

**INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHALLENGES FOR AN IMPLEMENTATION OF
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND
TRAINING, IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

by

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DECLARATION

I, **DISEGO VINCENTIA THOBEJANE**, declare that **INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHALLENGES FOR AN IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE** is my own work and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other institution.

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Date: 20 May 2016

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved late parents, Mantepu Mojapelo and Rampedi Thobejane, and in memory of my brother, Letshumabatho Thobejane whose untimely death had such a profound impact on my life. I sincerely thank them for inculcating a love for education and a proper work ethic in me through their relentless discipline, training and upbringing.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the challenges for an implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) at three FET Colleges in Limpopo Province. The implementation of RPL in the South African education system is seen as an essential tool to drive transformation in FET Colleges. RPL was designed to play a unique role in the provision of the higher level skills required to support the socio-economic growth and development of the nation. With all these good intentions, RPL is virtually non-existent in our public FET Colleges.

This is a qualitative case study in which both exploratory and descriptive designs were used. Data was collected from observations, documents, interviews and questionnaires from the learners and educators. Twenty one learners and seven educators were interviewed. Questionnaires were distributed to nine educators. The purposive sampling method was used.

The significant findings are that there are no RPL policy guidelines, no quality management systems, a shortage of accredited staff and equipment prescribed for RPL, and lack of management and leadership commitment to implementation of RPL. This study therefore recommends the urgent implementation of RPL in FET colleges to promote access and to urgently address the needed skills for the nation. The research also recommends an effective model on quality assurance which appears to be compromised in colleges. The research also recommends effective and efficient training of educators, as this study revealed that the educators have low academic qualifications. While the Ministerial Task Team on RPL recommends a holistic approach to implementation, this research recommends an effective training model for the FET educators to implement RPL.

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LIST OF ACRONYM

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ANA	Annual National Assessment
ANC	African National Congress
APEL	Accreditation Prior Experiential Learning
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
AQF	Australian Qualification Framework
AQFB	Australian Qualification Framework Board
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative – South Africa
CAPLA	Canadian Association of Prior Learning and Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
CAPS	Competency and Placement Tests
CBVT	Competency-Based Vocational Training
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHET	Centre for Higher Education Transformation
COGHSTA	Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPTD	Continuing Professional and Training Development
CTFL SETA	Clothing, Textiles, Footwear and Leather Sector Education and Training Authority
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DOE	Department of Education
DOL	Department of Labour
DPSA	Department of Public Service Administration
ETD	Education Training and Development
ETDP	Education Training and Development Practitioner
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance
EVC	Erkenning Verworven Competenties
FET	Further Education and Training Institute

FET Act	Further Education and Training Act
FETC	Further Education and Training Certificate
FETI	Further Education and Training Institutions
GENFETQA	General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance
GET	General and Education and Training
GFET	General and Further Education and Training
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Quality Sub-Framework
HE	Higher Education
HET	Higher Education and Training
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
ICASS	Internal Continuous Assessment
IEB	Independent Examination Boards
ISAT	Integrated Summative Assessment Task
JET	Joint Education Trust
JIPSA	Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition
JMB	Joint Matriculation Board
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MQA	Mauritius Qualification Framework
MTT	Ministerial Task Team
NAMB	National Artisan Moderation Body
NATED	National Education Department
NCV	National Certificate Vocational
NCVER	The National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NFSAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIRN	National Independent Research Network
NLRD	National Learners Record Database
NPCC	Northern Province Community College
NPTD	National Professional Educators Diploma
NQF	National Qualification Framework

NSBR	National Standard Body Regulation
NSD	National Skills Development
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
OBE	Outcome Based Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Palama	Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
PLC	Prior Learning Centre
PMG	Parliamentary Monitoring Group
PoE	Portfolio of Evidence
PTC	Pietersburg Technical College
QA	Quality Assurance
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
QMS	Quality Management System
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SAFCERT	South African Certification Council
SAIDE	South African Institute of Distance Education
SAQA	South African Qualification Framework
SASA	South African Schools Act
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SKAV	Skills, Knowledge, Attitude and Values
STATSSA	Statistics South Africa
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
Umalusi	Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
UWC	University of Western Cape
VET	Vocational Education and Training

VPL	Validation of Prior Learning
W&RSETA	Wholesale and Retail Sector Education Authority
YEA	Youth Employment Accord

LIST OF KEY TERMS

- Access
- Assessment
- Experiential Learning
- FET
- Implementation
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Redress
- Social Inclusion

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in South Africa is seen as a key feature of the National Qualification Framework (NQF). It was introduced as a tool for transformation and to provide experiential learning and training to the members of the society who were historically excluded from education and training opportunities (South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA] 2004). These included the unemployed, people with disabilities, women, the out of school youth and young adults, and adults who needed retraining and re-skilling because of the changing economy in South Africa. The introduction of RPL promised to create greater inclusion in formal education and training for marginalised people in the society.

The emergence of the Further Education and Training (FET) policy (FET Act no 98 of 2006) was established with the aim of transforming the education and training system which emanated from the apartheid system. The National Certificate Vocational (NCV) was introduced into the FET college system to directly respond to the scarce skills demand of the South African economy (FET Colleges First 2008:4). This was reiterated by the initiatives of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2009) when stating that it could respond to high unemployment amongst the youth by creating an education system that will be able to facilitate access to the previously disadvantaged people. The technical colleges were therefore merged from 152 colleges to 50 multi campus FET colleges with the introduction of the NCV, a qualification aimed at providing young people with relevant knowledge and skills for employment and further learning.

The merging of FET colleges meant that a new curriculum would be introduced and entry requirements would be amended. For the NCV programmes, the entry requirements were grade 9 and RPL. This meant that as part of the requirement for entry into the NCV programmes, RPL needed to be implemented. There was therefore the development of the NQF, which is a set of principles providing a vision and an organisational structure of recognised qualifications of a learner that encourages lifelong learning (SAQA 2002). The NQF was specifically developed to combine education and training into a single framework, and bring together separate education and training systems into a single, national system; make it easier for learners to enter the education and training system and to move and progress within it; improve the quality of education and training in South Africa; open up learning and work opportunities for those who were treated unfairly in the past because of their race or gender; and enable learners to develop to their full potential, and thereby support the social and economic development of the country as a whole (SAQA 2008). The NQF is therefore driven by two main objectives: facilitating access to, and mobility and progression within education and redress of the past injustices which forms the basis of RPL implementation (SAQA 2002).

The RPL policy was drafted by SAQA (2002) which provided the principles and guidelines for RPL implementation. RPL recognizes

“What the learner knows and can do, irrespective of whether the learning was achieved formally, non-formally or informally. It deals with demonstrable knowledge and learning that an applicant has acquired, whether through formal teaching-learning programmes or through experience” (SAQA 1995).

This shows the relevance of RPL in education and training and in a society, that the previous learning, skills and experience of a learner can be formally acknowledged (Tennant & Pogson 1995:154). This would mean a reduction of poverty, unemployment and increase in skills development. This study investigated the challenges for the implementation of RPL in public FET in Limpopo Province of South Africa. The implementation of RPL in South Africa is therefore seen as an

essential element to drive change for the public FET colleges with a focus on the transformation of the education system inherited from apartheid (FET 2008).

Despite the fact that SAQA (2002) initially developed the RPL policy in 2002 and the criteria and guidelines in 2003, the FET Colleges are still seen as having a history of limited implementation. RPL is a mandate by SAQA's Act 58 of 1995 which was developed by the NQF Act 67 of 2008. The NQF principles were informed by the principles formulated by the African National Congress (ANC) in the ANC Policy Framework (1994:3-4) for education and training that:

- The state has the central responsibility in the provision of education and training. The provision of education shall be planned as part of the coherent and comprehensive national social and economic reconstruction and development programme, including the national strategy for the development of human resources, and the democratisation of our society;
- Education and training policy and practice shall be governed by the principle of democracy, ensuring the active participation of various interested groups, in particular educators, parents, workers, students, employers and the broader community;
- In the process of ensuring education and training for all, there shall be a special emphasis on the redress of educational inequalities among historically disadvantaged groups such as youth, the disabled, adults, women, the unemployed and rural communities;
- There shall be mechanisms to ensure horizontal and vertical mobility and flexibility of access between general formative, technical, industrial and adult education and training in the formal and non-formal sectors; and
- There shall be nationally determined standards for accreditation and certification for formal and non-formal education and training with due recognition of prior learning and experience.

Therefore, RPL in South Africa affirms values in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 section 29 (1996) that everyone has the right to further

education which the state through reasonable measures must make progressively available and accessible, removing barriers to further education. The White Paper on Post School Education and Training (2014) presented to the skills planning committee indicated that RPL has always been a government priority and that the focus is on prioritising the production of critical skills in the country, and affirming that RPL requires a national strategy to ensure that RPL is embedded within the education and training system. The intention of this research is aimed at encouraging RPL implementation in FET colleges as a mandate to address skills shortages in the country.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

RPL in South Africa is defined in terms of the National Standards Bodies Regulation (NSBR) No 18787 of 28 March 1998 issued in terms of the SAQA Act of 1995 as *“the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner how so ever obtained against the learning outcomes required for a special qualification, and the acceptance thereof for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirement (SAQA Act 58 of 1995)”*. RPL is a mandate by the South African NQF which was initially developed in 2002 as a transformation tool to build on a more inclusive system to provide ease of access to different levels and forms of learning, to those who may have been left out of the formal system in the past (Parliamentary Monitoring Group [PMG] 2009). It was an instrument to also address unemployment and a shortage of priority skills, weak infrastructure, monopolies and cartels and a lack of partnerships at workplace level (Youth Employment Accord [YEA] 2013). Implementation of RPL in FET Colleges is a necessity to realise the goals of access, redress and transformation in the country.

