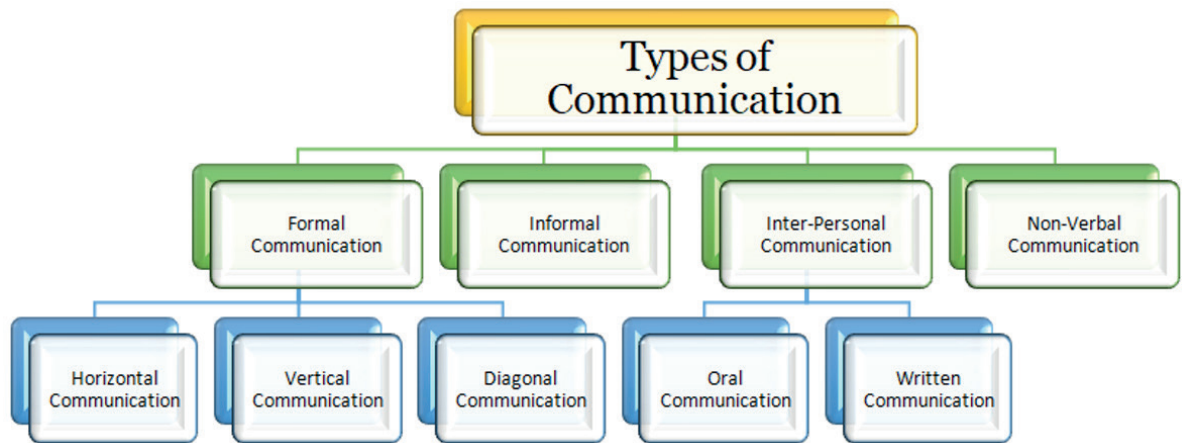
6.4.3 What to consider when choosing a communication channel

- a) The **preferences and habits** of the intended audiences.
- b) **Literacy levels** of the intended audience.
- c) Type of **information to be conveyed**. Complex information requires longer and more interactive formats than simple messages.
- d) **Communication objective** – raise awareness and increase knowledge, improve skills and self-efficacy.
- e) **Timelines** – some formats of communication can take longer to develop.
- f) **Budget** – some communication channels will be more expensive than others. Budget and funding may therefore limit the choice of channels.

Different channels are appropriate for different audiences. The choice of channel will depend on the audience being targeted, the message being delivered and the context of the message. Using a variety of channels or a channel mix is recommended so that messages can be reinforced through multiple sources.

| Channel | Appropriate Use of Channel |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Mass Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Raising awareness across audiences (informing and educating) b) Modelling behaviours c) Reducing stigma and taboos d) Communicating with low literacy audiences e) Obtaining wide regional and national reach |
| Mid Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f) Engaging communities g) Promoting discussion and reflection among communities about the issues being addressed h) Modelling behaviour |
| Print Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Supporting other communication channels j) Providing more detailed information on a particular topic that individuals can look through at home k) Providing information about personal and confidential issues l) Engaging with policy and decision makers |
| Social & Digital Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> m) Communicating with young people n) Obtaining a large reach (if internet is widely available and accessible) o) Promoting discussions through chat rooms or email exchanges p) Providing information about personal and confidential issues |
| Interpersonal communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> q) Creating a two-way communication process with the audience r) Engaging community members and creating community action plans s) Promoting discussion, reflection and challenging dominant norms t) Informing and education (increase knowledge) u) Imparting skills v) Discussing sensitive topics |

6.4.4 Types of communication⁵



6.4.5 Formal communication

Communication which travels through the formally established channels / chain of command or lines of hierarchy of authority. Information is given through formally designed channels or networks. It is designed, controlled and regulated by the management.

Advantages of formal communication

- a) Helps in the fixation of responsibility and accountability.
- b) Helps in maintaining the lines of authority in the organisation.
- c) Helps in maintaining discipline.
- d) Ensures orderly flow of communication.

Disadvantages of formal communication

- a) It lacks personal contacts and relationship.
- b) Its time consuming – takes longer to effectively communicate.
- c) It creates a bottlenecks in the flow of information because almost all information is channelled through a single officer / executive.
- d) Obstructs free, smooth and accurate circulation of information in an organisation.

Formal communication can be horizontal, vertical and diagonal.

⁵ <https://analysisproject.blogspot.com/2020/08/types-of-communication-formal-informal.html>

6.4.6 Informal communication

Communication which takes place based on informal relations between members of a group. It is personal communication in nature and not a positional communication. It does not flow along with the formal lines of authority or formal chains of command. It is used by group members to share their views, ideas, opinions and other information. There is a lack of official instruction for communication. It is controlled and designed by informal organisational structure therefore, it is not used to communicate formal messages.

Advantages of informal communication

- a) More flexible.
- b) Helps to improve decision making.
- c) Faster in speed than formal communication.
- d) Works as a powerful and effective tool of communication.
- e) It may provide feedback on actions and decisions made.

Disadvantages of informal communication

- a) Difficult to fix responsibility for the information.
- b) May cause misunderstanding.
- c) Carries inaccurate, half-truths or distorted information.
- d) Difficult to believe in information.
- e) Leads to leakage of secret/confidential information.

6.4.7 Oral communication

Messages expressed through spoken words. May take place either through face-to-face conversations or through any electronic mode such as telephone, cell phone, etc. The source of message i.e. sender gives the information through oral means. Communication is more effective and reliable as the sender can get feedback quickly.

Advantages of oral communication

- a) It is quicker and saves on time.
- b) Establishes a personal touch and leads to better understanding.
- c) Economical / less expensive as compared to written communication.
- d) Flexible and the messages can be changed to suit the needs and responses of the receiver.

Disadvantages of oral communication

- a) Messages can easily be distorted.
- b) Less reliable.
- c) Provides no record for future reference.
- d) Does not provide sufficient time for thinking before conveying the message.

6.4.8 Written communication

Messages expressed through written words. May be expressed through groups, charts, diagrams, pictures with or without words. Information to the receiver is shared by writing or drawing thus can be kept for future reference.

Advantages of written communication

- a) Tends to be complete, clear, precise and correct.
- b) Reduces misunderstanding, conflicts and disputes.
- c) Ensures transmission of information in uniform manner.
- d) Ensures little risk of unauthorized alteration of the message.
- e) Taken as legal evidence by courts.

Disadvantages of written communication

- a) Time consuming.
- b) Expensive.
- c) May be interpreted in a different manner by different people.
- d) Tends to be ineffective and unimpressive in case of poor drafting.
- e) Fails to provide feedback immediately.

