



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING
IN
A CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN
CONTEXT:
A NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL
APPROACH**

by

Alrika Moore

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

in the

Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

Promoter: Prof. Dr L van Rooyen

SEPTEMBER 2000

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA



2191466

© University of Pretoria



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

DEDICATED TO

MY HUSBAND AND PARENTS



WHO IS IGNORANT?

What kind of people are we?

We are poor, very poor, but we are not stupid,

That is why, despite our illiteracy we still exist.

But we have to know why we should become literate.

Why should teachers feel so superior?

They behave as if we were ignorant fools, as if we were little children.

Please, do understand that the teacher may know things which we don't.

But we know a lot of things which are beyond him...

Literacy should help us live better: at least we look at it that way.

They say that things are being planned for us – the poor.

Would literacy help us in knowing those government plans?

Would it help us to know how to raise our yield, and increase our income?

And from where to borrow money on easy terms,

And what benefits would we get from the cooperative?

Will this programme teach us how to think and work together?

Will “doing” be made a part of “learning”?

We want a straight answer.

Then we shall decide whether we should become literate or not.

But if we find out that we are being duped again with empty promises,

We will stay away from you.....

From the Journal, Adult Education and Development, no 43, 1994

Written by some illiterates of India

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the following persons and institutions for assisting me in my research:

- Professor Linda van Rooyen who guided me. Her incisive and constructive criticism and suggestions were invaluable.*
- The persons I interviewed from the various organisations, institutions, departments, NGOs and SETAs. They also supplied me with the documents I requested and were always willing to assist me.*
- My husband, Warren, for limitless patience, understanding and support during my studies.*
- My parents and family for their continued interest and support during my studies.*
- Dr CCJ Leschinsky for the efficient way in which she did the proofreading and editing of my thesis.*

ABSTRACT

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING IN A CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT: A NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

BY

ALRIKA MOORE

PROMOTER: Prof. Dr L van Rooyen

DEPARTMENT: Psycho- and Sociopedagogics

DEGREE: Philosophiae Doctor

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a systematic process to accredit learning gained outside formal educational institutions, by assessing relevant learning against the standards required by a specific field of learning or course. RPL recognises what individuals know or can do before undertaking a course of study, wherever or however they may have acquired their knowledge or skills. It includes testing, or various other techniques of assessment which may include compiling a profile or a portfolio of learning and/or experience. RPL in South Africa can be seen as a mechanism to accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities. RPL can empower individuals, it can provide a skill focus for employers and can assist in economic and social development.

KEYWORDS

Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning

Reflection

Experiential learning

Lifelong Learning

Adult Basic Education and Training

Competence-based assessment

Competent

Non-formal education

Accreditation



OPSOMMING

ERKENNING VAN VORIGE LEER IN 'N KONTEMPORÊRE SUID-AFRIKAANSE KONTEKS: 'N NIE-FORMELE ONDERWYSBENADERING

DEUR

ALRIKA MOORE

PROMOTOR: Prof. Dr L van Rooyen

DEPARTEMENT: Psigo- en Sosiopedagogiek

GRAAD: Philosophiae Doktor

Erkenning van Vorige Leer (EVL) is 'n sistematiese proses om geleerdheid wat bekom is buite formele onderwysinstellings te akkrediteer. Dit word gedoen deur die relevante geleerdheid te assesser teen die standaard wat deur 'n spesifieke leerveld of kursus vereis word. Erkenning van Vorige Leer gee erkenning aan wat 'n individu weet en kan doen voordat hy/sy enige kursus of studie onderneem, ongeag hoe en waar die kennis en bevoegdhede bekom is. Die erkenning kan verkry word deur die aflê van toetse of enige ander metode van assessering. Dit kan ook insluit die saamstel van 'n profiel of 'n portefeulje van 'n individu se kennis en/of ondervinding. EVL kan in Suid-Afrika beskou word as 'n meganisme wat die



SLEUTELWOORDE

Leer

Erkenning van Vorige Leer

Nadenke

Ervaringsleer

Lewenslange-leer

Basiese volwassene-onderrig en opleiding

Bevoegdheidsgebaseerde evaluering

Bevoegdheid

Nie-formele onderwys

Akkreditering

CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF FIGURES	ix-xi
LIST OF ACRONYMS	xii-xiv
CHAPTER 1: THEME ANALYSIS AND FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM	1
Acronyms	2
1.1 Introduction	4
1.2 Theme analysis	7
1.2.1 Recognition of Prior Learning	7
1.2.1.1 Sources of Prior Learning	8
1.2.2 Experiential learning	17
1.2.3 Lifelong learning and education	24
1.2.3.1 Learning	24
1.2.3.2 Education	27
1.2.3.3 Lifelong learning	29
1.2.3.4 Lifelong education	32
1.2.4 Competence-based assessment	33
1.2.5 Adult Education	36
1.2.5.1 Adult Basic Education	41
1.2.5.2 Adult Basic Education and Training	43