Despite the fact that RPL was designed as a mechanism to address shortages of priority skills and unemployment amongst the youth, and as a way to redress the imbalances of the past education and training system; in the present South African education system there are reported challenges that impede the implementation

process in the public FET Colleges of Limpopo Province. A study by Prinsloo (2009) from the University Western Cape (UWC), explored the RPL practises within the public FET college sector, how FET colleges understand and implement RPL, and what RPL practises exist within the colleges. The findings for the study were that there is a slow implementation of RPL in FET colleges, and that the delivery is fragmented. The study found challenges during the implementation process which have been identified as limited resources, RPL stigma and inconsistent and fragmented implementation.

Another significant study by Mahlangu (2013), a master's student at the Tshwane University of Technology, investigated the effects of using various admission requirements to the NCV programmes at FET Colleges. The study revealed that the admission requirements at FET Colleges were too vague and not refined. The study also revealed that the general perception of staff members with regard to the knowledge and understanding of the RPL processes and its implementation leaves much to be desired. Other challenges included the aptitude and psychometric tests, RPL implementation, training of educators, quality assurance systems and access to practical workshops. The challenges were not explored, as it was not the area of study but were revealed as findings from the respective studies. Makinde (2005) argues that an implementation challenge occurs when the desired results on the targeted beneficiaries is not achieved. Makinde (2005) identified four factors that restrict implementation: the ego of the leaders, lack of continuity in government programmes, social, economic, political and administrative variables which are not considered and bribery and corruption.

The challenges cited above, if not addressed, will affect the intended implementation process and benefits and as a result RPL will not be able to deliver on its intended promises of access of opportunities and redress of the injustices of the past. Despite all the efforts that the South African government has put in place, there is still unemployment and a shortage of skills. In lieu of the above, the study therefore aims to investigate the challenges that restrict an implementation of RPL at FET

Colleges and to come up with a possible model for appropriately implementing RPL in FET Colleges that will consequently address the country's economic problems.

1.3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The broad aim of the study is to investigate the challenges that are affecting the implementation of RPL in FET institutions in South Africa.

1.3.1. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- To investigate how assessment criteria for awarding credits for a qualification were undertaken, and for obtaining access into the programme affect RPL.
- To establish how principles and procedures are used for quality assurance of programmes.
- To develop a model that will be used to implement RPL in FET institutions to positively contribute towards effective and efficient implementation of RPL in South African FET colleges.

1.4. MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the challenges affecting the implementation of RPL in public FET colleges?

1.4.1. Research Questions

- How does the assessment criteria used for awarding credits for a qualification and for obtaining credits into the programme affect RPL?

- How are principles and procedures used for quality assurance of programmes?
- Which model can be used to effectively and efficiently contribute towards and the implementation of RPL in public FET colleges?

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate challenges that restrict implementation of RPL in FET Colleges. It has to be acknowledged that South Africa has inherited a very poor skills regime (Badroodien 2004) and that the government should build strong high skills based institutions to be able to address economic growth in the country. With shortages of priority and scarce skills in South Africa, FET Colleges would be a way to help the majority of unemployed youth and the jobless to get access to learning, and help the employed to get reskilled and upskilled. For people who are currently holding lower ranked positions, this can possibly help them get better jobs and promotions. Through FET experience, the skills of employees could possibly change to contribute fairly to the needs and demands of their societies.

The significance of the study is that it will contribute positively towards the effective and efficient implementation of RPL in public FET colleges. This will be done by building commitment in leadership and involving individuals in the implementation process through combined strategies. An effective training strategy is important for the success of any implementation, as it will give the colleges an advantage of empowerment and implementation readiness. Effective training would thus make it easier for colleges to better deliver on the mandate and promises of the NQF, which is redressing the injustices of the past. Training will also assist in a better way in assessing learners for qualifications.

The study will be valuable for policymakers so that they could make meaningful decisions that are relevant that could lead to improvements in the society. The service providers will be able to provide the most needed services, competitive strategies and insights that help government to make decisions regarding the provision of products and services to clients. The government's desire is to draw on the best advice available to be able to develop evidence-based policies to solve problems it is facing and also defending the nation. RPL has been birthed by a number of research studies such as the research by the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) which has played a very significant role in ensuring that RPL is included as a key principle of reform in education and training in South Africa (Lugg, Mabitla, Gordon &Desi 1998).

The business will be able to get information on how to meet the needs of clients and their expectations and to identify problems that the government should be able to focus on, such as development, transformation and innovation and identify readiness for new policies. The study has the potential to help researchers make innovations for further studies in FET Colleges in areas of RPL and curriculum implementation.

There is a recommendation for this study to develop an RPL model for effective and efficient implementation of RPL in FET Colleges. Since the initial development of RPL in South Africa, RPL has never found its rightful place in institutions of learning, regardless of the goals (SAQA 2011). A number of similar challenges were identified but efforts to bring solutions to the challenges were only labour intensive despite the attractive RPL policy which was revised with a mandate to advance the objectives (SAQA (2012)).

1.6. RESEARCH IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

1.6.1. RPL in Australia

Australia introduced RPL in the 1990s as part of the training reform agenda that included the introduction of a Competency-Based Vocational Training (CBVT) system, a national qualification and training package (Cameron & Miller 2006). Extensive research in Australia has been undertaken on RPL since 1995 (Bateman 2006:3). In terms of research there is a body of literature reporting specifically on RPL policy and development issues in Australia. Cameron and Miller (2006) identified three reports; the first was commissioned by the Australian Qualification Framework Board (AQFB) to develop national principles and guidelines for RPL in compulsory education and training. The second report was to identify and analyse the drivers and barriers to RPL implementation in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. The third and the last report provided a strategic response to the findings of the two reports. According to Smith (2004) a significant amount of research into RPL was sponsored by government who wanted to know the failures and successes of RPL. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) was allocated funding to identify barriers to the implementation and to make recommendations for improvements. Senate was instructed to inquire into the Australian VET system which included critiques of RPL policy and practice, while Australian National Training Authority was asked to simplify and enhance RPL as a key component of national policy. From the above three research studies initiated by the government, NCVER, senate and ANTA's reviews identified 'unresolved problems' which let s identifying funding constraints, accountability practices, administrative costs, excessive paperwork, complex processes, confusing language, negative perception, limited awareness, the growing complexity of teacher roles and institutional structures, as factors impeding the success of implementation. Sims (2010) argues that Australia is to blame for its low uptake, confusion around its purpose and scepticism around its value. Hence Cameron and Miller (2006) were of the opinion that RPL has failed to act as a mechanism for social change and in fulfilling its promised potential of encouraging traditionally represented and disadvantaged groups to access formal education and training.

1.6.2. RPL in Africa

Very few countries in Africa have extensive experience of RPL and as such little attention have been paid on how RPL can be used (Sims: 2010). In a report by Sims (2010) on benefits and pitfalls of RPL in African countries, he indicated that countries such as South Africa, Mauritius and Namibia have just begun to introduce RPL policies, though he argues that extensive evaluation has yet to take place.

1.6.2.1. Namibia

When Namibia gained power in 1990, there were major challenges in their education and training system which needed to be addressed. One such challenge was transformation in their education system that will correct the major problems which were inherited from the colonial regime. The Namibians therefore wanted to create an inclusive, fair and learner-centred education system. The Ministry of Education and Culture (1992) adopted a policy directive entitled “Towards Education for All”, with four goals: access, equality, quality and democracy and lifelong learning. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] (2013), the Namibians were denied opportunities in formal education because of their involvement in the struggle for their independence, which was gained in 1990. Their participation in education is still exclusive as the skills and knowledge acquired over the years are not formally recognised. The key challenge facing the Namibian education and training is the perception that learning attained through the formal route is superior to knowledge gained in informal or non-formal learning such as open distance learning, and work place-based learning, and learning acquired through life experiences. There are two policies on RPL that are in operation. These are RPL policy for TVET institutions and for the Namibian College of Open Learning.

1.6.2.2. RPL in Mauritius

Mauritius Qualification Framework [MQA] (2009) and Auckbur (2008) define RPL “as a process to assess and certify the competence and knowledge of a person,

regardless of how, when and where learning occurred and assessment is done against prescribed standards for a partial or full qualification". According to Algoo, Ramdass and Santokhee (2012) RPL was introduced as a process of maintaining and enhancing a competitive and skilled work force in Mauritius so that they could be able to make informed choices and to adapt to changing economic conditions and labour markets. This was in line with the government policy on lifelong learning in Mauritius which its main functions were to recognise and validate competencies for the purpose of certification obtained outside the formal education and training system. According to UNESCO, Mauritius lack natural resources, therefore Mauritius only resource is its human capital, and therefore its main challenge is a demand for new skills and the opportunity to reskill those that are less employable. Therefore the MQF was established to:

- raise the value of vocational qualifications;
- integrate education and training;
- improve the quality of training provision and provide quality assurance
- provide the mutual recognition of Mauritian and foreign qualifications;
- give learners a clear indication of the level of their learning and the possibilities for further progression; and
- recognise and formally certify competencies obtained outside the formal education and training system.

1.6.2.3. RPL in Botswana

According to UNESCO (2015), there was an impact study which was conducted in 2006 which concluded that Botswana lacked credibility because there were no clear learning pathways in their education system. There was therefore a recommendation to establish Botswana National Credit and Qualification Framework (BNCQF) which helped to create links between academic and vocational qualifications. The BNCQF was mandated to fulfil three functions: the quality assurance system, the system of credits upon which qualifications will be based, RPL, and Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC), which was intended to assess and recognise learners with informal and indigenous skills. According to Modungwa and Molwane (2011), training institutions had started to design new curricula targeting Adult Basic Education

Programme, which combines core skills training with work experience, and the Structured Work-Based Learning programmes which are aligned to suit college-based Technical Qualifications, with the aim of making training more consistent with employers' demand for skills.