6.4.9 Non-verbal communication

Communication through postures or gesturing – neither written nor oral means are used.

| Types | Description | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|----------------|---|---|--|
| Oral | Face-to-face communication including meetings, interviews, speeches, and presentations. F2F communication allows non verbal cues and immediate feedback between sender and receiver. Oral communication is most appropriate when delivering bad, sensitive, or personal news. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provides opportunity for immediate feedback ✓ Involves non-verbal cues ✓ Allows for immediate feedback and consensus building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Provides no permanent record of communication × Reduces sender's control of message × Immediate feedback may not be constructive |
| Written | Written messages, other than digital, are used to communicate routine, day-to-day, information to audiences inside and outside of an organization. Memos, letters, reports, or proposals fall into this category. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provides permanent record ✓ Shared easily with large audiences ✓ Minimizes emotional reaction to message | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Delays feedback including non-verbal cues × Takes time and resources to distribute |
| Visual | Visual documents are communication formats in which one or more visual element play a central in conveying the message and are supported by small amounts of text. SlideDoc Reports and Infographic illustrations fall into this category. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Conveys complex ideas ✓ Simplifies messages ✓ Reduces demand on receiver's time demand ✓ Provides permanent record | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Requires specialised skills and more time to produce × Increases difficulty to transmit and store |
| Digital | Electronic media have largely replaced printed messages in many companies. Some degree of technical skills is required to use this category. Blogs, wikis, and websites fall into this category. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Delivers messages quickly ✓ Reaches large audiences ✓ Provides interactive media ✓ Provides permanent record | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Entails privacy and security risks × Requires specialised skill and time to produce |

Summary of the types of communication⁶

⁶ <https://pressbooks.senecacollege.ca/buscomm/chapter/2-3-selecting-appropriate-channels/>

6.4.10 Principles of Effective Communication (the 7Cs of communication)⁷



⁷ <https://opspl.com/infographic/7-cs-of-effective-communication/>

6.4.11 Active listening skills

Active listening intentionally focuses on who you are listening to, whether in a group or in one-on-one and to understand what he or she is saying. As a listener, you should then be able to repeat back in your own words what they have said to their satisfaction. This does not mean you agree with, but rather understand, that they are saying.⁸

6.4.12 Components of active listening

There are three primary aspects of active listening.

- a) *Comprehending*: Listener actively analyses and listens to what the speaker is saying without distractions or thoughts about other topics.
- b) *Retaining*: Listener's ability to remember what the speaker has said so that the speaker's full message can be conveyed. Some people may opt to take notes or use memory tricks when practicing active listening.
- c) *Responding*: Providing both verbal and non-verbal feedback to the speaker that indicates the listener is both hearing and understanding what the speaker has said.

6.4.13 Examples of active listening

In active listening, the speaker must feel heard. Listeners can utilize several techniques to accomplish this. Non-verbal cues used by an active listener might include:

- a) head nods;
- b) smiles;
- c) appropriate eye contact;
- d) leaning forward towards the listener;
- e) verbal cues may include statements such as:
 - i) mm-hmm;
 - ii) I see;
 - iii) how strange;
 - iv) tell me more; and
 - v) any other statements that encourage the speaker to continue.

6.4.14 When to use active listening

- a) *Information – getting a clear picture*: asking questions to find out about needs, instructions and context of the candidates. Check back to ensure

⁸ Source: www.studygs.net/listening.html

you have heard and understood the relevant details and that the candidate agrees on the facts. The speaker aims to tell what you want while you as a listener aim to find out and confirm what the speaker is saying.

- b) **Affirmation – affirming, acknowledging, exploring the problem:** reflect on candidate's feelings and perhaps the context and providing a statement of acknowledgement. The speaker aims to tell the listener about the topic of discussion while the listener aims to help the speaker 'hear' what they are saying.
- c) **Inflammation – responding to message:** the speaker tells listener about their context and listener aims to let them know that they have taken in what the speaker is saying and where possible, defuse any strong emotions.

6.4.15 What to do as an RPLP

- a) Give the candidate your full attention.
- b) Repeat the conversation back to them, in your own words, providing your interpretation or understanding of the candidate's meaning (paraphrasing).
- c) Check for the candidate's understanding of the message.
- d) Be as accurate in summarizing the candidate's meaning as much as you can.
- e) Try rephrasing again if not accurate or well received.
- f) Provide feedback to the candidate, in context.
- g) Challenge in a non-threatening and subtle manner.
- h) Do not force conversation, allow for silence and look out for non-verbal communication.

6.4.16 What not to do as an RPLP

- a) Talking about yourself and introducing your own reactions or well-intended comments.
- b) Changing topics and thinking about what you will say next.
- c) Pretending to have understood the candidate or their meaning if you have not.
- d) Allowing the candidate to sell themselves less because the RPLP is not well-versed in the trade area.
- e) Filling every space with talk.
- f) Ignoring candidate's feelings in the situation.

6.5 Barriers to effective communication

Any hindrance to communication is regarded as a barrier. There are physical barriers to listening and speaking.

6.5.1 Categories of barriers

- a) **Language barriers:** language and linguistic abilities may act as barriers to communication. For example, a message that includes a lot of specialist jargon and abbreviations will not be understood by a receiver who is not familiar with the terminology used.
- b) **Psychological barriers:** the psychological state of the communicator will influence how the message is sent, received and perceived e.g. anger or stress as emotional states will affect your communication.
- c) **Physical barriers:** geographical distance between the sender and the receiver. Communication is generally easier over shorter distances as more communication channels are available and less technology required. The ideal communication is face-to-face.
- d) **Attitudinal barriers:** behaviours or perceptions that prevent people from communicating effectively. They may result from personality conflicts, poor management, resistance to change or a lack of motivation. By developing your emotional intelligence, you will become more aware of how to communicate with others in the most appropriate and effective ways.

6.5.2 Notable barriers to effective communication

- a) Difference in perception.
- b) Stereotyping.
- c) Lack of knowledge.
- d) Lack of interest.
- e) Distraction.
- f) Use of jargon.
- g) Difficulties in self-expression.
- h) Emotions.
- i) Personality.
- j) Information overload.
- k) Confusion.
- l) Noise.

6.6 Importance of effective communication

- a) Improving public relations.
- b) Giving and obtaining information.
- c) Clarifying issues.
- d) Influencing action.
- e) Coordinating.
- f) Improving customer service.
- g) Confirming agreements.

REFLECTIONS

Think of examples when you have listened ineffectively or not been listened to over the last 24 hours. You can probably recognise the frustration and irritation when you know the person you are talking to is not listening to you. As listening is so fundamental to the communication processes it is important to try to avoid ineffective listening..

6.7 Interviewing

An interview is a methodology employed to collect primary data.

An interview is a procedure designed to obtain information from a person through oral responses to oral inquiries⁹.

An interview is a face-to-face conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee, where the interviewer seeks replies from the interviewee for choosing a potential human resource¹⁰.

According to Gary Dessler, an interview is a selection procedure designed to predict future job performance based on applicants' oral responses to oral inquiries.

