

Report of the Online Consultative Workshop on the Review of the Recognition of Prior Learning Coordination Policy (2016)

19 August 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Mr Vijayen Naidoo – CEO of the Quality Council on Trades and Occupations (QCTO)
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BACKGROUND

The DHET is undertaking a comprehensive review of policy and legislation governing the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) System to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, one of the targets of the Department is to ensure that NQF-related policies are developed or reviewed and monitored. The Department has initiated a process to review the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Coordination Policy (2016).

As part of the review process, the Department held a consultative meeting with SAQA and the three Quality Councils on 18 February 2021. The purpose of the meeting was to, among others, to identify barriers and challenges to the implementation of RPL and to recommend proposed amendments to the RPL Coordination Policy and other RPL related policies.

Emanating from the February consultative meeting, a report on the Recommendations and Proposed Amendments to the RPL Coordination Policy (2016) was approved by the Director-General for consultation with key stakeholders.

ONLINE CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP

Following the approval of the Recommendations and Proposed Amendments to the RPL Coordination Policy (2016), an Online Consultative Workshop (as part of the revision of the RPL Coordination Policy) was held on 19 August 2021.

The workshop was attended by 214 participants from a wide range of stakeholders, including:



- Government
- Universities
- Private Higher Education Institutions
- Universities South Africa (USAf)
- South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)
- Quality Councils
- Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)
- Professional Bodies
- Regional Offices
- TVET and CET Colleges

OPENING AND WELCOME

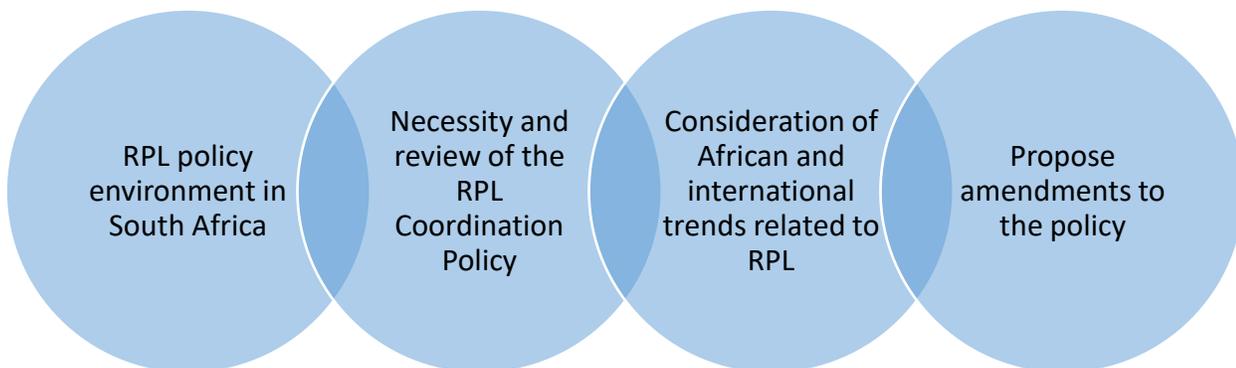
MS N GASA

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: PLANNING, POLICY AND STRATEGY, DHET

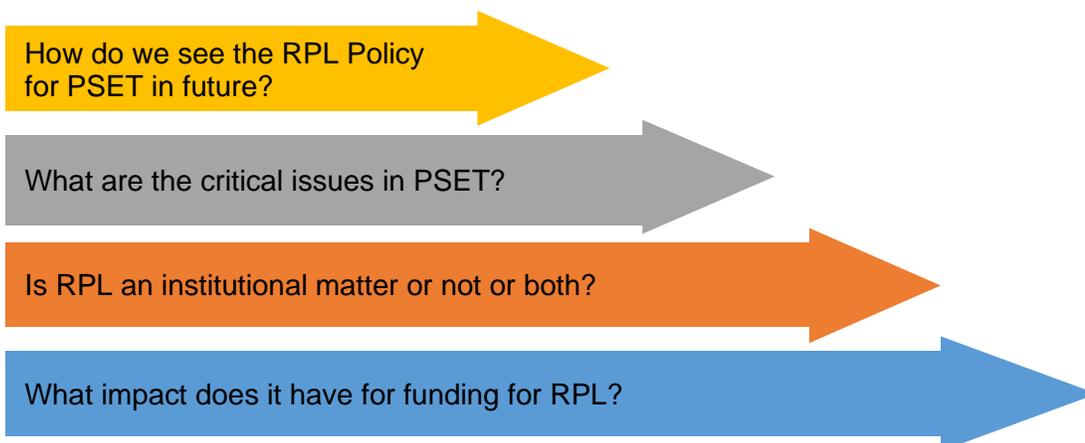
Ms Gasa opened the workshop by expressing her gratitude to the attendees for taking part in the workshop. She mentioned that:

- The White Paper for Post -School Education and Training, 2014 states that “Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) remains a key approach to redressing past injustices and recognising competence gained through practical workplace learning and experience”.
- The two main purposes of RPL in South Africa are access and redress and (RPL) takes place within a range of differing contexts and that RPL, on its own, is not a solution to either inequalities or unemployment in South Africa, but is a key developmental strategy that should be further prioritised in the our (South African) context.
- There is a range of RPL-related initiatives that have been underway for several years and others that are being planned for the future.
- All stakeholders played a key role to bring us where we are today – not without barriers, challenges and hurdles along the way – implementation of RPL like any other strategy is not easy.
- As key stakeholders in education and training it must be reflected on how we can take advantage of different perspectives and mandates to support the implementation of RPL.

The purpose of the workshop was to consult with stakeholders on the following:



The discussions at the workshop aimed at strengthening understanding and clarify questions such as:



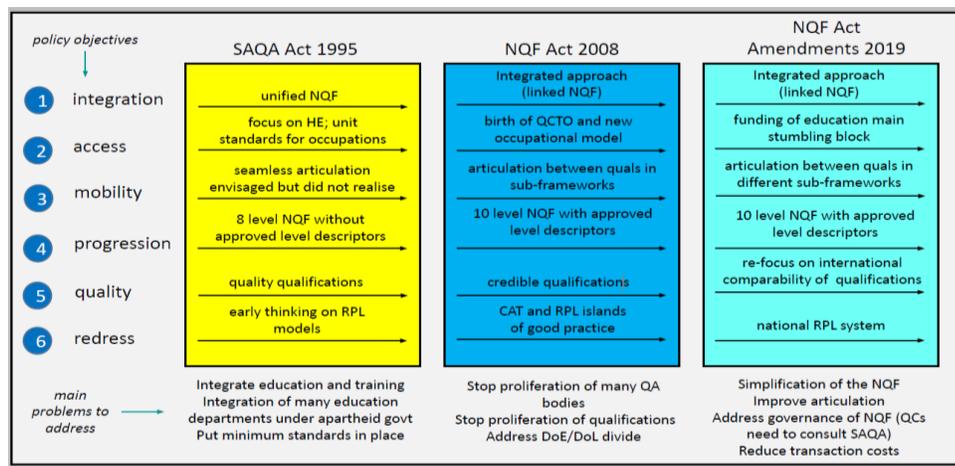
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: DR JAMES KEEVY: CEO JET EDUCATION SERVICES

Where are we and where to in terms of RPL and RPL Policies in the Country?

Dr Keevy highlighted:

- South Africa is still grappling with inequality in education and training and the question is - what can RPL do to address inequalities?
- A study done by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlighted that RPL is not consistently applied in the country and within institutions.

The diagram below provides the changes in the NQF, its policy objectives and problems/challenges it is facing.



The presentation stimulated discussions on:

The six concepts for consideration

- Categorisation of different types of learning (Informal, non-formal and formal)
- Scaffolding of learning outcomes
- Interoperability
- Data Privacy
- Articulation (systematic and specific)
- Policy layering

The six future considerations

- Proxies for human capacity
- Credential fluency
- Accelerated change
- Continental change
- International change
- Coming together of learning and the world of work

Asking the following questions

- How do we see the RPL Policy environment for PSET in future?
- What are the critical issues for RPL in the PSET SYSTEM?
- Is RPL an institutional matter or not or both?
- What impact does it have on funding for RPL?