1.6.2.4. RPL in Kenya

According to the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology [MoHEST] (2012), there was a need in the Kenyan Education system to establish a common regulatory system for the development, assessment and award of qualifications as it was difficult for the employers to understand what competencies to expect from the holders of particular qualifications. The Kenyan Education and Training Policy reform was guided by the following objectives:

- to implement two parallel progression routes from primary to university education, one for general education, and the other for technical and vocational education and training(TVET);
- to unify the fragmented TVET sector, which was scattered across fifteen different sectors;
- to create curricular which encourage entrepreneurial and imaginative attitude to work;
- to put in place mechanisms for RPL;
- to revitalise the Youth Polytechnic programmes; and
- to facilitate the horizontal and vertical mobility of vocational trainees and increase progression from TVET to university.

The Kenyan Qualification Framework (KQF) established the following objectives:

- to improve access to qualifications for all individuals, thus promoting skills development and lifelong learning;
- to align the KQF with international qualification frameworks in order to enhance the national and international mobility of graduates and workers; and
- to strengthen national regulatory and quality assurance system (UNESCO: 2015).

1.6.3. RPL in South Africa

There have been very few scholars who explored RPL in South African FET colleges. The first study was by Prinsloo (2009) who investigated the RPL practises within the public FET college sector, how FET colleges understand and implement RPL, and what RPL practises exist within the colleges. His findings were that there was slow implementation of RPL in FET colleges and that the delivery was fragmented.

The second study by Mahlangu (2013), investigated the effects of using various admission requirements for the NCV at the FET Colleges. The study findings revealed vague admission requirements, poor perception of educators, inadequate understanding of RPL, and lack of training, quality assurance systems and access to practical workshops. Although the study focus was on admission, the findings are significant for this research and finding solutions to the above mentioned challenges.

The third research was by the Ministerial Task Team (MTT) RPL (2013). The RPL report of FET Colleges, the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), and the Further Education and Training Institute (FETI) of UWC argue for the need of a well-planned and managed transition towards a high quality FET college system with expanded access in order to produce more intermediate level graduates.

However, there are other contributions in research from higher education and workplace research that have contributed to the body of knowledge on RPL. Breier (2008) conducted a study on the introduction of the National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) at a systemic level. Breier (2008) explored the implementation of RPL in a programme designed to upgrade under-qualified educators. The findings were that RPL relies solely on the judgement of educators. Motaung (2007) focused on quality assurance practice in the provisioning of RPL in Higher Education at a Pretoria University. Motaung's findings indicate that there is a good system of RPL provisioning with few areas of concern, but that the system is not benefitting the

majority of people it was intended for, and that there are clear procedures and processes which are adhered to. Motaung, Fraser and Howie (2009) conducted a study on RPL in Higher Education to assess RPL candidates for admission into programmes of study. Educators viewed the possibility of admitting large number of under-qualified adult learners as a threat to the institution's reputation or an erosion of academic standards. Deller (2007) conducted a research on the design of an RPL implementation model that will guide and contribute to a more successful implementation of RPL in the workplace. Deller found that RPL candidates were ill equipped to tackle the RPL process, lack of clear national policy, and that RPL has not lived up to the claims of social redress.

The researcher was aware that there were three universities which had policies in place for RPL implementation. They are the University of Pretoria (UP), the University of Western Cape (UWC) and the University of South Africa (UNISA) (Joint Education Trust (JET) 2003). South Africa regards the implementation of RPL as valuable, hence the review of the national RPL policy. On the basis of the research highlighted in this section, research study in Limpopo Province's public FET Colleges is valuable in order to find out the challenges that hinder implementation of RPL and the development of an RPL model for effective and efficient implementation.

1.7. MODELS OF RPL

There are different models of RPL implementation. The intention of this study is to develop a model for the implementation of RPL in FET Colleges to bring a solution to the challenges identified in implementation. In the light of this, the following models are discussed: credential, developmental and transformational models. FET institutions can choose a model that they wish to implement according to the needs and purpose, which are equity, redress and social inclusion.

1.7.1. Credential Model / Credit Exchange Model

According to Nitko (2004:12) credentialing and certification decisions reflect whether a student has attained a certain standard of learning. This form of assessment decides whether the learner meets the standard of competence for a diploma or a certificate that enables him/her to apply for employment. It focuses on accreditation and competence. The assessment is in the form of tests, essays and examinations. If the learner has acquired credits or achievements for courses, he must be able to provide proof for such. Certain aspects of the curriculum are selected by the educator on the basis of the curriculum.

1.7.2. Developmental Model

The development model of RPL acknowledges informal learning acquired formally, informally and non-formally by giving credit to courses or access to a learning programme (Osman 2004). The model focuses on experience and high order competencies such as critical thinking, good communication and problem solving. The learners submit portfolio of evidence for their competencies which promotes confidence, improvement and self-actualisation. The development model has the ability to empower the learner especially those who did not have to access higher education.

1.7.3. Transformational Model

This model focuses on the learner's current needs and circumstances, the importance of relevancy, viewing learners from a holistic point of view, investigating past trajectories and current possible learner identities. The model values all forms of learning including non-formal, informal and formal and it does not matter how that learning was achieved. It addresses barriers intrinsic to credentialing models in RPL by focusing on self-recognition capabilities (Cameron & Miller 2006).

1.8. THEORIES OF LEARNING

A number of RPL theories have been used in literature on this topic. Kolb (1984) developed experiential learning theory whose focus was on learning as a dialectic process in which the learner is able to appraise themselves, develop knowledge and apply theory of their learning. The theory is valuable in this study as the key feature of RPL is about the formal assessment of experiential learning acquired informally, formally or non-formally. Mezirow (1981) developed transformative theory which focused on critical reflection of the learner with a belief that learning could transform a person's beliefs; and attitude can transform a person's entire perspective. Mezirow's theory forms a basis for transformation of the education and training system in South African FET Colleges to address the dire needs of the society and because equity principles demand change in FET Colleges with regard to the shortage of priority skills of the society.

1.8.1. Experiential Learning Theory

Kolb (1984:38) defines experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. This definition emphasizes several critical aspects of the learning process as viewed from the experiential perspective. The first emphasis is on the process of adaptation and learning as opposed to content and outcome. Secondly, knowledge is a transformation process continuously created and recreated, not an independent entity to be acquired and transmitted. Thirdly, learning transforms experience in both its objective and subjective forms". Finally, to understand learning, we must understand the nature of knowledge and vice versa (Kolb 1984). The study will make use of Dewey's (1938:5-6) theory of experiential learning which emphasises learning as a dialectic process of interacting experience and concepts, observations and action. Dewey's interest lies in the centrality of education. Therefore, Dewey's experiential learning theory is the basis of RPL. Tennant & Pogson (1995:153) indicate that the purpose is to relate the present to the past, ensuring continuity in the acquisition of skills and knowledge. The aim of experiential learning is therefore to facilitate learning and giving the

learner an opportunity for experiential performances within their environment. Feedback should always be given to the learner in any RPL process.

Dewey's theory of learning rested on two central tenets: continuity and interaction. Continuity refers to the notion that humans survive more by learning from experience. Education is critical for providing people with skills to live in society. Interaction builds upon the notion of continuity and explains how past experience interacts with the present situation to create present experience. Therefore Dewey's experiential learning theory is the basis of RPL. According to Tennant and Pogson (1995:153) the purpose is to relate the present to the past, ensuring continuity in the acquisition of skills and knowledge.

Oxendine, Robinson and Wilson (2004) identify many applications of Experiential Learning Theory within the education system, especially in colleges, which include field courses, study abroad, mentor based internship and in-service training. Students are therefore engaged in critical thinking, problem solving and critical reflections of theory and their own experiences. Experiential learning is also valuable to learners who are at risk of dropping out, and those who are unemployed and seeking jobs. RPL serves to measure or assess ones academic skills and the previous knowledge that one has. The assessments of such skills would therefore help one to take stock of one's life and be able to plan ahead. The FET Colleges are education centres responsible for placements, internships and work placement of learners, and offer theory and practice, and therefore experiential learning may be beneficial to the learners to acquire jobs needed by society.

1.8.2. Perspective Transformation Theory

Another theory worth discussing is perspective transformative theory by Mezirow (1991). Mezirow define transformational learning as learning that induces more far reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning. This theory says that the process of perspective transformation has three dimensions; psychological

(changes of understanding the self), convictional (revision of believe systems) and behavioural (changes in lifestyles). This theory attempts to explain how our expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning we derive from our experiences. Mezirow's work suggests that the responsibility of education, based on the equity principle, is to foster critical reflection in students. Two aspects of critical reflection can be identified: one examines power relations and believe system and the other looks at once personal experience. This means that when people understand the social, economic and cultural structures in which they find themselves, they can be able to re-evaluate their personal experience and what they have learnt. The learners should be able to attach meaning and critically reflect on those structures in society, so that they could not become failures in life. RPL has the potential to value experiential learning fully through a process of assessment, and also revert to its true purpose, to empower the individual. Perspective transformation theory is in line with the purpose of NQF and RPL, which fosters transformation of education and training and to contribute towards the full development of the nation at large (SAQA 2002).

1.9. OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative and Johnson and Christenson (2005:52) define it as a method of enquiry relying primarily on the collection of the non-numerical data though data can be analysed in terms of numbers. This study adopted a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis because it is an effective method of studying things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret a phenomenon in terms of meanings people bring to them, understanding social and human problems and building a complex, holistic picture formed with words and reporting detailed views of the informants (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:3).

1.9.1. Research Design

Welman, Kruger and Mitchel (2005:52) define a research design as the plan according to which we obtain research participants and collect information. The case study design has been chosen because of on-going transformations needed because of the RPL policy, which needs to be implemented as a promise for social and economic change. This study has used both descriptive and explorative methods. The descriptive method was designed to depict the informants in an accurate way and to find out what are the challenges for not implementing RPL. The exploratory method was used to explore the causes and effects to RPL implementation and to determine the FET College perceptions to RPL implementation.