An interview is a conversation in which an interviewee and an interviewer exchange information. The goal of the interviewee is to present themselves in the best possible light for what they seek to get and the interviewer's goal is to ensure they get the best suited person in response to what they are looking for.

⁹ <https://www.iedunote.com/interview>

¹⁰ <https://www.iedunote.com/interview>

6.7.1 Modalities of conducting an interview

Interviews can be conducted through telephone, video-call, one-on-one, panel and group interviews. Every modality is determined by audience, purpose and geographical location.

For RPL, a face-to-face interview shall be used on the initial encounter. Other modalities can be employed on follow up.

6.7.2 Lines of communication

6.7.3 Vertical communication

Communication in which information is either transmitted from top to bottom or from bottom to the top in a structured hierarchy.

Advantages of vertical communication

- a) Authoritative and official.
- b) Binding to all parties involved.
- c) Most legitimate type of communication.

Disadvantages of vertical communication

- a) Formal and informal. Usually slow-moving since it must be channelled through several levels of authority.
- b) May conceal the true motives behind the formal message it carries.

6.7.4 Downward communication

Transmitted from top to down – mostly instructions, memos, policy statements, procedures and manuals.

6.7.5 Upward communication

Transmitted from down to top. Helps to provide feedback on the extent of effectiveness of downward communication. It also provides an opportunity to get viewpoints, reactions, feeling and state of engagement from target audience. Used in a participative approach of communication.

6.7.6 Horizontal communication

Communication between two or more persons at the same level. Main objective is to coordinate efforts of different persons / stakeholders.

Advantages of horizontal communication

- a) Coordinating in nature.
- b) Frequently informal and therefore simpler than vertical communication.
- c) Reassuring to those in charge of implanting policy as it provides an opportunity for checks and balances.
- d) Expedient in terms of communication time.

Disadvantages of horizontal communication

- a) Some stakeholders may remain uninformed.
- b) Can have a disuniting effect by fostering cliques (groups) among some stakeholders.
- c) Can distort the purpose of a message and even render it inoperative by allowing too much discussion about it.
- d) May increase misunderstanding if alterations are made to the messages.

6.7.7 Diagonal communication

Cuts across different stakeholders at different levels. It may affect communication within projects / programs.

Advantages of diagonal communication

- a) The most direct method of communication.
- b) Most selective method of communication.
- c) One of the fastest methods of communication.
- d) In critical situations, it would seem to be the most essential and logical type of communication.

Disadvantages of diagonal communication

- a) Can destroy lines of authority and formal chains of command.
- b) Can leave some stakeholders uninformed of what others are doing.
- c) Can lead to conflicting orders – leading to further confusion.
- b) Usually verbal and thus untraceable if things go wrong.

6.7.8 Planning for the interview

Steps to be undertaken before conducting an interview

6.7.9 Preparation stage

Adequate preparation of tools, checklists and questions through research.

- a) Define the role requirement of the interview
 - i) What profile does the candidate present?
 - ii) What evidence do you want displayed?
 - iii) What are your expectations?
 - iv) What would be the candidate's possible expectations?
- b) Prepare specific questions / tools and checklist in advance to ensure that all bases are covered.
- c) Pre-interview screening should include background checks and verification to help build up on the potential level to be applied for, analysis to guide on the evidence to be presented.
- d) Proper scheduling – allocate appropriate time.

6.7.10 Interview stage

The following should be exhibited.

- a) Be transparent with the candidate before the interview. help the candidate overcome their stress by letting them know as many details as possible about the interview as well as the basic outline of the questions and why they will be asked.
- b) Remove all distractions.
- c) Properly introduce yourself and let the candidates do the same.
- d) Ask pre-written questions.
- e) Follow-up questions can be asked for clarification.
- f) Listen actively and intentionally.
- g) Conversation should flow somewhat naturally – 80% listening and 20% talking.
- h) Actively listen for specific qualities and skills to be able to guide the candidate accordingly – refer to holistic portfolio approach.
 - i) Be enthusiastic and vibrant.
- j) Record the proceedings by taking notes, photography and video for reference.

- k) Allow time for questions by the candidate.
- l) Communicate to the candidate on the next steps going forward.
- m) Conduct a follow up interview if necessary. This is important for clarification and / or gathering information not gotten during the interview stage.

6.7.11 Post-interview stage

This stage includes analysis of reports that will help with recommendations made for further progression to the final assessment state.

6.7.12 Interviewing competencies

The following skills are required of effective interviewing.

- a) Rapport building.
- b) Listening.
- c) Observing.
- d) Questioning.
- e) Synthesis.

6.7.13 Qualities of a good interviewer

A good interviewer displays the following attributes.

- a) Emotional maturity / stable personality
- b) Objectivity
- c) Patience
- d) Time management.
- e) Organisation
- f) Knowledge
- g) Physical and mental stamina
- h) Ability to recognise uniqueness

REFLECTIONS

- State the activities that should be undertaken at each of the three stages of the interview process.
- What competencies should an RPL assessor possess to conduct effective interviews?
- Did you know that the following technique can be used to enhance the quality of an interview process?
- Use of conversational tone of questioning that enables a candidate to be at ease for them to be able to freely communicate their competencies.
- Use of open-ended questions that elicit discussions that expounds on candidate experience in line with the occupation.
- Use of probing questions to enable the assessor to contextualize or reformulate questions that fit a particular role of a candidate work.

6.8 RPL Practitioners' competencies – counselling skills

Counselling can mean different things to different people, but in general, it is a process people seek when they want to change something in their lives, or simply to explore their thoughts and feelings in more depth.

REFLECTIONS

- An RPL Counsellor should possess certain skills. Discuss the skills that would make counselling session effective.
- What are the competencies that an RPL Counsellor should possess to conduct effective Counselling?

6.8.1 Why we counsel

Counselling for RPL is specific to candidates who want to be certified after prior experiential learning. This counselling is therefore purposeful and directional. The three core conditions of counselling are – empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence.

Within RPL, counselling is specific to the process of guiding and facilitating the candidate through the RPL Process. Guiding the candidates to decide on the trade areas to apply for, the level and the evidence to present. This process also helps the candidate to be at peace and comfortable with the RPL process.

6.8.2 Counselling techniques

Effective counselling techniques are discreet skills which, when practiced effectively by a knowledgeable person, make possible a trusting environment where the candidate can share what has been held “secretly” or “privately”.

- Psychological preparation:** mental preparation of the RPLP is key to ensure they can carry out the task ahead in an effective way. This will enable the RPLP think through the counselling process. Through this, the actual counselling sessions are more enhanced by warm, friendly welcome they received from the RPLP.
- Active listening:** listening for meaning. The RPLP says very little but conveys empathy, acceptance and genuineness. Rephrasing to ensure you are both on the same page of understanding. The candidate is likely to experience a calming effect and would be more comfortable with the RPL process.