PANEL DISCUSSION 1: RPL Policy Environment

Moderator: DR JULIE REDDY, CEO OF SAQA

Dr Julie Reddy moderated the first panel which focused on the RPL Policy environment in South Africa. In her introduction she commented that RPL in the country is layered and it must be questioned if it is working optimally and if it is meeting its objectives.

MS BELLINAH MOLAUDZI

DIRECTOR: NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK, DHET

Ms Molaudzi gave an overview of the **RPL Coordinating Policy** and the **Report on the Recommendations and Proposed amendments to the RPL Coordination Policy, 2016**.

Among other things, the presentation covered the:

- Background to the RPL Coordination Policy which was published by the Minister in 2016;
- Progress made with the implementation of the Policy;
- The Department's process to review the RPL Coordination Policy;
- Emanating from a consultative meeting held in February 2021, a Report on the recommendations and proposed amendments to the RPL Coordination Policy, 2016 was approved by the Director-General for consultation with key stakeholders;
- Requests for written comments on both the RPL Coordination Policy and the Report were sent to stakeholders;
- Comments have been received from organisations including SAQA, CHE, QCTO, Umalusi, USAf, several universities, TVET colleges, Professional Bodies and Individuals.
- The comments received highlighted issues such as:
 - Changes needed in the policy;
 - Proposals for amendment;
 - Aspects that needed clarification/to be removed; and
 - Proposals for the simplification of coordination of RPL in South Africa.

DR HEIDI BOLTON

SENIOR RESEARCHER, SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

Dr Bolton provided a summary of SAQA's comments on the **RPL Coordination Policy** as well as the **Report on the recommendations and proposed amendments to the RPL Coordination Policy, 2016**, including comments from 10 Professional Bodies.

She highlighted that the public finds it confusing that there are three sets of RPL policies, viz.: (1) the DHET's **RPL Coordination Policy**, (2) SAQA's **National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning**, and (3) Quality Councils' RPL & CAT policies. Stakeholders have expressed confusion as to which of the RPL policies they should follow, especially when there are conflicts in the requirements of the different policies. SAQA proposed that there could be one overarching national RPL policy and criteria document, developed together by the departments, SAQA and

the Quality Councils, including the general policy, criteria, guidelines (per entity), and other relevant topics.

The purpose of the DHET's **RPL Coordination Policy**, especially its funding strategies are not aligned with existing structures and funding protocols.

The national RPL coordinating mechanism has been established in the DHET is not fully operational and it is not clear to NQF entities and stakeholders what it is supposed to do. More communication is urgently needed in this regard.

Dr Bolton further deliberated that:

- RPL needs to be seen as one component of the range of flexible learning pathways offered – that includes Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), bridging programmes and supporting elements once learners have commenced studies, such as Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs), Supplemental Instruction (SI), and others.
- In specific there is resistance on the “exemption based on RPL should be limited to not more than 50% of the modules or courses of the qualification programme” and the “Not more than 10% of a cohort of students in a higher education programme should be admitted through an RPL process” in the CHE RPL-CAT policy.
- Professional Bodies are questioning that RPL should be centralised (or not), and its funding strategies, and agree that more communication on national developments should take place. They requested that the DHET should consider minimum standards for RPL. They also pleaded to be included in the RPL research/review process.

DR CHRISTABELLE MOYO

RESEARCHER: MANAGEMENT OF THE HEQSF, CHE

In her presentation, Dr Moyo indicated that:

- The CHE uses the NQFPedia's (2014) definition for RPL as “the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and rigorously assessed and moderated for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development”.
- RPL is more than a process of assessment. It is a specialised pedagogical process that also includes “translation” of informal and non-formal bodies of knowledge into their formal and structured equivalent based on specified competencies. The CHE agreed that not anyone can assess RPL, people must be trained in the assessment of RPL.
- Implementation of RPL is context-specific and sub-framework specific. Institutions develop their own RPL policies based on the CHE's RPL-CAT policy that includes exemptions based on RPL should be limited to not more than 50 % of the modules or courses of the qualification programme in question.
- The policy furthermore directs that full qualifications on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) cannot be awarded solely on the basis of RPL and not more than 10% of

a cohort of students in a higher education programme should be admitted through an RPL process (CHE RPL-CAT Policy).