	PAGE
1.2.6 The Reconstruction and Development Programme	44
1.2.6.1 The Principles of the Reconstruction and Development Programme	46
1.2.7 The South African Qualifications Authority and the National Qualifications Framework	49
1.2.7.1 The South African Qualifications Authority	49
1.2.7.2 The National Qualifications Framework	50
1.2.8 Educational modi	57
1.2.8.1 Formal education	58
1.2.8.2 Non-formal education	59
1.2.8.3 Informal education	60
1.3 Statement of the problem	61
1.4 Aim of the study	62
1.5 Research methodology	62
1.6 Programme of the study	66
1.7 Conclusion	68
 CHAPTER 2: THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING A LOGICAL ANALYSIS	 69
Acronyms	70
2.1 Introduction	71

	PAGE
2.2 Approaches to the Recognition of Prior Learning	73
2.3 Philosophical foundations of the Recognition of Prior Learning	74
2.4 Recognition of Prior Learning as an integral component of competence-based assessment	77
2.5 The functions of the Recognition of Prior Learning	83
2.5.1 Findings of the First Nations Technical Institute's Project	83
2.5.2 Functions of the Recognition of Prior Learning in general	85
2.6 The benefits and beneficiaries of the Recognition of Prior Learning	86
2.6.1 Benefits of the Recognition of Prior Learning	87
2.6.2 Beneficiaries of the Recognition of Prior Learning	90
2.6.3 Financial benefits and implications	94
2.7 Implications of the Recognition of Prior Learning	96
2.8 Minimum standards required for an effective Recognition of Prior Learning system	97
2.9 Assessment practices and methods which could be utilised for the Recognition of Prior Learning	99
2.9.1 Assessing learning and assessing prior learning	99
2.9.2 The methods of assessment	100
2.9.2.1 The challenge process	105
2.9.2.2 Standardised examinations	106
2.9.2.3 Portfolio development	107

	PAGE
2.9.2.4 The assessment interview	118
2.9.2.5 Programme and course evaluation or credit transfer	119
2.10 The relationship between the Recognition of Prior Learning and placement assessment	120
2.10.1 What is placement assessment?	120
2.11 Financing of the Recognition of Prior Learning systems	122
2.11.1 Variables which affect the cost	122
2.12 Recognition of Prior Learning and Quality Assurance	123
2.13 Conclusion	127
CHAPTER 3: INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING DEVELOPMENTS	129
Acronyms	130
3.1 Introduction	132
3.2 Relevance of experiential and informal learning	134
3.2.1 Theoretical niche of the Recognition of Prior Learning within experiential learning	134
3.2.2 Three-stage model of reflection	135
3.3 International developments	136
3.3.1 United States of America	137

	PAGE
3.3.2 United Kingdom	144
3.3.3 Australia	150
3.3.4 Canada (Ontario)	153
3.3.5 Ireland	155
3.4 National developments (South Africa)	158
3.4.1 The Recognition of Prior Learning in the vocational sector	161
3.4.2 Workers' experience of the Recognition of Prior Learning in South Africa	165
3.4.3 The Recognition of Prior Learning in the education and training sector	168
3.4.3.1 Research projects undertaken in the education and training sector	170
3.5 Conclusion	177
CHAPTER 4: PRINCIPLES ESSENTIAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING MODEL	179
Acronyms	180
4.1 Introduction	181
4.2 Essential principles for the development of a Recognition of Prior Learning model	183
4.2.1 Quality assurance mechanisms	183
4.2.2 Efficiency of a Recognition of Prior Learning system	185

	PAGE
4.2.3 Equity and access	187
4.2.4 Validity and reliability of a Recognition of Prior Learning system	188
4.2.5 Transparency	191
4.2.6 Curriculum based on explicit learning outcomes to be utilised for the Recognition of Prior Learning assessment	192
4.2.7 Training of key players including their selection and monitoring	193
4.3 Barriers to the Recognition of Prior Learning assessment	199
4.3.1 Physical, personal and situational barriers	199
4.3.2 Institutional barriers	201
4.4 Conclusion	203
CHAPTER 5: A MODEL FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING OF THE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA	204
Acronyms	205
5.1 Introduction	206
5.2 Principles and systems of Recognition of Prior Learning	208
5.2.1 System 1: Access	210

	PAGE
5.2.2 System 2: Diagnostic	210
5.2.3 System 3: Assessment	210
5.2.4 System 4: Accreditation	210
5.2.5 System 5: Awards	211
5.2.6 System 6: Progress	211
5.3 Design of a Recognition of Prior Learning model for the Adult Basic Education and Training sector	211
5.3.1 Types of Recognition of Prior Learning	211
5.3.2 Purpose of a Recognition of Prior Learning model for the Adult Basic Education and Training sector	212
5.4 The Recognition of Prior Learning process	213
5.4.1 Application for the Recognition of Prior Learning	213
5.4.1.1 Application through an adult learning centre	215
5.4.1.2 Direct application to the education and training quality assurance body or appropriate assessor body	221
5.4.2 Support services for Recognition of Prior Learning candidates	222
5.4.3 Assessment of Recognition of Prior Learning candidates	236
5.5 Recognition of Prior Learning appeal procedure	243
5.6 Recognition of Prior Learning and Quality Assurance	244
5.7 Role-players at all levels in the Recognition of Prior Learning process	245

