



SADC Meeting on Recognition of Prior Learning and Good Practices in Skills Development

Johannesburg, 18-21 August 2015

Questionnaire for participating countries on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

On 18-21 August, a SADC Meeting will be organised in Johannesburg, with the support of the ILO, on *Good Practices in Skills Development/TVET and Recognition of Prior Learning*. The Meeting will be an opportunity to address both topics, which will require active participation from the country delegates. The questionnaire below focuses on the successful implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). It is circulated ahead of the Meeting in order to gather data and evidence from all the participating countries. The responses to this questionnaire will help preparing one of the keynote speeches presented at the Meeting.

The deadline for completing the questionnaire is the 31st of July 2015.

It comprises two main parts. The first one is a regular questionnaire about the status of RPL – a.k.a. Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes – in your country. Most questions are multiple choice questions and some require short answers. Nevertheless, please do feel free to add any explanations that may help understanding the situation about RPL in your country. The second part is about good practice(s), also in your country.

Please do not hesitate to contact patrick.werquin@gmail.com for any question or issue with the questionnaire.

1. Situation of your country regarding Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The focus of the meeting being on “successful implementation”, it is believed that some of the questions below will help understanding the factors hindering or promoting, preferably promoting, actual implementation of RPL.

1.1. RPL System – RPL Practices¹

In order to best describe the status of advancement of RPL in your country, could you please indicate whether the following exists in your country:

1.1.1. There is a well- developed official rhetoric² for RPL:

- ☐ Very much

¹ Please tick mark the right option regarding your country and/or type your response/comments. Thank you.

² A rhetoric is a written or oral communication that is intended to convince people about the merit of RPL.

- Somewhat developed
- Beginning
- Not at all

1.1.2. Key stakeholders' vision³ for the RPL in the country:

- Yes, all stakeholders⁴ (Government, enterprises, employers organisations, trade union, learners association...) have a shared vision about RPL.
- Yes, all stakeholders have a vision about RPL, but it is different from a stakeholder to another
- Only some stakeholders have a vision about RPL
- There is only one champion promoting RPL
(Please name it:)
- There is no such a thing as a vision about RPL in the country

1.1.3. There is existing practices for RPL in the country:

- Yes, in all sectors of the economy
- Yes, in some sectors (pilots)
(Please name them:)
- Yes, in one sector
(Please name it:)
- Not at all

1.1.4. Stakeholders are involved in the RPL system⁵:

- Yes, all stakeholders are involved in RPL
- Yes, some stakeholders are involved in RPL
(Please name them:)
- Yes, one stakeholder is involved in RPL
(Please name it:)
- No stakeholder is interested in RPL

1.1.5. Who is the main promoter of RPL in the country?⁶:

.....

1.1.6. Do stakeholders make provision of skills gaps training, or top-up training, for RPL applicants; for the skills they may not have acquired through prior learning?

- Yes, all stakeholders make sure RPL applicants have access to skills gaps training,
- Yes, some stakeholders make provision of skills gaps training
(Please name them:)

³ A vision is an aspirational description of what an organisation would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid-term or long-term future.

⁴ See Annexes for definitions.

⁵ See Annexes for definitions.

⁶ See Annexes for definitions.

- Yes, one stakeholder makes provision of skills gaps training
(Please name it:)
- No stakeholder makes provision of skills gaps training

1.1.7. Does the promoter of RPL maintain information about the implementation of RPL?

- Yes, very much
- Yes, somewhat
- Yes, very little
- Not at all

1.1.8. Do the stakeholders evaluate the benefits and impact of acquiring awards through RPL?

- Yes, very much
- Yes, somewhat
- Yes, very little
- Not at all

Additional comments (if necessary), on any of your responses above (Please specify to which question(s) you are providing additional comments): (Please add as many pages as necessary)

1.2. Cost and Financing

For a better understanding of the situation in terms of costs and financing, could you please respond to the following questions:

1.2.1. Is there a cost for enrolling/registering in an RPL process for the applicant?

- ☐ Yes, all the time
- ☐ Yes, in some cases (some sectors provide RPL for free; Please provide examples of the fee paying sectors and the free sectors)
- ☐ No, it is free for all applicants

1.2.2. If “Yes” to the previous question, what is the cost of enrolling in an RPL process for the applicant?

- ☐ There is a unique cost throughout the country (Please report the price):
.....
.....
- ☐ There are several prices by level of educational attainment and/or industry sector (Please provide 2 or 3 examples of prices, e.g. the cheapest and the most expensive):
.....
.....
.....