- The CHE does not take specific responsibility of what happens on the ground when it comes to implementing RPL, but includes it in their quality assurance functions. The CHE sees RPL as a critical mechanism, but the general perception is that RPL dilutes the quality of education. Therefore, the uptake of RPL in Universities is still low. RPL is still not understood well by students, academics and staff. Specific academics must be trained on RPL processes and applications.

DR EVA SUJEE

SENIOR MANAGER: QUALIFICATIONS, CURRICULUM AND CERTIFICATION, UMALUSI

Dr Sujee indicated that Umalusi is currently reviewing its RPL Policy. She highlighted:

- For Umalusi, RPL was intended to be used in formal written exams for adult learners for access and placement only.
- Within the context of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GENFETQSF), RPL is the evaluation and acknowledgement of the knowledge and skills that a candidate has gained to enable access to qualifications on the GFETQSF or to further education and training.
- School-going learners do not have prior learning and experiences outside schooling. Therefore, RPL is more applicable to adults with prior learning and experiences and wish to obtain a National or lower Certificate.
- In practice there are certain credits within the National Senior Certificate (NSC) that are recognised for the purposes of certification of the National Curriculum (Vocational (NC(V)) at level two to four. Candidates are accredited for Mathematics, English and Physical Sciences. It is important to note that not all subjects will be considered for RPL and CAT, it depends on the nature and requirements of the qualification.
- Umalusi is not supporting the awarding of a full qualification through RPL however it can be used for access and for credits.

MR VIJAYEN NAIDOO

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: QUALITY COUNCIL ON TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS

Mr Naidoo's departure point was that in the context of the Occupational Qualification Sub-Framework (OQSF), RPL is a valuable practice that gives recognition to a person's previous learning regardless of how the learning was acquired. It is a process by which individuals who had gained skills and knowledge through informal, non-formal or experiential learning can be assessed, recognised and awarded credits for such learning in meeting the requirements of an NQF registered qualification or part qualification. The QCTO acknowledge that RPL can be applied at any NQF level on the OQSF.

He provided an overview of the QCTO's Policy for the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). According to the Policy there are two types of RPL namely: RPL for access into a qualification; and RPL for credits towards a qualification. Through RPL and formal learning, students obtain a

'Statement of Results' that provides admission towards the external integrated summative assessment (EISA). Certification is done upon successful completion of the EISA.

Mr Naidoo further highlighted that the Policy is focusing on workers and not only students to meet the human development challenges, social justice, access to education and training, validation of knowledge, personal and social empowerment, improving the education and training system, and job opportunities within a broader lifelong learning context. It is designed to ensure that the advancement of a comprehensive quality assured and resource driven approach to optimise the delivery of RPL services and programmes.

MR CRAIG PEREIRA

DEPUTY DIRECTOR: NATIONAL ARTISAN DEVELOPMENT, DHET

Mr Pereira gave an overview of the Artisan RPL (ARPL). He indicated that ARPL is a valid and used pathway to a full artisan trade occupational qualification registered on the NQF. RPL is linked to listed trades, provides artisan trade qualification in all sectors of the economy, and sets national criteria and guidelines on the practice of ARPL in order to grant access to non-contracted learners to a national trade test both in the formal and informal sectors of the economy.

He explained that the Criteria and Guidelines for the Implementation of ARPL (2017):

- Are based on a developmental approach to RPL for artisan related occupations that takes into consideration the history and economic development of artisans in South Africa. In particular, the need to consider literacy and numeracy in relation to ARPL is a critical component;
- Progressively replace all previous and prevailing artisan RPL learning practices relating to Section 28 of the repealed Manpower Training Act of 1981; and
- Replaces all previous and prevailing artisan related RPL practices developed and implemented by Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).

ARPL is not a shortcut as candidates must still go through a rigorous assessment process.

There are 18 legacy trades and 3 occupational trades that are implementing ARPL. ARPL ensures parity of esteem for all artisans. He maintains that ARPL is resource driven and funding is a critical issue that requires continuous attention.