- c) **Body language:** communication is 55% body language, 38% tone and 7% words. One of the most interesting phenomena in the body language arena is the perceived non-verbal cues and respond in 1/18th of a second according to Mihalyi Csikszemihalyi – author of FLOW – meaning one can process 126 bits of data every second. That is about twice as fast as one can blink one’s eyes. Paul Ekman, who has been studying facial expressions, reports we can process non-verbal cues from the face in 1/25th second, subconsciously, and one is bound to respond emotionally – perhaps with adrenalin and cortisol. It is good as the RPLP to appreciate the amount of modelling that goes on in a counselling session and how they can positively or negatively affect the candidate’s perception about RPL
- d) **Asking questions:** both open and close ended questions is an important tool in counselling. Open ended questions encourage ongoing story lines and are preferable. Closed questions help to zero in on specifics on a discussion that one has been having.

- e) **Paraphrasing:** the RPLP restates succinctly and tentatively what the candidate said – conveying empathy, acceptance and genuineness. This is similar to what reflective / active listening is all about.
- f) **Summary:** focus on the main points of the session to highlight them. For example, the RPLP can summarize the experience that the candidate has and see how best to link that to the level in the KNQF.
- g) **Note taking:** writing down pieces of information, often in shorthand and messy manner to help the RPLP remember the feelings around issues and the story line too. This helps the candidate to have the perception of being listened to as well as the RPLP following up on the right areas within the right context.
- h) **Homework:** fun and informative work done outside of the session. This could be on Portfolio of Evidence collection to meet the expectations of the learning outcomes.

6.8.3 Counselling formats

- a) **Face-to-Face:** one-on-one meeting between the candidate with the RPL Counsellor. This would be a very popular approach because it provides an opportunity for the candidate to be guided about the RPL process.
Individual or group: the RPLP may choose to counsel a group of candidates. The group members must be of similar trade and level to ensure information shared is applicable to all of them in the same way. Group session may help form a support network and act as a motivator for the candidates.
- b) **Telephone counselling:** there may be times when either the candidate or the RPL Counsellor wishes to clarify some information or share new information outside the face-to-face session. This is helpful in situations where distance and / or schedule may be a challenge and information needed by either party is not complex. This approach brings flexibility and can help reduce waiting list times. However, it should only be used as a follow up and not the main counselling session.
- c) **Online counselling:** leveraging on technology and / or email facilities to engage with the RPL Counsellor or Candidate. This form of counselling allows one to take the time to think through what they wish to discuss.

6.8.4 Types of counselling

- a) **Event counselling:** specific to an event or a situation. RPL would be classified as an event counselling. This is because, RPL is an event and can also be categorized under sub-events e.g. PoE Collection, skills gap identification, summative assessment, PoE assessment.
- b) **Performance counselling:** review of the candidate's performance during

a specified period. This goes hand in hand with the PoE principle on currency and suitability of the evidence provided. Through this, the candidate can be guided and advised on their strengths, areas of improvement as well as potential.

- c) **Professional growth counselling:** the RPLP counsels and guides the candidate on the possible career pathways and how to approach each of them helping them set both short and long-term goals and objectives where possible. The RPLP should share possible opportunities and considerations that the candidate can pursue.

6.8.5 The stages / process of counselling

- a) **Opening:** one of the most important parts of the interaction between the candidate and the RPLP. It provides a chance to get to know each other and set the tone for the rest of the relationship.
- b) **Exploring candidate understanding:** the exploration process leads to understanding what the candidate wants to achieve. Explore their past and evaluate their current concerns. As the RPLP, help the candidate manage RPL oriented expectations.
- c) **Understanding:** as the RPLP, demonstrate understanding of what the candidate is communicating by using both verbal and non-verbal cues as well as reflections and paraphrases.
- d) **Intervention:** choosing the appropriate counselling techniques that encourage growth within the candidate.
- e) **Exploring problems:** learning more about the candidate and why they want to pursue RPL. This helps the RPLP truly understand a candidate's thoughts and feelings in relation to RPL.
- f) **Empower to create own solutions:** empower the candidates with your counselling skills by helping them formulate their own solutions instead of providing them with straight answers.

6.8.6 Benefits of counselling

- a) Helps one to deal with situations in a less anxious manner.
- b) It provides an opportunity to reassess or set new goals.
- c) Helps one to gain clarity and direction.
- d) Provides an avenue for mediation.

6.8.7 Core counselling skills

Listening skills are basic counselling skills or practiced techniques that will help the RPLP to empathetically listen to the candidates. Such skills can be clustered into three.

- a) Active Listening.
- b) Being aware of non-verbal communication.
- c) Rapport building.

The following is a summary of the core counselling skills.



- a) **Attending:** the RPLP being present by giving the candidate their full attention – to what they are saying or doing, valuing them as worthy individuals.
- b) **Silence:** RPLP listens to silence as well as words, sitting with the can-

didates and recognizing that the silence may facilitate the counselling process. Through silence, the candidate gets control of the content, pace and objectives of what they share with the RPLP.

- c) **Reflecting and paraphrasing:** an art of listing that ensures the candidate knows that their story is being listened to. The RPLP will achieve this by rephrasing their understanding of what the candidate has said to ensure they do understand each other.
- d) **Clarifying and use of questions:** questioning is categorized as a basic skill. The RPLP uses open questions to clarify his or her understanding of what the candidate said. Avoid leading questions as they can impair the RPL process. Instead, use close ended questioning as you want to zero in on an answer.
- e) **Focusing:** making decision about the issues the candidate needs to deal with – PoE collection, assessment preparation. The candidate may have mentioned a range of issues and challenges they face. The RPLP should help the candidate focus on what is relevant and helpful in the process – this will help the candidate concentrate on central issues of concern.
- f) **Rapport building:** rapport is about a sense of having a connection – the RPLP and the candidate. This helps build trust on both ends allowing for disclosure of necessary information during the process.
- g) **Summaries:** these are longer paraphrases. The RPLP condenses the essence of what the candidate is saying and feeling. This summary helps ‘sum-up’ the main discussion and / or action points.
- h) **Immediacy:** the RPLP revealing how they themselves feel in response to the candidate. It helps focus attention on the here and now of the counselling and facilitation relationship helping the candidate enhance their awareness on possibilities and relevant action to be taken.

6.8.8 Qualities of a good counsellor

As an RPL Counsellor, you will be the first contact with the candidate, and it is important to help build a positive image for the RPL process as well as build the confidence of the candidate in the process. The RPL counsellor will help the candidate zero in on the exact level and skill area they want to be assessed in as well as the collection of relevant evidence to support the claim to that specific competence. To be effective as an RPL counsellor, you should enjoy helping others and possess specific attributes and skills listed below.