	PAGE
5.8 Costs of Recognition of Prior Learning to the candidate	253
5.9 Recognition of Prior Learning centres	254
5.10 Time factors	256
5.11 Advocacy	256
5.12 Conclusion	257
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	259
Acronyms	260
6.1 Introduction	261
6.2 Findings	264
6.3 Recommendations	269
6.4 Shortcomings of the study	270
6.5 Further research	271
6.6 Conclusion	272
BIBLIOGRAPHY	274
BIBLIOGRAPHY (ACTS)	295
GLOSSARY	296

LIST OF FIGURES

		PAGE
FIGURE 1.1	SOURCES OF PRIOR LEARNING	10
FIGURE 1.2	KOLB'S LEARNING CYCLE	21
FIGURE 1.3	EXPANSION OF KOLB'S LEARNING CYCLE	22
FIGURE 1.4	A COMPARISON OF THE ASSUMPTIONS OF PEDAGOGY AND ANDRAGOGY	39
FIGURE 1.5	THE NQF STRUCTURE	52
FIGURE 1.6	OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE NQF	56
FIGURE 2.1	FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE	76
FIGURE 2.2	ASSESSMENT PROCESS: COMPETENCE-BASED ASSESSMENT	80
FIGURE 2.3	CONTINUUM OF ASSESSMENT	82
FIGURE 2.4	ASSESSMENT METHODS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING	102
FIGURE 2.5	TYPES OF EVIDENCE	112

		PAGE
FIGURE 2.6	AN ASSESSMENT MODEL	117
FIGURE 2.7	TEN STANDARDS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ASSESSING LEARNING FOR CREDIT	126
FIGURE 3.1	KEY ELEMENTS OF THE CAEL APPROACH TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	141
FIGURE 3.2	BARRIERS TO WORKFORCE LEARNING	143
FIGURE 3.3	COMPARISON OF SELF-ORIENTATED AND OUTCOMES-ORIENTATED PORTFOLIOS	148
FIGURE 3.4	FAS CERTIFICATION FRAMEWORK	157
FIGURE 3.5	THE RPL PROCESS	163
FIGURE 4.1	THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KEY PLAYERS IN THE RPL SYSTEM	195
FIGURE 5.1	SIX-POINT TYPOLOGY	209
FIGURE 5.2	APPLYING FOR RPL	214
FIGURE 5.3	AN INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	216

	PAGE
FIGURE 5.4	A PLACEMENT PROFILE 220
FIGURE 5.5	SUPPORT MECHANISM FOR RPL CANDIDATES 223
FIGURE 5.6	COUNSELLING SESSION 225
FIGURE 5.7	RPL BRIEFING SESSION 228
FIGURE 5.8	RPL ACTION PLAN 230
FIGURE 5.9a	RPL EVIDENCE COLLECTION GRID 234
FIGURE 5.9b	EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED RPL EVIDENCE COLLECTION GRID 235
FIGURE 5.10	ASSESSMENT OF RPL CANDIDATES 237
FIGURE 5.11a	AN ASSESSMENT GRID 241
FIGURE 5.11b	EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED ASSESSMENT GRID 242

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ABT	Adult Basic Training
ALC	Adult Learning Centre
APA	Accreditation of Prior Achievement
APEL	Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning
APL/A	Accreditation of Prior Learning/Achievement
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
CAEL	Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
CCC	Credit for Current Competencies
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPL	Credit for Prior Learning
DOE	Department of Education
ETDP	Education, Training and Development Practitioner
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance Body
FET	Further Education and Training



FNTI	First Nations Technical Institute
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GET	General Education and Training
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
HET	Higher Education and Training
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
INDLELA	Institute for the National Development of Learnerships, Employment-skills and Labour Assessments
ITB	Industry Training Board
LET	Learning from Experience Trust
NCEA	National Council for Educational Awards
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualification
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
NTB	National Training Board
NTSI	National Training Strategy Initiative

NUM



National Union of Mine Workers

NUMSA

National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa

NVQ

National Vocational Qualification

PLA

Prior Learning Assessment

RDP

Reconstruction and Development Programme

RPL

Recognition of Prior Learning

SAQA

South African Qualifications Authority

SCOTVEC

Scottish Vocational Education Council

SETA

Sector Education and Training Authority

SGB

Standards Generating Body

SMME

Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises

TAFE

Technical and Further Education College

UCT

University of Cape Town

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USA

United States of America

UTS

University of Technology, Sydney

VET

Vocational Education and Training