He identified areas that may need further exploration:

- Taking RPL to scale;
- RPL and articulation as key drivers in advancing the NQF;
- Policy coherence and alignment to address issues of complexity;
- Funding for RPL;
- Communication and advocacy;
- RPL, CAT and Assessment;
- Parity of esteem; and

- Professionalisation of RPL Practitioners.

SUMMARY: PANEL DISCUSSION 1

The discussions were summarised as follows:

- There are islands of good practices;
- RPL must be taken to scale which must be a key construct with the NQF, and education and training space;
- RPL and Articulation are key in advancing the NQF;
- The issues raised the policy regime to address coherence and alignment must be looked into address issues of complexity.
- Funding was mentioned by most panellist.
- Better communication and advocacy is required;
- RPL, CAT and Assessment need to be further interrogated and understood;
- Professionalization of RPL Practitioners; and
- RPL is not a shortcut a candidate still has to go through RPL assessment.

PANEL DISCUSSION 2: INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF RPL

MODERATOR: DR JAMES KEEVY

MS CYNTHIA REYNDERS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE PROVIDERS OF EDUCATION TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT (APPETD)

Ms Reynders explained that APPETD is an association that comprises of private higher education institutions, private colleges and skills development providers. APPETD promotes quality of education and training while lobbying for the inclusion of private provision in all activities that contribute to excellence in skills development for people. It serves on various boards and works closely with the DHET and the Quality Councils.

She mentioned that:

- The RPL Policy successes and challenges associated with the RPL policy implementation is understood at various levels by APPETD.
- It is apparent that RPL policies which have been developed and implemented by the Quality Councils have created confusion. Policy layering is a huge problem in the PSET sector. A simplistic practical mechanism is needed for RPL.

- RPL should be considered for awarding full qualifications.
- SETA's should understand the RPL landscape.
- SAQA should be the one to coordinate RPL as part of its role to oversee the implementation of the NQF.
- Funding towards ensuring a resourced RPL division whether in DHET or SAQA is pivotal which will give support to RPL initiatives and centres.

MS LANA VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

SENIOR MANAGER: OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMMES, BOLAND TVET COLLEGE

The moderator Dr James Keevy posed the following question to Ms van der Westhuizen:

How do you find Implementation of RPL in Public Institutions, is it problematic from a policy point of view?

Ms Westhuizen responded that adhering to policies was very difficult because occupational units are self-sustaining.

Ms Westhuizen then proceeded to give an overview of RPL from the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges perspective. She indicated that:

- TVET colleges offer two modes of learning namely, Occupational and Vocational programmes. Vocational programmes offer nationally prescribed syllabus with textbooks and examinations less flexible whereas Occupational programmes include learnerships and skills programmes that are externally quality assured and are flexible.
- The implementation of RPL has not reached scale, and it would be good to see RPL evolving and developing into a system that is creating opportunities and reach scale, moving away from pilots.
- The RPL system should allow entry for both occupational and vocational.
- A pool of experts is important as RPL alone is not an assessment.
- There has to be guidance for RPL implementation.
- Advocacy and communication is critical.
- The critical issues identified are lack of buy-in the greater
- A workable and sustainable funding model is needed.
- Clear progression guidelines in the policy would be recommended.

MR HUGH AMOORE

UNIVERSITIES SOUTH AFRICA

The moderator question to Mr Amoore:

Do learners who have a level 4 certificate obtained from a learnership considered to enter into university?

Mr Amoore answered that “Higher Education admission is regulated in ways which the public do not understand. There is Ministerial policy that sets minimum admission requirements, Section 3 on the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No 101 of 1997) is binding to all higher education institutions. There is alternative access route into degree studies. The matriculation board issued certificates to people wanting to enter in degree studies who did not have a formal school leaving qualification.

Mr Amoore further indicated that the policy on RPL for access is well established for degree studies as well as for higher degrees. An example would be for people who are musicians but would like to do a postgraduate in music. RPL for credit is complicated, universities have been reluctant in giving RPL for credit.

He added that USAf and its member universities have provided comprehensive comments on the RPL Coordination Policy. He mentioned that:

- USAf strongly supports, and its member universities have policies and procedures that allow for and promote, the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for purposes of enabling access and granting advanced status towards the attainment of a qualification.
- USAf and its member universities do not support the award of a qualification registered on the HEQSF through RPL.