1.9.2. Unit of Analysis

Babbie (2010:99) describes the unit of analysis as that which is examined in order to create summary descriptions of all such units and to explain differences among them. The unit of analysis for this study was institutions, three public FET Colleges of Limpopo Province. The colleges were chosen purposefully and to generate in-depth understanding of the topic at hand, to generate knowledge and inform policy development (Simons 2009:21). The population for this study comprised of different stakeholders: two principals, two coordinators, two assessors and twenty one learners.

1.9.3. Sampling

Babbie (2010:198) define sampling as the process of selecting observants and can be regarded as any procedure for selecting units for observation. This study used a non-probability sampling method which refers to any kind of sampling where selections of elements are not determined by the statistical principles of randomness. The technique used is purposive sampling. The researcher has selected information-rich cases to study in depth. Purposeful sampling was used to gather rich insightful information from the participants in the study. It is judgemental in nature and the researcher selected participants on the basis of the purpose and a

role in the case that was studied (Babbie 2010:192). Blanche, Durheim and Painter (2011:139), however, argue that sampling allows generalisation to population, even though they are expensive and difficult to obtain. In this study, the sample consisted of learners who were working before they were admitted into colleges, those who were currently working, and those intending to go through the RPL process. Newby (2010:239) argues that purposive sampling minimises the use of resources without affecting sampling quality and that it produces results that are more accurate. The researcher sampled the three FET colleges that are funded by the Department of Education in the Limpopo province.

1.9.4. Area of Study

The study was carried out in three FET Colleges, which are: Pietersburg College in the Capricorn District, Limpopo Province; Dr CN Phatudi College in Sekhukhune District, and CS Barlow College in Motetema (Sekhukhune District), in the South Eastern part of Limpopo Province. The public FET colleges were selected because they provide direction for the development of policy, curriculum, qualification and quality. They also provide lifelong learning and promote integrity for the assessment of learners. These institutions are responsible for restructuring and transforming education to respond to the needs of the country (Further Education and Training Colleges Bill 2006).

1.10. DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENTS

Research is designed to gather accurate information to explain concepts or events that are not well understood. There are several types of data generation instruments that are used more widely in case studies and gathering accurate information is a critical part of research (Borg & Gall 2000). The study comprises the accurate collection of raw data from the respondents to facilitate rigorous data analysis that

would be able to produce evidence that is required to address the research questions on page four. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used observation, documentation, interviews and questionnaires to collect the data.

1.10.1. Observations

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009:218) define observation as recording of units of interaction occurring in a defined social situation based on visual examination of that situation. The researcher was the participant observer to explore events and behaviours of people, the picture of the sites, norms and values of the colleges, features such as buildings, surroundings, lecture halls and learning centres. The other issues related to the quality of support given to the learners and whether the learners attend classes and manage time given to them. Field notes and an observation guide was drawn and used for this process (De Vos *et al.* 2011:337). Files were created for the organisation of data and notes compiled and saved on a personal computer using MSWord. Codes and memos were used to simultaneously analyse data during the observation process.

1.10.2. Document Review

Newman (1997:272) defines document review as a technique for gathering and analysing content of the text from someone else as the original source. The study made use of documents such as newspapers, reports on RPL, information available on the internet and articles, and integrated those with data available. The researcher designed a coding scheme with dimensions, and a manual. It contained policy, the brochure on admission requirements into the NCV programmes and the detailed information on the fees paid. This form of collection of data answers questions on assessment of learners and on the implementation of RPL policy.

1.10.3. Interviews

The researcher used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to collect data from three public FET colleges of Limpopo Province. To facilitate this process

twenty one learners, were interviewed, three coordinators, three assessors and a principal were interviewed. The aim was to guide the conversation so that when responses lacked sufficient detail, depth or clarity, the researcher asked probing questions to clarify the answer and to gauge their opinions. An in-depth face-to-face interview enabled the researcher to gather data rich in information from assessors and coordinators and their strategies in supporting learners who went through the RPL process. Individual interviews were conducted during official hours. Electronic devices were used as they do not tune out conversation or change what was said. In some instances, where the respondents refused to be taped, the device was not used and notes were taken. The researcher developed the interview guide taking into consideration the objectives of the study.

1.10.4. Questionnaires

Questionnaires were distributed to twelve staff members consisting of coordinators, assessors and principals who could not be interviewed because of their busy schedules and only nine of them were returned. The questionnaires were used to gather information from the respondents by means of a standardised questionnaire in which the interest was in aggregates rather than a particular individual. The aim was to obtain a broader picture of the causes and effect of RPL and the exploration of challenges for implementation and make sure that the questions asked have not omitted a significant response.

1.11. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis took place throughout the data collection process (Newman 1997:421). A variety of methods were used from the four different instruments. Data from participatory observations, document analysis, interviews and questionnaires were used. An observation guide used during the collection of the data was used to reduce the text data as in transcripts for analysis, through a process of coding and

condensing the codes. This was then represented in figures, tables and discussions. A coding scheme was used to analyse the content. The codes that were created before the fieldwork helped the researcher to analyse the work. The text based data (reports and other documents) was arranged in themes and codes in the form of numbers. Data gathered from the tapes was transcribed, typed and ordered whilst the information was still fresh to avoid data overload and loss of data in its original form. The researcher had fully transcribed data using it in the most appropriate way so that transcripts could be clearly analysed. Variables and categories were used to analyse interviews. The variables were sorted according to themes and those which had no bearing to the topic were set aside. A data matrix was used to facilitate the coding and categorisation process. Descriptive statistical methods were used to analyse the questionnaires in the most desirable way which included techniques for summarising the numerical data. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010:258) argued that the goal is to understand the data, detect patterns and relationships and better communicate the results.

1.12. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH

Guba (1981:77) proposes four criteria that he believes should be considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of a study that is trustworthy. They are:

1.12.1. Credibility

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:513) credibility requires demonstrating that research was designed to describe what it was intended for. There was prolonged engagement at the sites, prolonged observation and critical examination and evaluation to achieve the purpose of the research.

1.12.2. Transferability

According to Shenton (2004:69) transferability involves demonstrating the applicability of the results of the study in one context to the other context. The

researcher used a purposive sampling method to ascertain that the results were accurate. The researcher also used different methods to collect data and reported the data with sufficient details.

1.12.3. Dependability

The researcher used carefully planned multiple data gathering techniques (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:71). The incidents, interviews and documents were carefully scrutinised. The findings of the research were also reported accurately and properly managed so that they could be acceptable.

1.12.4. Conformability

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:72) believe conformability entails full revelation of the data upon which interpretation is based, and that the findings of the research are a true reflection of the responses of the participants rather than the preferences of the researcher. The responses of the participants were confirmed against the existing literature which proposes that the findings were not the researcher's views. The recorded video tapes, written field notes, interviews and documents were reviewed and a more detailed account of the information was recorded.

1.13. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2007:140) assert that research ethics help to prevent abuse and assists investigators in understanding their responsibilities as research scholars. The researcher adhered to the following principles: informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, voluntary participation and avoidance of harm (*Bless et al.* 2007:142-143). These principles were adhered to by the researcher throughout the data collection process. Simons (2009:101) argues that the researcher is obliged to ensure that the participants' rights, freedom, justice,

welfare, privacy, fairness, trust and fidelity are respected. The participants were informed that they may decline to participate at any time of the research. For confidentiality and anonymity the names of respondents were kept anonymous. The researcher requested permission from the National Department of Education for Higher Education public FET Colleges to carry out her research activities. Permission was also sought and obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Limpopo. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, (2007:52) argued that cooperation is needed from the participants who are to assist in investigations in the institutions and providing research facilities. Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmeister (2000:65) argued that the researcher is obligated to seek ways to benefit participants even after the research is completed, by using debriefing procedures. This was done once the research study was assessed and approved.

1.14. A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The research is divided into six chapters.

Chapter 1 is the background and introductory information of the study. It gave the statement of the problem, aims and objectives, research questions, the significance of the study, research in different countries, models of RPL, theories of learning, the brief overview of the research methodology, trustworthiness of the research and summary.

Chapter 2 presents the detailed literature review of RPL in FET colleges. The description of the challenges affecting implementation were spelt out, it included the historical background of RPL, core principles and forms of RPL, the benefits of RPL, factors affecting implementation of RPL in FET colleges, the description of how it is implemented and successful implementation. The chapter concludes with the assessment of RPL and quality assurance.

Chapter 3 presents the theories of RPL, the experiential learning theory and the perspective transformation theories, how they can be used in RPL and the criticisms behind them.

Chapter 4 presents the methodological framework of the research, the approaches used, data collection instruments, data analysis and the ethics of the researcher.

Chapter 5 focuses on the report and the research findings of the research.

Chapter 6 summarises the literature and findings of the research. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations made for improvement. A model of RPL implementation for educators is suggested.

1.15. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter outlined the introductory part of this research by introducing RPL and the main objectives in RPL which is access, redress and advancement. The statement of the problem, objectives and research questions ultimately guided the researcher on how to carry out the project. A review of the study highlighted research in different countries, models and theories of learning. The methodology consisted of a brief outline of the design, data collection, and data analysis, trustworthiness of the research findings and analysis as well as the ethical considerations. The following chapter will discuss the literature review of this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the background and orientation of implementation of RPL in FET colleges. This chapter fully reviews selected literature on RPL in order to investigate the challenges of implementation of RPL. The first part of this chapter conceptualise RPL by looking into the historical background of RPL, core principles, benefits, models of RPL, the implementation process, factors affecting the implementation and successful implementation of RPL. The second part of the chapter reviews the assessment methods and the quality assurance trends in the implementation of RPL. The last part reviews literature on FET development, roles in delivering the mandate and the challenges facing FET college that impede the implementation process are discussed.

2.2. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

Sims (2010) argues that there is no consensus on the definition of RPL. There exist several definitions of RPL across educational sectors and in different parts of the world. In South Africa, RPL is defined in terms of the National Standard Bodies Regulation (NSBR) (No 18787 of 28 March 1998 issued in terms of the SAQA Act of 1995) as the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner howsoever obtained against learning outcomes required for a special qualification, and the acceptance thereof for purposes of qualification of that which meets the

requirement (SAQA 2002:7). However, SAQA (2013:5) defines RPL as principles and processes through which non-formal learning and informal learning are measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts, and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system, or workplace.