Communication skills: natural ability to listen to the candidates and be able to explain their ideas and thoughts to the candidates.

- a) **Acceptance:** being non-judgemental and accepting. The ability to start where the candidate is at – accepting them for who they are and in their current situation, the RPLP needs to be able to convey acceptance to the candidates with warmth and understanding.

- b) **Analytical skills:** the ability to identify, to collect and investigate information to find out relevant facts and find a logical solution.
- c) **Empathy:** ability to feel what the candidate is feeling – the RPLP truly appreciating what it is like to stand in the candidate’s shoes. Compassion and empathy help the candidates feel understood and heard.
- d) **Problem-solving skills:** help the candidate identify and make the necessary decision on the skills / competencies to be assessed in and at what level.
- e) **Rapport building skills:** RPLP must possess a strong set of interpersonal skills to help establish rapport quickly with candidates and develop strong relationships. The RPLP is expected to give undivided attention to candidates and be able to cultivate trust. The RPLP is expected to place their focus on what the candidate is saying and avoid being distracted by their own personal problems or concerns when they are in a session.
- f) **Flexibility:** ability to adapt and change the way the RPLP responds to meet the candidate’s needs. The RPLP should not stay rigid and stick to predetermined approach when the candidate requires a different approach.
- g) **Self-awareness:** ability for the RPLP to look within and identify their own unmet psychological needs and desires. This helps prevent the RPLP issues from affecting or conflicting with those of the candidates. Multicultural competency: RPLP will interact with candidates from all walks of life. Ability to relate to and understand the candidates regardless of their race, ethnicity, religious, political beliefs or socio-economic background.

6.9 RPL Practitioners' competencies – analytical skills

The RPLP's ability to identify, to collect and investigate information to find out relevant facts and find a logical solution. RPLP can use this skill to help solve some of the challenges faced by the candidates and help them improve their approach, perception and ability to succeed. The RPLP can help candidates detect patterns, brainstorm ideas, observe data and processes, collect and interpret data, integrate new information, theorize and synthesize information to make decisions based on multiple factors and options available.

FACTS FILE

An RPL assessor should have the following basic skills: analytical, communication, creativity, critical thinking, data analysis and investigative skills.5.5.1 The importance of analytical skills in the RPL process

These skills allow one to find solutions to common problems and make informed decisions about which action to take next. Understanding the problem and analysing the situation for viable solutions is a key skill required in the RPL analysis.

6.8.1 The process of analysis

- a) Analysing information.
- b) Assessing.
- c) Synthesizing.
- d) Evaluating alternatives.
- e) Creating or generating ideas based on the analysis.
- f) Reflecting.
- g) Reaching a solution based on analysis.
- h) Giving feedback

6.8.2 Benefits of analysis in the RPL process

Good critical thinking skills bring benefits such as:

- a) improved attention and observation;
- b) knowledge of how to get your own point across more easily;
- c) skills of analysis that you can choose to apply in a variety of situations; and
- d) higher test score on class and standardized tests.

6.9.3 Basic analytical skills¹¹

6.9.4 Communication

Analysis only goes so far if you cannot share and implement your findings. You need to be an effective communicator to discuss the patterns you see and your conclusions and recommendations.

Analytical communications skills include the following.

- a) Problem sensitivity
- b) Active listening
- c) Reporting
- d) Surveying
- e) Teamwork
- f) Oral communication
- g) Written communication
- h) Conducting presentations

6.9.5 Creativity

Analysing information often requires a creative eye to spot trends in the data that others may not find. Creativity is also important when it comes to problem solving. The obvious solution is not always the best option. RPLP with strong analytical skills will think outside the box to come up with effective solutions to big problems.

Creative skill sets include the following.

- a) Budgeting
- b) Brainstorming
- c) Collaboration
- d) Optimization
- e) Predictive modelling
- f) Restructuring
- g) Strategic planning
- h) Integration

6.9.6 Critical thinking

This refers to evaluating information and then deciding based on your findings. Critical thinking is what helps an RPLP make decisions that help solve problems.

¹¹ <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/analytical-skills-list-2063729>

Critical thinking skill sets include the following. Process management

- a) Process management
- b) Auditing
- c) Benchmarking
- d) Big data analytics
- e) Business intelligence
- f) Case analysis
- g) Causal relationships
- h) Classifying
- i) Comparative analysis
- j) Correlation
- k) Decision making
- l) Deductive reasoning
- m) Inductive reasoning
- n) Diagnostics
- o) Evaluating
- p) Data interpretation
- q) Judgement
- r) Prioritisation
- s) Troubleshooting

6.9.7 Data analysis

No matter what your career field, being good at analysis means being able to examine a large volume of data and identify trends in that data. You must go beyond just reading and understanding information to make sense of it by highlighting patterns for top decision makers.

These are the different types of data analysis.

- a) Business analysis
- b) SWOT analysis
- c) Cost analysis
- d) Credit analysis
- e) Critical analysis
- f) Descriptive analysis
- g) Financial analysis
- h) Industry research
- i) Policy analysis

- j) Predictive analytics
- k) Prescriptive analytics
- l) Process analysis
- m) Qualitative analysis
- n) Quantitative analysis
- o) Return on investment (ROI) analysis

6.9.8 Research

One must learn about a problem before one can solve it thus calling upon the essential analytical skill of data collection and research. This can involve reviewing spreadsheets, researching online, collecting data and looking at competitor information.

Analytical research skills include: investigation;

- a) investigation;
- b) metrics;
- c) data collection;
- d) prioritisation; and
- e) checking for accuracy.

6.10 RPL Competencies coordination

Coordination skills is about seeing the big picture before it is formed and finding ways to realize it, your ability to see many moving pieces and making a plan for all the pieces to come together. This skill is key in keeping the workplace running smoothly by preventing miscommunications, disorganisation and confusion.

There are five coordination skills that make it easier to be effective at what you do.

5.6.1: Time management

- a) Awareness of deadlines and how to enforce them effectively.
- b) Knowledge of your team's individual and collective strengths and how to best leverage on them.

5.6.2 Communication

- a) Effective communication to minimize information loss or misunderstanding.
- b) Creates an avenue for information flow in all directions thus being aware of what is happening.
- c) Enhanced personal interactions.

5.6.3: Adaptability

- a) Easily adaptable to situations as they arise without interfering with project program.
- b) Applies creative thinking in problem solving and decision making.
- c) Adjust plans and responses based on how circumstances present themselves.
- d) Ability to explain the situation to team members / colleagues and encourage / motivate them to respond appropriately.

5.6.4: Organisation

- a) Keeping track of the moving pieces that need to be kept track of.
- b) Managing the pieces in a way that they do not become overwhelming.
- c) Disseminate information in the most efficient way possible – ensures everyone remains in the loop and nothing gets lost in the chain of communication.