MS MATSIE NOGE

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL: ACADEMIC, GAUTENG CET COLLEGES

MS LILLAN LOUW: DEPUTY PRINCIPAL: ACADEMIC, WESTERN CAPE CET COLLEGES

Question asked to Ms Noge:

There will be a qualification at the exit of grade 9, once there is a NASCA there must be a way in which an adult can satisfy the equivalence of a grade 9 exit qualification to get RPL access into the NASCA. What is your comment?

A: The Department must put in place a RPL system especially for students who would like to register for NASCA after completing Level 4 which is equivalent to NQF Level 1. We should look into bridging courses before the students move to the NASCA.

Ms Noge alluded that CET colleges service communities and offer different academic and skills programmes. Academic programmes are from ABET Levels one to four as well as NSC rewrites. She noted that Learning Centres that offer skills programmes are not accredited. Critical issues to be considered is the capacity building on RPL for lecturers. In this way CET colleges could become RPL centres.

Ms Louw added that the CET space there is no RPL system in place. RPL is in a form of ‘placement test’ - students are placed at correct levels after writing a placement test on Communication and Mathematics. It is recommended that CET colleges also explore to offer occupational programmes.

PANEL DISCUSSION 3: OVERVIEW OF RPL FOR DESIGNATIONS

MODERATOR: DR JAMES KEEVY

DR SHIRLEY LLOYD

RPL SPECIALIST

Dr Lloyd highlighted that:

- RPL in South Africa is stuck in the literature review space.
- In terms of the professional bodies, particularly South African Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC), keeps a very close eye on international Research and International work on RPL.
- What has been recognised is that there is still huge suspicion around RPL.
- Significant study concluded in Sweden which included various countries, Higher Education Institutions and the European Union commission have reinforced RPL in Higher Education and that no one should be required to study something they already know. This has been used a guideline in the sports space.
- RPL should be considered at the earliest stages of development. Very importantly RPL is both administrative and academic. A functional NQF facilitates the implementation of RPL.
- For example, SASCOC has designed a credible online model where people can drop their evidence what has been used is underpinning qualifications for all levels are used to match the criteria of these designations, learning outcomes approach is hugely important and a credible level descriptor, experience is also considered and the actual evidence submitted.

MR ENRICO DU PLESSIS

PROJECT LEADER, MARKETING ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Mr Du Plessis highlighted that:

- The funding concept is a huge issue that must be addressed specifically in the professional designation area which can allow people to become certified and recognised in a particular industry.
- For the applied skills and competence RPL is an integral part towards the recognition and certification towards a designation.
- The only Designation in the South African Marketing Association is the Associate Marketer at an operational level. Candidate's applied skills and competence are recognised at an

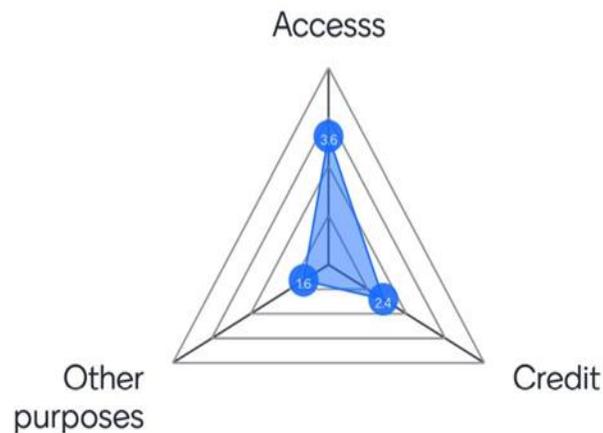
operational level based on NQF level 5 accredited qualification. If a candidate does not have that, he/she can then go through an RPL process.

- RPL is an integral part of the certification process. You must go through a portfolio of evidence process which have been based on RPL principles. There are approved assessors and moderators that assess the portfolios provided. As part of the process and inputs, certification towards a designation is focused on applied skills and competence.
- The biggest challenge is how to bridge the gap between what is being done to link it into the eco- system.