Both definitions acknowledge that learning happens in all kinds of situations; formally, informally and non-formally; and that there would be assessment of the knowledge and skills the learner has gained without proof. The NSBR (1998) definition compared the experience against the learning outcomes while the new definition measures the experience for purposes of crediting or access to formal education. The other difference is that there are principles and processes which need to be followed in assessment for a qualification and/or crediting. However, both of them are significant in the context of South African RPL. The RPL principle endorses the value of giving recognition to knowledge and skills that were acquired outside the formal learning environment while RPL as a process consists of educational and training activities through which the learner has to go through (SAQA 2012). In South Africa, RPL is the concept of recognising and acknowledging what people know and can do irrespective of whether that learning was acquired formally, informally or non-formally.

In Australia, RPL is based on the notion that all learning of previously unrecognised skills and knowledge that an individual has achieved outside the formal education and training system is worth of recognition. The Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) defines RPL as an assessment process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine the credit outcomes of an individual application for credit (AQF 2012). The AQF (2012) makes this definition clear, that the learners' prior learning is assessed and credit is determined for awarding of a qualification. AQF (2012) defines credit as the value assigned for the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications. The AQF

(2012) facilitates the progression of students through qualifications by giving credit for learning outcomes they have already achieved. The credit obtained may allow the learner's entry into a qualification by providing credit towards the qualification or may reduce the time required for the qualification.

RPL in Netherlands is based on the belief that people can also gain knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in any context and can be recognised and accredited (Kaemingk 2010). Dutch Knowledge Centre (2012) uses both descriptions; RPL and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), and defines RPL as the process of recognition of competence that an individual has gained through formal, informal or non-formal learning in various settings. APL is defined as the process of accreditation once the gained competencies have been recognised. In the Netherlands, RPL is seen in the following contexts: to increase the employability of individuals and employees by recognising prior learning related to a qualification and describe these outcomes in a certificate of experience, to get more insight into employees' capacities to create an optimal match with occupational profiles or learning programmes on the job and to increase employability of individuals by recognising and accrediting their prior learning to shorten the duration of continuing training/education programmes and also attain nationally recognised qualifications. The two concepts, RPL and APL in Netherlands, are seen as instruments to make the potential of the individual development visible and to improve the human capital management in companies. In essence, in Netherlands RPL enables people gain knowledge, skills and competences by other means rather than through formal schooling and it is as worthy as the learning gained through formal education (Dutch Knowledge Centre for RPL 2012).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in Conrad and McGreal (2012) define RPL as formal acknowledgement of skills, knowledge, and competencies that are gained through work experience, informal training and life experience. The basic concepts of RPL in South Africa, Australia and by UNESCO are similar because RPL is a process on its own and the learners'

knowledge and skills (howsoever obtained) have to be assessed to determine the previous knowledge to be able to be acknowledged. Sims (2013) supports the definition when indicating that RPL should be simply seen as a form of assessment.

Different countries use different interpretations, meanings and terms to describe RPL, which clearly indicates that the concept RPL is practiced globally. In Sims (2013), the term RPL overlaps with other terms. In Canada, the Canadian Association of Prior Learning and Assessment (CAPLA) (2000) defines Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) as a systematic process that involves the identification, documentation, assessment and recognition of learning (i.e. skills, knowledge and values) and can be used towards the requirements of education and training programmes, occupational and/or professional certification, labour market entry, organisational and human resource capacity building. Conrad (2013:91) indicates that Canada uses PLAR to be understood with the use of a portfolio as an assessment methodology.

In the USA, they use Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) which is defined as learning from the past that is subsequently credited against a new qualification and gives exemption from taking part of the qualification in question (Knight 2006). APL is dependent on the level, content and achievement of previous learning and the congruence of the learning outcomes of the previous learning of the programme of study for which credit are sought. Duvekot (2008:3) indicates that in Netherlands they use Erkenning Verworven Competenties (EVC), which means the identification, recognition and accreditation of non-formally and informally acquired competencies intended to recognise and to value what people have regarding visible and invisible knowledge and skills.

There are also other concepts that are used for RPL, for example, Accreditation Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), and Validation of Prior Learning (VPL). Australia, South Africa and New Zealand use

RPL which evaluates skills and knowledge outside the classroom for purposes of recognizing competence against learning outcomes. Regardless of RPL definitions and descriptions, all these countries refer to the same concept, that is, RPL.

However, according to SAQA (2013), there is a variety of contexts within which RPL takes place and for differing purposes. RPL is practised in Higher Education and Training (HET) FET, and General Education and Training (GET) Band and in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in formal institutions of learning as well as in workplace-based education and training centres and by small private single purpose providers. Therefore the context within which RPL is practised is linked to differing purposes (SAQA 2013) which include personal development, progression into a learning programme, promotion and career or job change.

2.3. THE HISTORY OF RPL IN SOUTH AFRICA

RPL was introduced in South Africa after 1994 as a reform policy in the education sector for transforming education and training. There was a need in South Africa for such policy reforms because the vision of the Department of Education (DoE) declares that South Africa should have equal access to lifelong learning and training opportunities that will contribute towards improving the quality of life and build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic South Africa (DoE 1996). The following transformation policies and legislations were identified by the DoE (2001) and Zenex Foundation (2013):

The Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (1996) Chapter 2 Bill of Rights Section 29, forms the basis of transformation and restructuring of education in South Africa. It states that everyone has the right to basic education, including basic education; and to further education which should be made progressively available

and accessible. The constitution requires that education be transformed according to the values of equality as enshrined in the constitution. It also indicates that basic education should be provided for all people irrespective of colour, creed, sexual orientation and gender.

According to the South African Schools Act (SASA) Act 84 of 1996 (1996) transformation is aimed at ensuring that all learners have access to quality education without discrimination. The focus is on access and redressing the historical imbalances of the past education system to restructure education and training to target poverty in funding allocations to the public schooling system. SASA (1996) focused on creating a uniform high quality education that provided a framework for the organisation, governance and funding of schools, which included making nine years of schooling compulsory, localising power in community schools, offering greater powers to schools to purchase their own textbooks and also empowered communities and schools to effect changes (SASA 1996).

The National Norms and Standards for School Funding focus was on input equality-output-quality. The problem has been what resources inputs would be necessary to provide an adequate quality of education. SASA required that the state should fund schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure proper exercise of the right of learners to education and the redress of the past inequalities in education provision. There were two main mechanisms to address inequalities; the equitable share formula and the quintile system. The equitable was based on variables such as the size of the school-age population, capital needs, size of the rural population and the number of people eligible for social grants. The quintile system on the other hand was a mechanism used to redistribute personnel costs and schools were classified into the most poor that is from quintile 1 to 5 which is the least poor. Personnel were also distributed in a form of rationalisation processes and reducing teacher-learner ratios (Zenex: 2013)

The Higher Education Act (1997) makes provision for a unified and nationally planned system of higher education and creates a statutory Council on Higher Education (CHE) which is responsible for quality assurance and promotion. The Higher Education Act and Education White Paper 3 on Higher education (1999) formed the basis for the transformation of the higher education sector through an institutional planning and budgetary network.

SAQA Act 58 of 1995(1995) provided a framework for the establishment of the NQF to establish an integrated education, training and development strategy that will harness the potential of young and young adults. SAQA objectives are to drive the objectives of the NQF; to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements, to facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths and to enhance quality in education (DoE 2001). The NQF principles were informed by the principles formulated by the ANC in ANC Policy Framework for education and training (1994:3) that:

- the state has the central responsibility in the provision of education and training,
- the provision of education shall be planned as part of the coherent and comprehensive national social and economic reconstruction and development programme, including the national strategy for the development of human resources,
- the democratisation of our society, education and training policy and practice shall be governed by the principle of democracy, ensuring the active participation of various interested groups, in particular educators, parents, workers, students, employers and the broader community,
- in the process of ensuring education and training for all, there shall be the special emphasis on the redress of educational inequalities among historically disadvantaged groups such as youth, the disabled, adults, women, the unemployed and rural communities,
- there shall be the mechanisms to ensure horizontal and vertical mobility and flexibility of access between general formative, technical, industrial and adult education and training in the formal and non-formal sectors and

- that there shall be nationally determined standards for accreditation and certification for formal and non-formal education and training with due recognition of prior learning and experience.

National Education Policy Act (NEPA), Act 27 of 1996 (1996) was a new perspective to provide for the formulation and implementation of policies in General Education and FET in relation to curriculum, assessment, language policy and quality assurance. The major aims of NEPA were to advance and protect the rights for all people, to contribute to the full personal development of all learners, achieve equitable education opportunities and redress of the past, to provide opportunities for and encourage lifelong learning, to achieve an integrated approach to education and learning, to encourage independent and critical thought and to promote a culture of respect for teaching and learning in education institutions.

Outcome Based Education (OBE) was first developed to encourage educators to translate learning programmes into achievable objectives of quality teaching and learning in an adequate education and training. Its assessment, qualifications, competency and skills based framework encourages the development of curriculum models aligned to the NQF theory and practice.

OBE was followed by Curriculum 2005 (2005) which was established for general education to especially move from a racist apartheid, rote learning model of learning and teaching to a liberating, nation building and learner centred outcome based (DoE 2001). It was intended to allow greater mobility between different levels and institutional sites and the integration of knowledge and skills through learning pathways (DoE 2001).

Furthermore, according to DoE (2001), Curriculum 2005 was reviewed and then referred to as the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), with more

emphasis on skills and knowledge. For quality throughput, there was an introduction of grade R in primary schools, at four and half years. In improving school capacity, there were programmes set on place to increase performance in schools, for example, the Dinaledi School Programme and Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) School Leadership and Management for principals of schools, are two such programmes (DoE 2001).