1.2.3. Is there a cost for enrolling/registering in an RPL process for the employer (for applicants that have a job)?

- ☐ Yes, all the time
- ☐ Yes, in some cases (some sectors provide RPL for free; Please provide examples of the fee paying sectors and the free sectors)
- ☐ No, it is free for all employers

1.2.4. If “Yes” to the first question, what is the cost of enrolling in an RPL process for the employer?

- ☐ There is a unique cost throughout the country (Please report the price):
.....
.....
- ☐ There are several prices by level of educational attainment and/or industry (Please provide 2 or 3 examples of prices, e.g. the cheapest and the most expensive):
.....
.....
.....

1.2.5. If “Yes” to the first or third question, who covers the cost of the RPL process?

- ☐ The applicant alone
- ☐ The employer alone
- ☐ The Public Employment Service
- ☐ The applicant and the employer
- ☐ The applicant and the Public Employment Service
- ☐ Other or other combination
(Please specify:.....)

1.2.6. Is there a grant/loan system for RPL applicant (e.g. in the form of a right-to-study leave)?

- ☐ Yes, for all applicants
- ☐ Yes, for some applicants (Please specify the sectors and/or the conditions:.....)
- ☐ No

1.2.7. Is it possible for individual applicants to use their rights to a study-leave, if applicable, in order to undertake an RPL process (for the preparation, or for the assessment)?

- ☐ Yes, in all industries
- ☐ Yes, in some industries
- ☐ No

1.2.8. How much is the Government spending for developing an RPL system? What is the fraction of the Education budget that goes to the RPL system, if any? What is the fraction of the Ministry of Labour budget that goes to the RPL system?
(Please provide estimates if the actual figures are unknown)

Additional comments (if necessary), on any of your responses above (Please specify to which question(s) you are providing additional comments)⁷: (Please add as many pages as necessary)

⁷ Several options are possible regarding cost and financing, e.g. the cost may vary from a ministry to another, or by level of educational attainment. The cost may be shared. Please explain whenever necessary.

1.3. Assessment and Validation

Country practices vary a lot when it comes to assessment and validation, from portfolio to simulation of a workplace to observation at the workplace, and to written tests, to name a few. Therefore could you please respond to the following questions:

1.3.1. Are there eligibility criteria for a candidate to apply for an RPL process (age, number of years of experience, qualification(s)...)?

- ☐ Yes, there are conditions in all instances
- ☐ Yes, there are conditions in some instances (Please specify.....)
- ☐ No, access to an RPL process is always granted to any individual wishing to do so.

1.3.2. If “Yes”, to the previous question, what is/are the eligibility condition(s) (Please type in full)?

.....

.....

.....

1.3.3. What is generally accepted in terms of learning outcomes⁸?

- ☐ Learning acquired from occupational experience
- ☐ Learning acquired from private experience (not-for-profit organisation, assisting family members)
- ☐ Both type of learning outcomes

1.3.4. Against which standards are learning outcomes assessed?

- ☐ Standards provided by the Ministry of Education
- ☐ Standards provided by the Ministry of Labour
- ☐ Standards provided by other ministries or institutions
(Please name it/them:)
- ☐ Ad Hoc Standards prepared by the RPL Authority
- ☐ Other (Please specify:)

1.3.5. Do employers allow workers, who are RPL applicants, to prepare for their assessment (collecting evidence, documenting learning, practicing new competences etc.) during working hours, at the workplace?

- ☐ Yes, always
- ☐ Yes, under certain conditions (Please specify.....)
- ☐ Yes, for some hours only (How many hours.....)

⁸ See Annexes for definition.

- No

1.3.6. Do employers allow workers, who are RPL applicants, to be assessed during working hours, at the workplace?

- Yes, always
- Yes, under certain conditions (Please specify.....)
- Yes, for some hours only (How many hours.....)
- No

1.3.7. What are the most often used assessment methods for RPL applicant? (Please rank the following options according to frequency of use: 1 for the most frequent, 2 for the second most frequent, etc. Please put “0”, if the option is not used at all in your country. Provide percentage (%) if they are known⁹)

	Ranking or/and % if available
○ Portfolio of competences	
○ Simulation (a workplace environment is simulated, in a training centre typically), i.e. Trade test	
○ Observation at the workplace (for applicants having a job)	
○ Written test	
○ Interview	
○ Other (Please specify:)	
○ A combination of the above for individual applicants ¹⁰ (Please specify:)	
○ Another combination of the above for individual applicants (Please specify:)	
○ Another combination of the above for individual applicants (Please specify:)	

1.3.8. How effective is the assessment methods in use in your country (evaluated from the point of view of the applicants)?