5.6.5: Team work

- a) Effective delegation of work to team members.
- b) Easily motivates team members to provide their best.
- c) Demonstrates what is required instead of giving orders.
- d) Genuinely cares about the progress of their team members.
- e) Encourages team members on interconnectedness thus promoting a working together environment that enhances productivity and job satisfaction.

6.11 RPL Practitioners competencies – equity and inclusion (to address gender, PLWD, minorities)

Each candidate receives what he / she needs to carry out the assessment to the best of their ability. Thus, as an RPL Practitioner, one ensures the following.

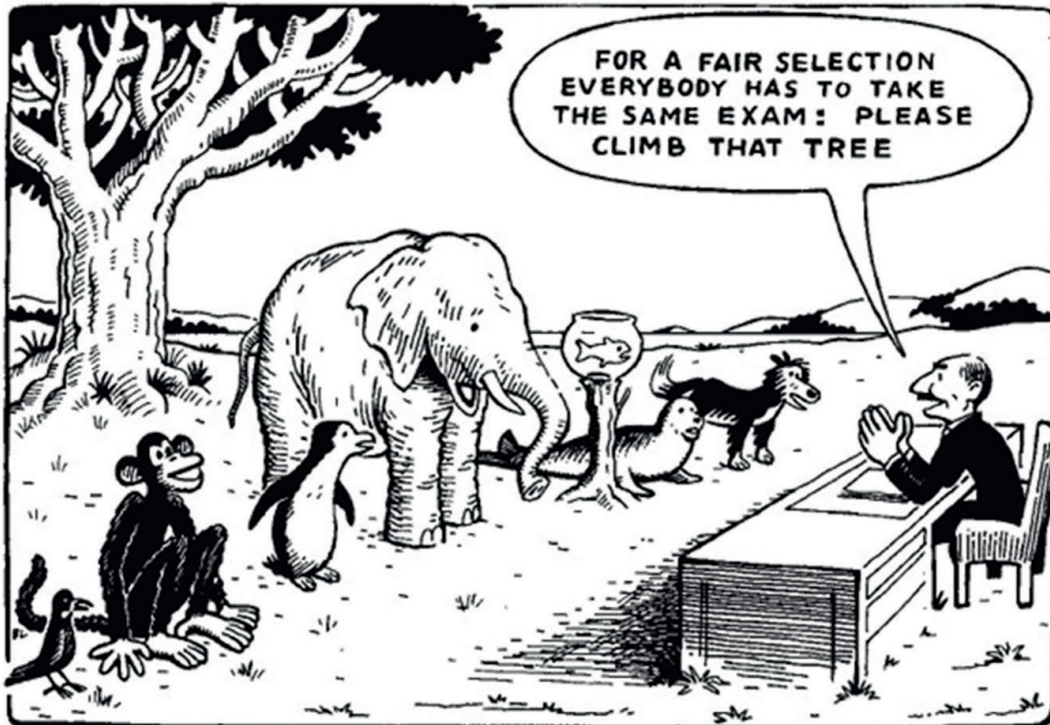
- a) High outcomes for all participants undertaking the assessment.
- b) Removes the predictability of success or failure that correlates with any social, economic or cultural factor.
- c) Interrupts inequitable practices, examines biases and creates inclusive, multicultural assessment environment for candidates.
- d) Discovers and encourages the unique gifts, talents and interests that the candidates may possess.

6.11.1 Equity

Equity means each candidate gets the same resources and support.

REFLECTIONS

Imagine you handing out application forms to the candidates. What assumptions might you make? That every candidate has a pen, can read and write, understands the language of instruction.



6.11.2 Strategies to promote equity

The following strategies should help you better manage equity while interacting with candidates.

a) Self-awareness

It is not just the candidates who bring with them their assumptions, experiences, biases and backgrounds to the process. The first step to building equity in the RPL process is to challenge your own beliefs. Examine your assumptions on:

- i) cultural stereotypes;
- ii) socio-economic status;
- iii) gender biases especially in relation to trade / skill areas;

- iv) persons gifted differently; and
- v) ability of candidate to communicate effectively.

When you are aware about your own biases, influences and cultural background, you are better equipped to thoughtfully engage with candidates and promote equity in the RPL process.

b) Model Equity for your candidates

Look out for the interactions that you have with your candidates. This will help the RPL Assessors to achieve the following.

- i) Check for assumptions through informal and formal conversations by using open ended questions to accommodate a range of responses and lived experiences.
- ii) Open the space, especially during counselling and facilitation, to have difficult conversations honestly and empathetically.
- iii) Better tune in to how best to assist the candidates and identify areas of support.
- iv) Move the focus to the candidates as opposed to the RPL Practitioner.
- v) Encourage and motivate the candidates to have self-belief in performing well in the assessment

c) Be Flexible

The need for flexibility can arise at any point of the RPL process e.g. at the counselling and facilitation stage, a candidate may have difficulty with developing their Portfolio of Evidence, how can you help them develop the same instead of demanding an already built one.

Be on the lookout for areas you can best assist candidates to achieve their goals without being rigid in approach but still maintain quality of the process. You can do this by:

- i) guiding the candidate in details on how best to address the area of difficulty they experience;
- ii) providing a timeline instead of fixed dates to give the candidate options of choice; and
- iii) respecting the needs of the candidate and understanding their situations and finding solutions.

d) Address inappropriate remarks

Candidates may come in with own sets of biases, assumptions and prejudices. They may voice them in ways that are inappropriate, leaning on stereotypes and false information.

As an RPL Practitioner, it is your responsibility to flag out the insensitive remarks so everyone present feels comfortable.

In the event that a candidate uses language that doesn't follow the assessment guidelines, you can do the following.

- i) Pause: stop what you are doing and focus on the problem.
- ii) Address: bring attention to the remark without shaming the candidate. Explain why it doesn't promote equity and identify why the statement is harmful.
- iii) Discuss: have respectful discussion around the biases and background knowledge that might have prompted the candidate to make the comment.

Never call out the candidate and pass judgment without a discussion.

e) Create an equitable environment

An environment that addresses the possible challenges that your candidates may experience e.g. ramps for persons using wheel chairs. This can be achieved by doing the following.

- i) Setting and posting assessment centre rules.
- ii) Ensuring flexibility in assessment approaches e.g. language used, reading for the candidate in case they are illiterate.
- iii) Explaining more of the why the process is being carried out.
- iv) Respecting all religious holidays when planning for assessments.

6.11.3 Inclusion

The paradox of inclusion – a world more connected than ever seems more divided than ever. Indeed, pointing out this pervasive division and exclusion nears a cliché. But if exclusion is such a defining issue, so too is inclusion: the lack of it, the need for it.