For a systemic drive to turn around education, the department implemented three levers, firstly the Annual National Statement (ANA), secondly the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), and lastly Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) to improve performance and create opportunities for all learners in education (DoE 2001). It was imperative that the education and training system had to be transformed to accommodate a wide range of needs, with particular attention to strategies for instructional and curriculum transformation (DoE 2001:11).

The FET Act (1998), White Paper 4 on FET (1998) and the DoE (1999-2001) provides a basis for developing a nationally coordinated FET system comprising of the senior secondary component of schooling and technical colleges. It requires that the FET institutions develop plans and provide for programme-based funding, and a national curriculum for learning and teaching. Whilst the FET Colleges Act No 16 of 2006 was established to regulate the establishment, governance, funding and employment of staff in public colleges as well as the registration of private colleges. This act also promotes quality in FET colleges. According to Harley and Wedekind (2004), the transformation agenda was to implement the relevant curriculum, retrain staff and assist college learners to access learning programmes.

There was therefore the introduction of the NCV programmes in the FET which included RPL as an admission requirement to give people an opportunity to access learning programmes. RPL in college would make recognition of individual's knowledge and skills that were acquired through experience or from workplace to be recognised. This was because the practices and policies of the apartheid

government did not make recognition possible. The curriculum content and skills gained were invalidated and excluded from credit, value and certification (Alexander *et al* 2011).

Therefore, the transformation policy according to Cooper (2011), Mukora (2008) and Janakk (2011) wanted to specifically address three key elements: the injustices of the past to ensure that there is access to education and training to individuals who were excluded from the mainstream education; to improve the economic competitiveness of the country globally; to give credits and recognise learning acquired outside the formal education system, and as part of the objectives of the NQF, to enhance all forms of learning and to develop credits accumulation and transfer schemes. Therefore, RPL in South Africa has a political, social and economic agenda.

2.3.1. Political Reasons for RPL

Doddrell (2013) and Alexander *et al* (2011) stated that RPL has a political basis, and was initiated in most countries from the political point of view, rather than it been in the education system. In South Africa, RPL as a tool for redress was introduced politically for social justice for those people who were historically disadvantaged through lack of access to institutions of learning, even though they had knowledge and skills from their work places and life (Alexander *et al* 2011 ; SAQA 2002).

Largely in South Africa, RPL was promoted by the labour movement, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), with the intention to create pathways and access route for their members and also to get promotions in the work place (Makole 2010).Lack of access to education blocks people's opportunity to be reskills, get promoted and for self-development. This also prevents the youth from realising their goals while there would be slow development in the country as a whole because of unemployment and poverty.

In Australia, Doddrell (2013); Cameron (2011), and Smith (2008) indicated that RPL was introduced in education and training as part of a national reform agenda and was included in the vocational education and training system primarily for industrial skills recognition within award restructuring. In Canada, Tony (2006) indicated that RPL was driven by mature learners who needed their qualifications to be upgraded in professions such as nursing, dental assistants and early childhood education. In the United States, RPL was driven by the soldiers returning from the military camps to have access to college education.

RPL in Mauritius is based on the notion that all learning, regardless of how, when and where it was acquired, and provided that learning is relevant to the outcome, is recognised. The Mauritian Qualification Framework (MQA) introduced RPL in their education system as a way to recognise and validate competencies for the purpose of certification obtained outside the formal education and training system. Like in South Africa, RPL acts as a mechanism of social inclusion by offering access to people who were previously left outside the mainstream education system.

2.3.2. Social Reasons

RPL has a social justice function of delivering recognition to people who were marginalised in the past. UNISA (2005) supported this when indicating that RPL is aimed at enlightening and empowering potential students by providing access to their learning programmes. RPL originated as a tool to transform South African society that will bring human dignity, development and well-being to all the citizens. The purpose of development would be that people be able to acquire knowledge, participate in community projects, political freedom and lifelong learning. The ultimate goal is for social inclusion and redress with the aim of reducing inequality in all spheres of life. In Australia, Cameron (2004) indicates that the major driver of RPL is social justice and as a promise to act as a mechanism for social inclusion.

2.3.3. Economic Reasons

South Africa has inherited an economy that was in crises and shaped by apartheid policies which were racially segregated. Blacks were excluded from opportunities in the labour market and access in the business sector. One of the objectives of RPL is to increase skill base of the workforce which implies the enhancement of the functional and intellectual capability of the nation. This would increase South Africa's success in the global economy. The main objective of NQF (SAQA1995) was to create jobs, eliminate poverty, and have a sustainable economy and that the skills and knowledge acquired would increase employment opportunities of the South Africans.

Mukora (2008) argues that RPL in South Africa is very purposeful and deliberate to redress the injustices inherited from apartheid and to improve the country's economic competitiveness in the global market. This is supported by Ralph (2009) who argues that RPL also had to address some of the subtle aspects of work-related injustices inherited from apartheid and skills acquired experientially. This is in line with the vision of South Africa as contained in the Bill of Rights, chapter 2, stipulated in the Constitution, (section 29:1996) that says all people have the right to basic education, including adult basic education and further education, which the government must make available and accessible.

2.3.4. RPL within the NQF

SAQA has been established by the SAQA Act No 58 of 1995 and provided a framework for the development and implementation of the NQF. SAQA's objectives are to drive the objectives of the NQF as has been outlined in the SAQA Act, to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements; to facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths; and to enhance quality education and teaching.

According to Mukora (2008), the objective of the NQF was to drive restructuring of education and training to one that would facilitate development of individuals in the country, elimination of skills deficits and develop high standards of qualification reflective of international practice. According to Cooper (2011), RPL raised many expectations that with necessary standards and assessment techniques, it could be applied and recognised helping to build an inclusive system of lifelong learning across the conventional boundaries to formal, non-formal and informal learning. More recently, and for over twelve years, RPL policy documents developed by SAQA in 2002 have provided guidance for RPL implementation in South Africa (SAQA 2002). There is still much debate in the literature about the implementation of RPL. In South Africa, RPL is an integral part of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and has since been introduced as part of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) since 1993.

2. 4. THE CORE PRINCIPLES AND FORMS OF RPL

2.4.1. Core Principles of RPL

The principles of RPL are almost the same in different countries. However, they can be developed and used by teaching providers to meet the needs of the learners in different sectors. The aim of the core principles is to ensure effective quality assured practice so that there should be confidence in the outcomes of RPL. In South Africa, the principles are centred on four themes, fairness, validity, reliability and dependability as identified by SAQA (2002).

Fairness, according to SAQA (2002), means that the assessment is not supposed to place a candidate at an advantageous or disadvantageous position as all candidates have an opportunity of equal access to opportunities, resources and support. Candidates should not experience bias when interacting with Education and Training Provider for fellow students and other role players in the RPL context. Fairness also

means that the process is clear, transparent and available to all candidates and can only assess what the learner can do. Candidates can be assessed in the language of their choice and can have an interpreter.

Validity means that the assessment process must be transparent and measures what it has set out to measure. The assessment procedure, methods, instruments and materials have to match what is being assessed (SAQA 2002).

Reliability refers to the consistency of the assessment process meaning that assessors must make the same judgement in the same or similar context (SAQA 2002).

Practicability is ensuring that the assessment takes into cognisance the finances, resources, equipment, facilities and time available. If an assessment requires equipment that is costly, the whole assessment will fail. The assessment should be based on what is available and realistic (SAQA 2002).

2.4.2. The Holistic Approach to RPL

There are different approaches to RPL in different countries. Nel (2010) argues that the South African education needs an approach that is slightly different to other countries as an opportunity for access and returning to work. Although there are many definitions for holistic approach, this research found the definition by Hare (2010) to be very appropriate. Hare (2010) describes holistic as a group of beliefs, feelings, principles and general ideas that share a family resemblance. It focuses on the learner as a whole person who is capable to develop to his/her full potential.

The aim of holistic education according to Hare (2010) should be to prepare learners for lifelong learning in which the educational focus moves towards life skills, attitudes

and personal awareness which can be supported and developed. Nel (2010) supports Hare (2010) on the idea on human development and lifelong learning, but indicates that they subscribe to the RPL principles which tie in with the National Skills Development III (NSDS III) which the objectives are for redress and promotion of lifelong learning. The following structure, adapted from Nel (2010) summarises the holistic approach to RPL in South Africa.



Figure 2.1: Holistic Approach to RPL (Adapted from Nel 2010)

SAQA (2004:12) outlines the following key elements for a holistic approach to RPL assessment:

- that it is committed to the development and maintenance of assessment systems that protect the integrity of standards, qualifications and institutions,
- subscribes to the principles of human development and lifelong learning, it is learner-centred and developmental,
- allocates high priority to learner centred support systems that will assist in the preparation for assessment,
- seeks to address the context and conditions that inform the practice by taking steps to remove the barriers to effective learning and assessment practice,
- promotes the principle of flexibility in the use of assessment methods and instruments in accordance with the right of candidates to participate in the selection of fit for purpose assessment methods,
- recognises the rich diversity of knowledge and learning styles, which learners bring into the assessment situation,
- recognises that RPL should ideally be the first step into a learning programme that will build on the skills and knowledge already recognised and acknowledged,
- takes the stand point of the critical theory which challenges the social and structural conditioning of the curriculum, institutions and related opportunities for adult learners in formal education; and
- increasingly challenges the construction and content of qualifications to be more inclusive of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes acquired outside formal institutions of learning in society.

Therefore, the following principles are important elements for a holistic approach to RPL (SAQA 2013):

- the focus is on what the learner has learnt either in an organisation, institution of learning or any place where learning was obtained,
- credit is awarded to the learner for knowledge, skills and experiences but not experience alone,

- prior learning is made explicit through assessment and other methods that engage the intrinsic development of knowledge, skills and competency acquired, and
- candidate' guidance and support, the preparation of evidence and the development of an appropriate combination of further learning, mentoring and assessment approaches are core to RPL policies.