- Very much (a large fraction of the applicants report they are satisfied with the way they have been assessed)

⁹ For instance, portfolio are used in 90% of the cases, and observation in 10%.

¹⁰ For example, a sector may impose “Portfolio and Observation” for all RPL applicants, and this sector represent 10% of the total number of RPL applicants, all the other sectors (the rest) using only portfolio: Please add the combination “Portfolio+Observation” and rank it 2 (10%), and tick mark Portfolio and rank it 1 (90%).

- Somewhat (a fair fraction of the employers report they are satisfied with the way they have been assessed)
 - Barely (a small fraction the employers report they are satisfied with the way they have been assessed)
 - Not all (employers always report they are not satisfied with the way they have been assessed)
- 1.3.9. How effective is the assessment methods in use in your country (evaluated from the point of view of employers)?
- Very much (a large fraction of the employers report they are satisfied with the competences of the RPL graduates)
 - Somewhat (a fair fraction of the employers report they are satisfied with the competences of the RPL graduates)
 - Barely (a small fraction the employers report they are satisfied with the competences of the RPL graduates)
 - Not all (employers always report they are not satisfied with the competences of the RPL graduates)
- 1.3.10. What is the pass rate at the eligibility criteria (i.e. the fraction of the applicants that are allowed to continue onto the actual assessment process)? Please provide a rate or tick mark one of the following):
- There is eligibility criteria (all applicants go directly into the assessment process)
 - Very much (a large fraction of the applicants pass, i.e. > 80%)
 - Somewhat (a fair fraction of the applicants pass, i.e. = 50%)
 - Barely (a small fraction of the applicants pass; i.e. = 15%)
 - Not all (a tiny fraction of the applicants pass; i.e. = 2%)
- 1.3.11. What is the pass rate at the assessment (i.e. the fraction of the applicants that actually graduate (full qualification, credits...) at the actual assessment process)? Please provide a rate or tick mark one of the following):
- There is eligibility criteria (all applicants go directly into the assessment process)
 - Very much (a large fraction of the applicants pass, i.e. > 80%)
 - Somewhat (a fair fraction of the applicants pass, i.e. = 50%)
 - Barely (a small fraction of the applicants pass; i.e. = 15%)
 - Not all (a tiny fraction of the applicants pass; i.e. = 2%)
- 1.3.12. Did you notice an evolution in the attitude of the employers regarding RPL?
- No, no change, always unhappy
 - No, no change, always happy
 - Yes, from very content at the outset to less content nowadays
 - Yes, from not content at the outset to very content nowadays
 - Other (Please specify:)

1.3.13. Is there a growing number of employers that are hiring RPL graduates?

- ☐ No, steady number
- ☐ No, diminishing number
- ☐ Yes, growing number

1.3.14. Is RPL attracting employers from industry sectors that were not active in RPL before?

- ☐ Yes, a lot
- ☐ Yes, some
- ☐ No

1.3.15. Since when (which year) is your country organising actual assessment of RPL applicants?

1.3.16. How many applicants did enrol for RPL assessment in 2014? (If the number are available, please provide the time series for the number of RPL applicants; if there is an eligibility criteria, and if the number are available, please break down the time series by number of applications to eligibility, and to actual assessment)

1.3.17. How many RPL applicants did graduates (full qualification, credits or else) in 2014? (If the number are available, please provide the time series for the number of RPL graduates)

Additional comments (if necessary), on any of your responses above (Please specify to which question(s) you are providing additional comments): (Please add as many pages as necessary)

1.4. Award(s)

What is awarded to successful RPL applicants is very relevant for the success of the system. Therefore, could you please respond to the following questions:

1.4.1. What types of awards are delivered (granted) to successful applicants of an RPL process?

- ☐ A full qualification
- ☐ A partial qualification
- ☐ Some credits toward a qualification
- ☐ A labour market certificate of competences
- ☐ An exemption of academic prerequisite(s) for access to formal studies (e.g. in the tertiary education system)
- ☐ An exemption of all or part of a programme in a higher education cycle
- ☐ An exemption of all or part of a programme in a TVET cycle...)?
- ☐ Other (Please provide:)

1.4.2. Who delivers (grants) those awards?

- ☐ A ministry (Please name it:)
- ☐ Several ministries may award (Please name them:)
- ☐ An inter-ministerial body (Please name it:.....)
- ☐ Education and training authority (Please name it:)
- ☐ Private education and training providers
- ☐ Chambers of Commerce and Industry
- ☐ Other Trade bodies (please specify.....)
- ☐ Other (Please provide:)

1.4.3. Is the RPL award equivalent to that granted in the formal education and training system (if applicable: e.g. credits, full qualification...), by the Ministry of Education?

