

Webinar: Innovations and Strategies for Recognition of Prior Learning

14 October 2020, 11h00-13h00 (CEST)

Welcome and introduction

Ashwani Aggarwal, Team Leader for workgroup (WBL, Apprenticeships, RPL)

Opening Speech

Ms Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Africa, ILO

- The webinar's theme and objectives are very timely. As mega-drivers are transforming the World of Work, certain jobs are lost, while new ones are being created
- Appropriate skilling, reskilling and upskilling needed to support successful transitions
- As highlighted in the ILO Centenary declaration, skills development and lifelong learning (LLL) are at the core of a human-centered approach to the Future of Work
- Skills development and LLL systems need support from tripartite constituents
- Abijan declaration, adopted in December, 2019, recognizes RPL as a key priority
- It is important to increase the diversity and flexibility of skills acquisition
- RPL system should be in place to recognize learning through informal and non-formal means, which would ease transitions between jobs, from the informal to formal economy, promote fair migration, etc.
- Many institutions do not recognize skills/knowledge acquired through informal and non-formal means
- Informal workers are especially vulnerable in the COVID-19 crisis
- While the ILO, UNESCO, African Union recommended all countries to establish RPL system, many countries continue to face challenges and seek support from the ILO
- It is the time for innovations, such as through using digital technologies and new strategies
- This webinar enables mutual learning and sharing of new approaches

Poll 1: What is the most important benefit of RPL?

1. Improving employability	30%
2. Skills recognition and fair migration	25%
3. Access to higher education and LLL	18%
4. Transition from informal to formal economy	15%
5. Social inclusion and self-esteem	12%

Panel session on innovations and strategies for RPL

Moderator: Ashwani Aggarwal

Mr Manish Kumar, MD & CEO, National Skill Development Corporation, India

- From the experience of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in India, RPL is based on public private partnerships, involving both the private sector and the government
- RPL infrastructure was created using the loan from developmental banks
- India has a private sector-led National Skills Qualification Framework with 10 levels (similar to Australia)

- NSDC is working towards leveraging its nationwide presence for reaching out to workers in the informal sector through setting standards, offering short-term skilling and RPL opportunities
- There is a huge potential for RPL in India, as there are many informally skilled workers, in which 67% of them have work experience of over 10 years
- It is important to mobilize private sector participation and provide skilling opportunities
- Sector Skills Councils engage industries in their sectors to take up RPL, using evaluation studies to show productivity gains on account of RPL
- The RPL portal (electronic process) improves targeting of candidates, as individuals can learn more about RPL, register themselves and connect to the nearest assessment centres
- Assessors are from a third party to minimize risks of corruption
- The main challenges are widespread informality and difficulty in getting people into skilling
- **RPL certified individuals earn 19% higher income compared to those not certified, mainly benefiting those who earn the least**
- RPL helps improve the confidence and self-esteem of certified individuals
- RPL is a great tool to create a skills repository or skills bank based on certified individuals
- The industry is often deterred by the risk of labour issues, but it should come forward and contribute more
- Constant conversation with the industry is necessary
- As a large proportion of the industry is in the informal sector, the key questions is how to take RPL into informal sector?

Question from moderator: How to ensure quality and prevent corruption in RPL?

- Use technologies, e.g. GEO Tags; organize site visits
- Rank partners and only work with the ones with good ratings
- Prevent cheating through disincentives, e.g. publish on website

Mr Comoros Mwenda, National Project Coordinator, ILO Tanzania

- RPL system in Tanzania started by the ILO
- RPL programme can be life changing for participants, whose income was doubled or even tripled with increased access to jobs
- Most workers do not have qualifications as they acquire skills informally in the informal economy
- RPL can improve employability and LLL opportunities, social inclusion and self-esteem by offering alternative learning pathway
- Some of the challenges in RPL systems are shortage of trained RPL experts; inadequate institutional capacity; rigidity in formal qualifications and competency standards, as well as ensuring the credibility
- Good practices in Tanzania (More than 10,000 candidates)
 - Policy, legal and regulatory framework
 - Commitment and financial support from government
 - National RPL guidelines
 - Active engagement of employers and workers
 - Online RPL platform
 - Link certified candidates to infrastructural projects and government tender
- We call on young people who have skills in the relevant fields but do not have certificates to enrol into the RPL programme through VETA colleges

Question from moderator: As the majority of RPL candidates are men, what are the strategies to increase female participants?