In addition the approach focuses on the learner as a totality thereby preparing them to be able to fulfil their role in which their skills and knowledge have been constantly challenged and developed as part of their lifelong learning (Hare 2010). RPL as an assessment policy with the holistic approach for its implementation can be realised in FET colleges, the institutions called by the Minister of Education Nzimande (2010) as colleges of choice. According to SAQA (2013) the holistic approach is necessary as it will take into consideration the experiential learning of adults in formal institutions of learning with young learners coming from the school system.

2.5. FORMS OF RPL

RPL was formalised within the NQF Act of 2008 in terms of SAQA (1995) as a mechanism in which the majority of the larger part of the country's peoples' experience and skills could be validated and recognised. The NQF principle therefore finds its way in two major objectives, which are access and redress mechanisms in which it is to deliberately make opportunities available for those who could not have in any way access them. The other objectives include credit, equity of opportunities and lifelong learning which could all be made possible only when they can be translated into practice. SAQA (2013) indicates RPL is emancipatory in that it provides opportunities; for those who have been denied opportunities unfairly, for reducing inequalities in society, for people to be formally recognised for what they

already know and to generally take part in the economy by contributing creatively and meaningful work. This work has identified RPL for access, redress, credit, equity of opportunities and lifelong learning which will be discussed later.

2.5.1. RPL for Access

RPL for access means when individuals do not meet the formal entry requirements set by the institution of learning (SAQA 2013). It is believed that there are individuals who have acquired skills and knowledge through life or work experience and do not have certificates for such knowledge and skills. In such cases, RPL provides an alternative access route for such individuals into a learning programme to prove their abilities. Individuals have to make an application, if the desire is that the acquired knowledge and skills be acknowledged so they (that the knowledge and skills) can be assessed against the entry requirements of the qualification.

Access is a priority to quality learning pathways for all South Africans including unemployed persons (SAQA 2012). FET colleges are institutions where quality learning and training activities could be supported. This has been supported by COSATU (2009) in their education and skills-conference indicating that FET colleges must ensure access to the working class, especially young adults and workers with disabilities. What needs to be investigated is whether or not FET colleges are supporting young adults and workers with disabilities in this regard.

ETDP SETA has made known that the South African education system is supporting young adults in FET colleges. Young adults are supported by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). This became evident in the report by ETDP SETA (2013-2014) which noted that an allocation of +/- R1.9 billion was given to FETs. Further note that R318 million in 2010, R1.2 billion in 2011 and R1.7 billion in 2012 were allocated to FETs. Even though there is an access of opportunity in the FET colleges, there are still a number of learners who are unemployed or not schooling (Mayer 2011). Mayer (2011) further indicated that unemployment and a number of young adults who are not going to school are a concern to the nation as a whole.

This is supported by the (NYP 2014) when pointing out that about 60% of young adults are unemployed and have been discouraged in their search for work. One may ask a question: “*Do they know about these benefits or not?*”

The South African education system had provided FET colleges with benefits for accessing learning programmes. For example, the government realized that the tourism industry was an important industry in assisting it to redress the past imbalances and as a result developed the White Paper on the promotion and Development of Tourism (Tourism White Paper 2001). It is in this context that Tourism programmes are offered in FET colleges.

DHET (2014) also believed that when access is increased in colleges the objectives of the NSDS III in reskilling and upskilling will be obtained although they indicated that instead of retraining, what usually occurs is retrenchment. However, the following groups of people who could benefit are youth and adults:

- **Youth**

The National Youth Policy [NYP] (2009) defines youth as any persons between the ages of 14 and 35. NYP (2009) recognises a number of challenges that the mentioned group are faced with. It further indicated that their problems are unique and need specialised tailored interventions. South African youth experience the problem of unemployment and they lack skills. Unemployment can be described as a situation when someone of working age is not able to get job but would like to be working full time. Statistics South Africa [STATSSA] (2014) has shown that there are 3.7 million youth between the ages of 18-24 years without matric, and those are not in education or employment. SAQA (2014) reported that unemployment amongst the South African youth rose significantly in the last six years. The SAQA report (2014) also indicates that the youngest working age of population is found in Limpopo,

Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal. Rasool and Mahembe (2014), on the other hand, indicate that FETs have a contributory role to play in providing a variety of education programmes for discouraged youth and adult population to alleviate unemployment and shortage of skills. In addition, FETs may create career pathways and access avenues for them.

The following table shows the unemployment rate amongst the youth since 2010.

	UNEMPLOYMENT RATES PER YEAR				
Age In Years	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
15-34	35,7	36,1	35,8	36,2	36,1
35-64	14,9	14,4	15,1	15,0	15,6
Total 15-64	25,1	24,8	25,0	25,0	25,2

Table 2.1: Unemployment rate in South Africa from 2010- 2014 (SSA 2014)

According to the above table, youth unemployment rates are higher than that of adults. The table indicates that there are less job opportunities for youth in the labour market. RPL could provide access for the unemployed youth into skills development programmes, and accelerate completion of the training programmes. Skills Development is defined in South Africa as an institutional framework to devise and implement national, sector and workplace strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African work force; to integrate those strategies within the NQF contemplated in SAQA Act of 1995; to provide for learnerships that lead to recognised occupational qualifications; to provide financing of skills development by means of a levy-grant scheme and a National Skills Fund to regulate employment services; and to provide for matters connected therewith (Brendan and Down 2000). Skills development can help employers to create more jobs and improve the skills of those that are working and they can also help job seekers to acquire new skills and employees to upgrade existing skills for personal development. Akojee and McGrath (2010) in the Green Paper indicated that skills are an important element in development, education and training, and therefore should be placed at the forefront,

incorporating FET colleges. FET colleges are therefore considered important to the success of the South African economy.

The need for transformation, according to the National Commission on Higher Education (1996), stems from two sets of factors. Firstly, the profound deficiencies of the present system inhibit the ability to meet the moral, social and economic demands of the new South Africa, and secondly, a context of unprecedented national and global opportunities and challenges exist. Therefore transformation in South Africa was most needed to alleviate a shortage of skills and reducing the high number of the young unemployed in the country, which according to Newton (2007) was the single greatest impediment to continued growth.

Hence the focus of the Department of Education (DoE), Department of Labour (DoL) and other initiatives such as the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiatives of South Africa (ASGISA) was on skills development of the young unemployed. According to Mayet (2006), ASGISA was looking at critical skills which were required for South Africa's ongoing participation in the global economy and the initiatives have created an enabling environment for the development of centres of excellence in the FET colleges that would become more responsive to the education and economic needs of the nation. Avenues for the implementation of skills development will remain in the FET colleges and will play a vital role in implementation of skills development policies.

COSATU (1990) confirmed that on education and skills development, they must overcome the divide between mental and manual labour, and address the imbalances of the past through Early Childhood Development, RPL, Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), career pathing and related strategies. As a union, they also had to ensure access to the higher education for the working class, especially young adults and workers with disabilities making use of RPL (COSATU 2010). Pandor (2010), speaking at the DoE/HSRC conference, declared that colleges are central to their agenda of developing skills, and that their intention was to build and sustain a well-designed set of institutions offering flexible programmes

and ensuring that they have students qualified in critical skills. FET colleges were earmarked to respond to national skills development imperatives in creative ways, asserting their role as preferred providers for delivery of skills between 2005 and 2010. FET colleges are seen as places for career preparation and appropriate sites of learning for employment or self-employment.

- ***Adult learners***

Adults usually find themselves as victims of social and economic oppression. Attempts to uplift the living conditions of adults have focused on a number of programmes and projects. The reality is that institutions have developed frameworks for admitting adult learners in programmes that should have been relying on matric certificates and providing opportunities for development. New entry requirements in the FET colleges include RPL to promote the principle of access and promoting lifelong learning.

Access to learning for adults is important for their own career development and personal development. Personal development is a process of gaining additional knowledge, skills and experiences to enable you to improve on how things are done to become perfect and fulfil their own abilities and potentials. The main purpose is to build the learner's confidence, discover the hidden, master basic skills such as time management, creativity and turn ones challenges into opportunities. Personal development empowers one's personality, self-esteem, self-worth, and one may also discover meaning and purpose and joy in life. Every industry has very high expectations on its own workers to provide quality work, be accountable and compliant. Prinsloo (2010) indicates that skills development is a clear spirit of helping each adult on a pathway towards knowledge, skills and positive attitudes towards life, hence the establishment of the Skills Development Act which was initiated to improve the working skills of all South Africans so that the economy of the country should grow. Therefore, access to learning for adults need to be encouraged as communities and the nation will benefit from the skills and knowledge acquired from education and training.

2.5.2. RPL for Redress

Redress can generally be described as an act of removing the cause of social grievance which has been caused by racist policies. RPL is seen as a central pillar of redress which supports transformation of the education system in South Africa for purposes of social justice. The need for transformation according to the National Commission on Higher Education (1996) stems from two sets of factors; firstly, the profound deficiencies of the present system inhibits the ability to meet the moral, social and economic demands of the new South Africa, and secondly a context of unprecedented national and global opportunities and challenges. In Bowman, Clayton, Bateman, Knight, Thomson, Hargreaves, Blom, and Enders (2003), for social justice, RPL promises to provide a mechanism for individuals to gain confidence from what they have learnt before, and the skills and knowledge they acquired through life and work experience.

According to SAQA (2002), the target group of people in need of redress are those people who are semi-skills and those who are not employed. These are the groups of people who might have worked for longer periods of time and have gained experience in certain areas, but have been prevented from education and training because of the education policies of that time. According to SAQA (2002), these groups of people need certification, rather than access to further education and training. They would be recognised for what they know, which will ultimately make many of the candidates employed and alleviate poverty. What could be done on such candidates is the assessment of their previous knowledge and experience, and they should be given support. Therefore, RPL in this context will help redress the injustices of the past (Joint Education Trust 2003).