- ☐ Yes, it is the exact equivalent
- ☐ No, it is a specific award (with a rubber stamp on the document for instance, to distinguish it from the formal education and training system awards) but it has some currency (recognition) in the formal education and training system
- ☐ No, it is a specific award, with no currency (recognition) in the formal education and training system

- 1.4.4. Would you say that the award delivered after an RPL process has the same currency in society (societal recognition) as an equivalent¹¹ award delivered in the formal education and training system?
- Yes, exact same currency (employers and the society at large do not make any difference)
 - No, the RPL award is less valued than the education and training system award

Additional comments (if necessary), on any of your responses above (Please specify to which question(s) you are providing additional comments): (Please add as many pages as necessary)

¹¹ In terms of level.

1.5. Factors impacting RPL system

In this section, we would like you to tell us any hindering (barriers) or promoting (facilitating) factors to the effective development and successful implementation of an RPL system in your country?

1.5.1. Hindering Factors (Key barriers)

Please type in full what you see as hindering factors: (Please add as many pages as necessary)

1.5.2. Promoting (Facilitating) Factors

Are there factors that promote the successful implementation of RPL? E.g. is there a well-established communication strategy (by whom)? Is there some sort of guidance of potential applicants?

Please type in full what you see as promoting/facilitating factors: (Please add as many pages as necessary)



2. Good Practices

This section is about describing at least one and at the most two good practices that led to improved/successful implementation of RPL in your country.

In addition to providing a title for each good practice provided, please indicate under which of the following category(ies) does it fall (a maximum of two categories per practice). The idea is not to put practices into boxes and to pre-empt the structure of the workshop but to have an understanding of the themes addressed in all the good practice(s).

Several good practices reported here will be selected for a presentation at the workshop. Therefore, please also indicate whether your country will be represented at the workshop and the name of the contact person that would be willing to present the good practice if it is selected.

Categories:

- Stakeholders' ownership and commitment
- Cost and funding
- Assessment and Validation
- Skills upgrading
- Quality assurance
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Awards
- Other: please specify

Good practices in the areas related to assessment and validation of knowledge and skills, costs and funding, monitoring and evaluation and stakeholders' ownership and commitment would be preferred.

To the extent possible, each good practice should elaborate on the reasons why do you think it can be considered as a good practice, how is it different from practice implemented earlier (added value, or significant change in practices), and how and to what extent has it been successful in achieving the objectives.

Each good practice should therefore have a descriptive part (objectives, public or target groups, financing...) and a more analytical part (reasons for success...).

All available statistics are welcome (take up, cost...).

3. Annexes – Definition of Some Key Concepts

3.1. Stakeholders

Stakeholders are all actors passively or actively interested, involved or committed to RPL. Typical examples of stakeholders in this context are:

- The Government in general
- The Ministry of Education
- The Ministry of Labour
- Another ministry
- An inter-ministerial body
- Employers, and employer organisations
- Trade unions
- Teachers
- Assessors
- Families
- Learners and RPL applicants
- Non- profit organisations (NGOs)
- RPL providers
- The private sector (employers, employers associations...)
- Student associations
- Training and/ or Qualification Authority

3.2. Stakeholders Involvement

Stakeholders could be involved at any stage, such as:

- Elaboration of the standards and assessment tools
- Awareness building and publicity
- Counselling and guidance
- Assessment and validation process (professionals may be invited to assess applicants)
- Recognition of awards delivered to successful applicants
- Strategy for reaching the most needy people (outreach)
- Skills gap training

3.3. Learning outcomes

What a learner knows, understands and is able to do at any point in time during a learning process, i.e. knowledge, skills and attributes. Learning outcomes are usually assessed on completion of a learning process. In the case of RPL, learning outcomes could be acquired in the formal education and training system, or non-formally or informally. It is the assessment process that decides to which level of educational attainment or qualifications the learning outcomes correspond.

3.4. Competences

Ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a given, well identified, context.