- 10-15% are female; due to nature of occupation
- Include sectors with more female participation, e.g. hairdressing

Poll 2: How satisfied are you with the implementation of RPL in your country?

1. Dissatisfied 32%
2. Very dissatisfied 11%
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 23%
4. Satisfied 27%
5. Very satisfied 7%

Ms Karen Deller, South Africa

- South Africa has an effective RPL system
- An innovative e-RPL portal funded and set up by BANKSETA
- RPL system based on unit standards; qualifications can be earned in full or in part
- E-RPL portal sets up clearing house for candidates, employers and training providers and serves as interface between them
- RPL is about prior, uncertified and unassessed learning; not just an assessment but a process, a mediation to support candidates
- Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) pertains to formal learning that have not yet been formally certified
- Banking sector:
 - legal requirement
 - Train candidates throughout 5 years ; around 50,000 people have used the portal over last 3 years
 - Multiple RPL providers in the portal; employers can select candidates
- E-Portal provides sectors with information about RPL, creates awareness and increase understanding of RPL, e.g. through videos that explain requirements
- Users are guided by to RPL advisors on portal
 - National senior certificate (NSC); may get CAT exemption if passed
 - Identify and upload internal training courses already taken for CAT exemption
 - Formal exemption letter
 - Enter RPL process: pre-assessment

Mr Ernesto Villalba-Garcia, The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)

- CEDEFOP has over 20 years of RPL experience in Europe
- European guidelines of validation provide necessary conditions, which cannot be too prescriptive (currently working on the next update)
- Guidelines work with an inventory
- 4 stages of validation
- Successful RPL system requires the involvement of all stakeholders
- 2 fundamental principles:
 1. All learning, irrespective of where and when it takes place, is valuable for the individual and for society;
 2. Formal education needs to be complemented by validation of non-formal and informal learning.
- RPL system should:
 1. Place individuals at the centre
 2. Be tailored for beneficiaries and provide comprehensive support
 3. Have clear goals and manage expectations
 4. Involve all stakeholders
 5. Use a strategic and overarching approach

6. Work with other services

- It is important to use NQFs and define standards for better quality assurance
- Good practices in Ireland: RPL practitioners network serves as a community of practice to ensure common understanding
- RPL system should leverage digital technologies and enhance use of ICT for skills assessment and standardization of tools. Nevertheless, we need to be careful of how they are used
- Digital credentials through Europass is not ready for RPL but mainly for formal learning
- Systems need to be coherent: synergies are needed between RPL and digital credentials

Poll 3: How can the implementation of RPL be improved in your country?

1. Building awareness of the benefits of RPL 42%
2. Sharing costs of assessment between government, employers and RPL candidates 19%
3. Providing skills upgrading training to RPL candidates 15%
4. Using digital technology and e-RPL 13%
5. Increasing the capacity of assessors 11%

Questions & Answers

Moderator: Ashwani Aggarwal

Closing Remarks

Prof. Patrick Werquin, France

- RPL for employability is key. It is mainly for workers
- RPL is a second chance of qualifications, which is a main component of employability
- Stigmatization is key challenge
- It is crucial to agree on key concepts to avoid confusion
- RPL is a process; people need to be guided by a good system
- All stakeholders should be involved
- RPL and formal learning systems are allies, not competitors
- RPL is flexible, so 'top-up' training can be provided before or after the assessment
- One key question is whether RPL should lead to full qualifications, as RPL can be very demanding for applicants
- It is better to use a step-by-step approach; by offering partial qualifications, so that individuals can build qualifications throughout their life
- We need to be careful with digital systems as many people don't have access to the internet and many are illiterate. Instead, the focus should be on becoming more modern with the use of portfolios of competencies and how to document learning (e.g. using videos)
- RPL may not necessarily aim to bring people from the informal to formal economy; employers may be deterred by taxes. Instead, the goal should be to improve the informal economy by adding a layer of assessment to the informal system
- RPL systems need a good communications strategy as RPL is a complex concept
- RPL does not necessarily need a national qualifications framework to work – it needs a qualifications system