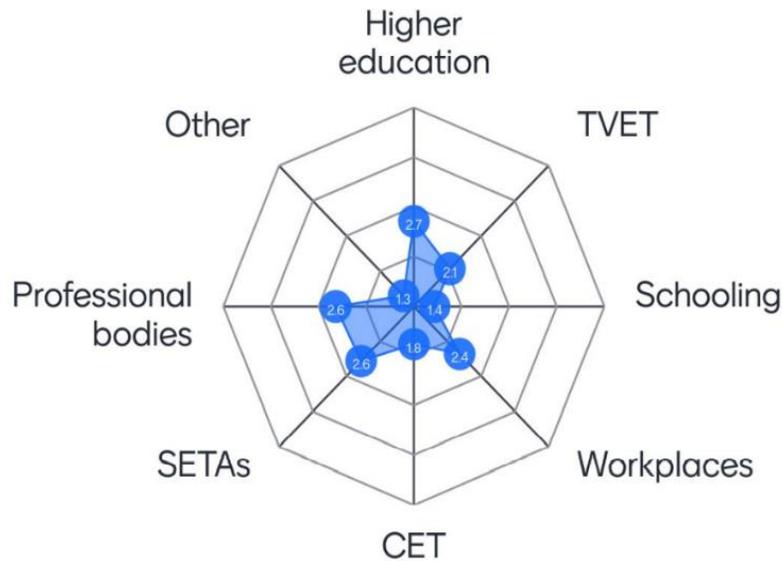
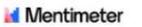
Mentimeter Survey

RPL in South Africa is used mostly for...

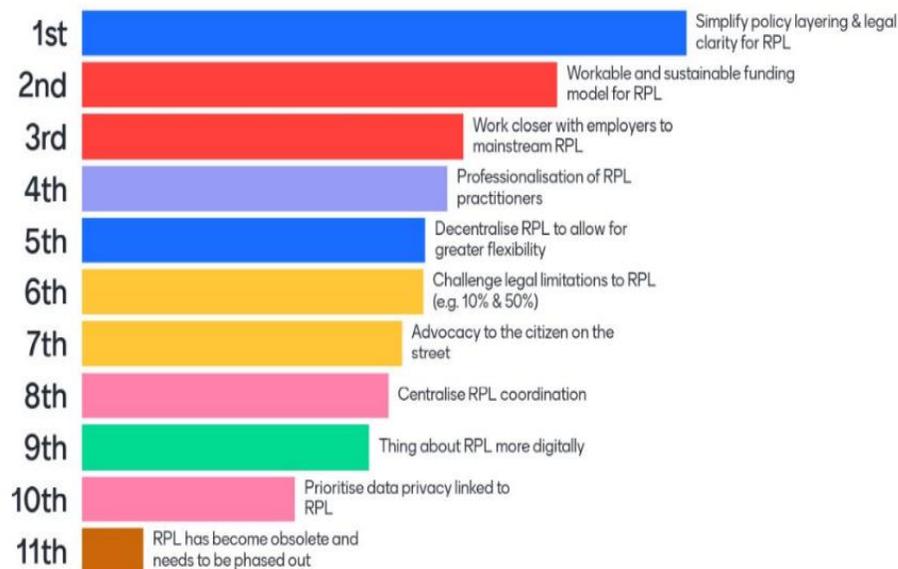
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RPL in South Africa is used mainly in/by...



The following priorities need attention going forward to improve RPL



FINAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be an alignment of policies between SAQA and the Quality Councils;
- RPL should look at making institutions more flexible and would be better if it were to move into the digital space and offer innovative opportunities;
- RPL should be done jointly not only by government and SAQA but by all other institutions involved;
- RPL offers an alternative pathway to life long learning, it offers access and formal recognition therefore there must mechanisms put in place to protect the public, incentives can be offered to recognise RPL implementation to encourage RPL to go to scale;
- It is important to look into the different supporting legislations to look into what could be the barriers to RPL;
- Capacity building for RPL Practitioners is needed;
- RPL advocacy and communication; and
- Innovative models can be used to come up with a plan for funding of RPL.

CLOSING REMARKS

Ms Gasa thanked Dr Keevy for chairing and moderating the workshop and the panel discussions so well, as well as everyone who has taken their time to participate in workshop.