Diversity features in RPL could include language, culture, gender, disability, age, socio-economic background, literacy levels, personality and much more. RPL Practitioners are expected to value the unique aspect of what makes each candidate unique.

An RPL Practitioner can enhance inclusivity by;

- a) Learning about the candidate's cultural background and what makes them unique and in so doing discovering their perspective on matters that may affect the assessment. The RPLP can establish a tone of inclusion by emphasizing that all perspectives are valuable.

- b) Creating a culturally responsive assessment environment: this promotes respect and understanding of cultures different from the candidate's. This promotes a willingness to listen respectfully to different viewpoints.

6.12 RPL practitioners competencies – the competence assessment skill

6.12.1 Meaning of competence assessment

- a) *Competence*: is the possession and application of knowledge, skills and attitudes to perform work activities to the standard expected in the workplace.
- b) *Competence assessor*: the person trained to work with a trainee to observe, collect evidence, classify and make reliable evidence about competence, using the benchmarks provided by the unit standards that comprise the national qualifications.
- c). *Competency assessment*: competency-based assessment is the evaluation of a person's competence against prescribed standards of performance including, attitudes, skills and knowledge. The aim is to determine whether a candidate meets the prescribed standards of performance, i.e., whether they demonstrate professional competence. It is the final step a learner takes to confirm that their skills and knowledge align with performing a specific task and are in fact competent.
- d) *Competency*: the application of knowledge, skills and behaviours used in performing specific job tasks. It is the ability to do a task effectively. The knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to get a job done. It involves performance of individual tasks (task skills); managing several different tasks within the job (task management skills); responding to problems, breakdowns and changes in routine (contingency management skills) and dealing with the responsibilities and expectations of the workplace (job and role environment skills).
- e) *Competency assessment*: an approach for measuring and documenting personnel competency e.g. the goal of competency assessment is to identify problems with employee performance and to correct these issues before they affect service delivery.
- f) *Competence level*: define different stages of expertise and help differentiate between people who have basic skills from those who are experts.
- g) *Assessment*: is the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on the nature and extent of progress towards the performance requirements set out in a standard, or a learning outcome, and, at the appropriate point, making the judgement as to whether competency has been achieved. It is the final step a learner takes to confirm that their skills and

knowledge align with performing a specific task and are in fact competent. A competency-based system encourages individuals to attain their full potential and to be assessed for a particular level of competency and then to move on to achieve further competencies, should they wish to do so.

- h) *Skill*: a task or group of tasks performance to a specified level of proficiency which typically involves the manipulation of tools and equipment or expertise that is knowledge or attitude-based.
- i) *Portfolio of Evidence* is a collection of documents that you are required to compile to show competence against a set of learning outcomes and to an appropriate standard.
- j) *Assessor*: the person trained to work with a trainee to observe, collect evidence, classify and make reliable evidence about competence, using the benchmarks provided by the unit standards that comprise the national qualifications.
- k) *Assessee*: the person who is being assessed.
- l) *Assessment centre*: industry, educational institutions where assessment of competence takes place.
- m) *Qualification Awarding Institution*: Any institution established by the university Act no; 42 of 2014; A National Polytechnic with a legal order to award qualifications; institutions in Government Ministries with legal order to award qualifications; institutions established by an Act of Parliament to develop and award qualifications; and foreign institutions accredited in their home countries as qualification awarding institutions.

6.12.2 Outcomes of competence assessment

After going through an assessment process, an individual is judged to be competent or not yet competent. This is based on the evidence collected during the assessment process.

6.12.3 Philosophy of competence assessment

- a) *Criterion referenced*: competency assessment is against existing occupation standards and candidates compete against set standards. This is unlike conventional evaluation or examination where candidates compete against each other and decisions concerning performance are subject to discussion and moderation.
- b) *Evidence based*: there must be proof of performance in form of evidence collected over time during the assessment process. There must be a strategy for collection and retaining evidence where practically possible. Technology will be applied to retain evidence through an interactive RPL Information Management System (IMS).

- c) *Participatory*: the candidate is a key stakeholder and is fully involved in the process of assessment. The potential candidate expresses interest to go through the assessment process and avails him/herself for planning and counselling as well as offering any insights that could contribute to the success of the process.

6.12.4 Components of competence assessment

- a) *Standards*: the occupational standards provided by the industry are benchmarks against which performance is measured. It is against these standards that the RPL assessment tools are developed.
- b) *Evidence collection*: there must be some established methods for collection of evidence of competence. This is what the RPL Practitioner does during a competence assessment whereas the candidate showcases their ability to perform against the set standards.
- c) *Quality assurance*: there must be an established system of quality assurance. The RPL system has an inbuilt system of quality assurance.
- d) *Outcomes*: an assessment must provide a verdict and the verdict should be specific, clear and transparent. There are only two possible outcomes in an assessment – either the candidate is found competent or not yet competent.

6.12.5 Methods of competence assessment

- a) *Direct observation* helps identify and prevent any performance problems. The candidate's techniques are watched during the assessment process, which allows the assessor to see if the candidate is following the standard procedure. To avoid subjectivity during a competency assessment, the assessor uses a custom designed checklist, especially when there are specific, observable items, actions or attributes to be observed.
- b) *Written Assessment*: knowledge or problem-solving skills are assessed using case studies. Candidates are asked to respond orally or in a writing to simulated technical problems.
- c) *Online*: assessments can also be carried out online using various platforms according to set virtual assessment rules.

6.12.6 Types of competence assessment

There are two broad types of competencies.

- a) *Behavioural competencies*: often called soft skills. They define not just the ability to do something, but how it is done. They also describe a way / style of doing things in relation to other people. Behavioural competencies are innately subjective and therefore must be observable.

- b) *Functional competencies*: often referred to as technical skills or competencies. They simply mean the ability to perform some technical tasks like operating machinery, performing double entry accounting, making a dress or designing a hyper loop.

A combination of both is almost always required to be effective.

6.12.7 Principles of competence assessment

Assessment needs to abide by the following principles and must be

- a) *Current*: RPL assessment should take place within a short time after expression of interest or any recommended learning to address skill gaps.
- b) *Valid*: all requirements of the unit of competency must be assessed. There must be sufficient evidence to ensure that the candidate meets the competency specified by the current standard. The candidate must not be asked to provide evidence for or be assessed against activities that are outside the scope of the unit standard.
- c) *Reliable*: the degree of consistency and accuracy of the assessment outcomes. The assessment must be able to stand up to scrutiny. That is, other assessors should reach the same conclusion. Several evidence-gathering methods can be used to ensure consistency.
- d) *Flexible*: the opportunity for a candidate to negotiate certain aspects of their assessment with their assessors. There is no single approach to competency-based assessment. Evidence can be collected using different methods, at different times, under a variety of conditions. It must be responsive to the needs of the situation and the candidate.
- e) *Fair*: assessment must not discriminate or disadvantage individuals or groups of candidates. Different people and different situations need different assessment methods and where necessary, reasonable adjustments to meet individual requirements must be made.
- f) *Safe*: all work and all assessment must comply with occupational health and safety requirements.

6.12.8 Stages in the outcome-based assessment

- a) *Planning*: both the RPLP and the candidate need to study the learning outcomes they are aiming to achieve and to check that they are at an appropriate level. They can then go on to look for opportunities to gather relevant evidence. On this basis it is possible to draw up an assessment plan, fully negotiated with the candidate and agreed with others who may be involved or affected such as work colleagues.
- b) *Collecting*: gathering of evidence. It may come from direct observation to finished products to supplementary questions. The most effective way to collect evidence is usually through some combination of planned and

spontaneous activities together with reviews after the event. Candidates should be encouraged to collect their own evidence based on an evidence collection guideline.

- c) *Judging*: determine whether the evidence before the RPLP is valid and meets the requirements of the level of performance standards. If the evidence does not yet satisfy the requirements laid down, the RPLP should advise the candidate, discuss the reasons with the candidate and plan on how to help the candidate acquire and / or collect competence-based evidence.
- d) *Deciding*: the RPLP is satisfied that sufficient evidence has been gathered and judged to cover the range of activities and situations and skill areas that would indicate the candidate's ability to meet the required performance standard consistently, then the candidate's competency should be attested and recorded.

6.12.9 Process of competence assessment

Competency assessment is an ongoing process in which knowledge and skills are continually built. This is particularly important in today's fast-paced world. Being able to understand current capabilities and develop new ones is critical to stay ahead of the curve.

But it is not just new skills that need to be developed. Competency levels can be used to define different stages of expertise. This is useful for individuals as they progress through career from novice to expert. For companies, competency assessment can provide a great foundation for a succession planning process.

6.12.10 Benefits of competence assessment

- a) Allows trainees to build on skills gained in a natural progression within a timeframe.
- b) Is part of a constructive and cooperative approach to developing the skills of trainees and it can identify the training needed to address gaps in competence.
- c) Candidates can gain a nationally recognised qualification.

6.12.11 Challenges of competence assessment

- a) Lack of competence assessment skill amongst trainers which emanates from current trainer education curriculum.
- b) Cost implications since competence assessment is an expensive undertaking. A resource mobilization strategy will be necessary.
- c) Lack of buy-in from the informal sector especially when RPL is packaged

as an academic process.

- d) Mismatch between industry occupational standards and the standards used by QAIs. There must be an aspect of harmonization of occupational standards.
- e) Mismatch between technology available at assessment centre and technology used by the potential RPL candidates
- f) Gender and disability issues that may hinder access to RPL for women and PLWD.
- g) Hurried implementation of the RPL policy. This should be allowed to take a natural course to avoid compromise on quality.
- h) Assessment instruments – National Occupation Standards (NOS), RPL tools and guides and test tools. These are the instruments required by the RPLP to conduct a competency assessment. They include:
 - i) *RPL Assessment tools* that guide the RPLP in the process of assessing a person's level of competence whilst identifying gaps, they help to inject objectivity in the assessment process.
 - ii) *National Occupational Standards*: are the benchmarks against which the RPL assessment tools are developed and define the expected level / standards of performance.
 - iii) *RPL guides*: provide guidance and facilitation to the RPL process.
- i) Gathering evidence – the following may be used to gather evidence on a person's competence depending on the task at hand.
 - i) Products they have made or work they have completed.
 - ii) The way they carry out a task.
 - iii) Their knowledge and understanding of a task.
 - iv) Their attitude to the work they do.

7.0 CODE OF CONDUCT – Refer to Code of Conduct manual

An RPL practitioner shall be expected to adhere to the tenets of article 10 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, RPL practitioners' Code of Conduct, Regulator's standards, Qualification Awarding Institutions rules and regulations.

8.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE – Refer to RPL Quality Assurance Manual

7.0 CASE STUDIES

7.1 Case study 1

Zawadi is a candidate who has come for RPL assessment in a registered assessment centre. She is received at the reception and directed to the RPL desk. Zawadi is then received by the counsellor who provides a seat and proceeds to have a conversation with her on work experience and work expertise.

Counsellor: Good morning Zawadi?

Zawadi: Good morning.

Counsellor: How can we help you?

Zawadi: Am here for the RPL assessment.

Counsellor: Can you hand in your evidence for assessment?

Zawadi: What is evidence?

Counsellor: You should have known about the evidence before coming to the assessment centre. Can you come back tomorrow with the full Portfolio of Evidence to enable us to assess you?

Zawadi: Okay. Is there no other way to assist me to gather the Portfolio of Evidence?

Counsellor: “*onzea vizuri*” (Talk nicely) We can arrange for that.

Zawadi does not return to the assessment centre after the above conversation.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CASE STUDY

- In your opinion, what could be the reason why the candidate never showed up in the assessment centre as requested?
- Which skills are demonstrated through the above case study?
- What gaps are linked to the skills identified?
- If you were the counsellor, how would you have handled Zawadi?

7.2 Case study 2

A beauty parlour employs 50 attendants in the areas of barbering, hairdressing and beauty therapy. Most of them are allocated roles based on their technical expertise or success in operational roles, but they do not have formal qualifications or training. The beauty parlour manager is aware of the need to focus attention on the importance of developing and recognizing competencies. He contacted and engaged an assessment centre to assess the attendants with a view of recognizing and certifying competencies that they possess. After initial consultations, it was agreed that the attendants would be advised to submit expression of interest form for RPL assessment to the centre. Thirty out of the 50 attendants submitted the EOI.

The process included:

- a) Counselling and information sessions for staff to decide if they wanted to apply.
- b) Informative tools that define qualification information and explain the recognition assessment process, including required engagement and potential outcomes.
- c) Presentation of the Portfolio of Evidence by the candidate and verification of the PoE by the counsellors.
- d) The counsellors found that 20 attendants had good evidence of workplace practice that matched the results of the competence units. Ten were advised to gain more workplace experience.
- e) The 20 attendants were assessed in English language by three panels of assessors each comprising three assessors -- one from the training centre and one from the industry and one from the Qualification Awarding Institution. Three of the 20 attendants had hearing impairment.
- f) However, five lacked knowledge or worker behaviour to support their practice.
- g) The panels faced dilemma whether the five attendants should be awarded certificates, as they lacked knowledge and worker behaviour, despite the seemingly competent performance.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CASE STUDY.

- In your opinion, what might have been the reason that made the 20 attendants not express interest?
- What might have informed the counsellors' decision to refer the 10 attendants to gain more workplace experience?
- In your opinion, were the principles of assessment adhered to? Explain your answer.
- How would you guide the five attendants who were declared not yet competent?

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