RPL could address the visible and the invisible barriers to learning and assessment, and create an effective vehicle for lifelong learning, and be used as a mechanism to

address the challenges in the education system of South Africa, which hindered many people opportunities of schooling because of the laws which were oppressive (SAQA 2004). Redress as such is supported by the South African Constitution of 1996 which puts it clear that everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection benefit of the law, no discrimination on the grounds of age, sex, race, religion and class. Therefore, transformation in South Africa is mostly needed to alleviate a shortage of skills and for reducing the high number of the young unemployed in the country, which according to Newton (2007) was the single greatest impediment to continued growth. The FET college would as such play a vital role in skills development and become venues for implementation of skills development policies.

Osman (2004) argued that RPL has a social justice function which means that there should be the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within a society. It is basically aimed at empowering individuals and providing them with opportunities to learn. It generally refers to the idea of creating an institution that is based on the principles of equality and that recognises the dignity of every human being. The expectations of many South Africans have not been met, and their needs have been marginalised. Cameron and Miller (2004) also alluded to the fact that RPL acts as a mechanism of social inclusion and as a means to offer those groups who were traditionally unable to participate in post compulsory education and training an opportunity to have their work and life experiences recognised.

RPL is also meant to support transformation of the education and training system of the country. The intentions are to create career pathways and access avenues for the historically disadvantaged people who received inferior education. This therefore calls for an approach to the development of RPL policy and practices that address the barriers to learning and assessment. The purpose is also to introduce a system that will ensure that learners from different educational backgrounds with skills, knowledge and experience; built up through formal, informal and non-formal learning that occurred in the past, are fairly assessed for competencies, by ensuring that they

demonstrate similar knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. This means that qualifications and standards would be expected to ensure that the potential citizens who were previously denied education and training opportunities are brought to the fore and recognised so that they can be improved for the individual's development and the country's socio-political economic development (SAQA 2000). As redress continues to take place in FET colleges and in other institutions of learning, people will be encouraged and motivated to be empowered, develop personally, be liberated and increase their skills.

2.5.3. RPL for Credit

SAQA (2013) defines credit as a measure of the volume of learning required for a qualification or part qualification, quantified as the number of notional hours required for achieving learning outcomes specified for the qualification or part qualification. AQF (2012) defines credit as the value assigned for the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or a qualification. This means that for every unit that a person studies, there is a number of credit points allocated for the outcome. The individual can claim a credit from previous knowledge depending on the amount of credits acquired. The credits can then be transferred to the new learning programme. Although credit transfer is a purpose for RPL, it has not been previously considered as an entry requirement for a qualification and/or part qualification, and it has neither been assessed. This principle applies to workers and those who are currently unemployed, who might have acquired skills in the workplace or self-taught, as they might have acquired a few qualifications which cannot be used for career pathing (SAQA 2012). The individuals can as such go for testing just to know what they are worth.

Credit transfer means the relocation of credits towards a qualification or part qualification on the same or different programmes, departments or institutions (SAQA 2012). It involves evaluating the extent to which the content or learning acquired is equivalent with the content of the matched qualification. There are benefits for credit transfer as they allow an individual to demonstrate the value of

previous skills and knowledge required to avoid duplication of learning. Credit can also reduce the length of study required to obtain a qualification. Other benefits include saving money if the individual is paying fees, gaining confidence in abilities and avoiding having to repeat learning that has already been done.

2.5.4. Equity of Opportunities

Equity of opportunities entails creating equal opportunities or benefits in education, which denotes that institutions should provide opportunities for developing learners (Joint Education Trust [JET] 2009). The objective explains the provision of ease of entry to an appropriate level of education and training for all prospective learners (SAQA 2000). It speaks to the fact that learners, particularly from historically disadvantaged communities, need to be treated quite differently to traditional school leavers. According to Nieman (2009), these individuals have been estranged from traditional learning systems, both on account of time, finances, and phase of life, distance or other factors, and were not able to obtain access to higher education. If RPL is to promote its objective, the certification bodies and service providers need to develop new entry requirements, so as not to contradict the principle of access.

These adult learners have quite different support and counselling needs, and their usual lack of familiarity with formal academic institutions can present challenges to successful learning. Qualifications and standards would be expected to be designed in a way that ensures that they do not lead learners to a dead end, that they allow for continued learning and improved employment opportunities. Learning provision would be expected to ensure that learning is a process of building knowledge and skills (SAQA 2000:4).

2.5.5. Lifelong Learning

SAQA (2013) defines lifelong learning as learning that takes place in all contexts in life from life wide, life deep and lifelong perspectives with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies. It embraces all forms of learning. The key driver

for lifelong learning is RPL, which has been embraced as a tool for transformation and developing a society that has been marginalised because of the injustices of the past apartheid system. Lifelong learning recognises learning opportunities should be provided over a lifetime not only in the early years, recognising that learning takes place in a variety of settings, industry, community and formal and informal sectors of the economy to meet the diverse needs of the society at large.

Pitman (2011) indicates that RPL is a positive agent of social change, and a need to support economic growth in a country addressing poverty, strengthening individuals and communities by promoting democracy and social cohesion. Lifelong learning is important, because knowledge is not static and people have to keep up with the modern life, such as good eating habits to stay healthy, the ever changing technological advances and also to adapt with new skills and knowledge in the workplace.

RPL has been included as a key principle of transformation in the education and training system in South Africa. Lifelong learning recognises learning opportunities to be provided over a lifetime not only in the early years, recognising that learning takes place in a variety of settings, industry, community and formal and informal sectors of the economy to meet the diverse needs of the society at large. UNESCO (2009) indicates that lifelong learning enhances social justice goals as an important mechanism of redressing the injustices of the past and inequalities and creating learning activities to widen access to education and training. Transformation in FET colleges will help increase number of people with skills, increase number of qualified professionals, decrease high level of illiteracy, decrease high unemployment and poverty and decrease the high level of HIV/AIDS in the country. The more people get knowledge the better it is for them to be transformed.

Another goal of lifelong learning is economics related. This is supported by Dorsett, Lui and Weale (2010) when indication that constant changes in the labour market mean that a person should always keep abreast with information on employment. It means that people are required to up skills, so that they will be valuable in their jobs.

Constant technological innovation requires new competencies to keep people informed. Laal and Salamati (2012) indicate that lifelong learning may benefit the economy in three ways. Firstly, by providing individuals with skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and understanding they will need in life as individuals, workers and citizens, making communities more productive and innovative as workers create and discover new abilities and ideas, and by strengthening the economy because as people develop, they are capacitated and achieve the greatest level of capacity in the economy.

Another driving force for transformation are changes in the society, social inclusion, and to have a stronger democratic society. South Africa has experienced democracy deficits and people can learn from other countries how they overcame transformation and challenges through education and training. Lack of information is sometimes a barrier to lifelong learning, but if people are informed, they become a better society and are able to solve problems that affect them.

Lifelong learning is personally rewarding and enhances professional development as it offers possible development opportunities in personal development. The individual is equipped with lifelong learning skills, self-development and career development. It gives people the opportunity to improve their skills for better employment opportunities by increasing the skills they already have or creating new skills, because they are not satisfied with their present job. Professional development enhances personal growth in work-based learning. The greater the knowledge and skills, the more able one is to solve problems in the work environment.

2.6. THE BENEFITS OF RPL

There is enough evidence in literature about the benefits of RPL in the policy guideline, the MTT RPL (SAQA 2013) report, the Skills Development Handbook, the NQF, AQF, and Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) and in other parts of the world where RPL is implemented. The benefits of RPL in South Africa align themselves with the principles of RPL as laid out in the Green Paper (1996) that should guide the process of transformation on equity, redress, democratisation, development, quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and academic freedom, institutional and autonomous public accountability. The potential benefits of RPL cluster around a number of benefits relevant to goals of the individual, employers, the education and training institutions and the society at large.

2.6.1. Personal Benefits

The individual will have access to learning and employment opportunities that they did not have before or that the individual wishes to undertake. Even those who have dropped out of school will be encouraged to resume learning and to complete a qualification. The stigma of qualifications associated with non-formal and informal learning will be reduced. The individual will have an opportunity to gain entry into a programme of study if they do not have the normal entry requirement.

The NSD Handbook (2007) indicates that RPL saves time as individuals do not have to repeat learning for skills or knowledge they already have. This means they will be empowered to have more control over where and when they learn and as such there would not be any duplication of learning, so the individual is encouraged to continue upgrading their skills and knowledge through structured education and training towards formal qualification and improved employment outcomes. The individual will be able to plan a career development path and education options so that they are not just doing a dead end job every day. It will enable the completion of formal studies in a shorter period of time. Based on succession and career planning through fair and accurate assessment of skills programme, individuals can document and demonstrate skills required for employment and advancement. The MQA (2009) and SAQA (2013) indicates that the individual will clearly identify skills gaps that should

be covered through learning, in order to get a qualification and to obtain credit toward a programme of study. This is supported by Cameron (2004) and Hargreaves (2006) when indicating that RPL allows fast tracking of recognised qualifications, and can satisfy industry licensing arrangements, and have a significant impact on self-esteem and motivation.

2.6.2. Employers

Smith (2007), Singh (2008) and Aggarwal (2014) have identified the RPL benefits to the employer as supporting the training and development of staff by increasing motivation and interest in the workplace. It provides a way of more effectively utilising skills already in the workforce, allowing fast tracking of workers, leading to organisations to have more competent workers and therefore increases productivity. Aggarwal (2014) indicates that there would be improved staff competence that assists in fulfilling succession planning and meeting employment equity and other skills development targets, it enables the skills gaps to be identified and the filling of those gaps to provide a sound basis for need analysis and career planning.

Aggarwal (2014) further argues that once the gaps are determined and identified, they would help in the planning of a skills training programme, assists in generating new ideas and development for the organisation, and as a result of reflection, reduces the cost of training and development, as learning would not be duplicated and improves employee retention. Learning can never be duplicated and this reduces time away from workplace. RPL fosters learning culture and employees become more confident, reliable and increasing motivation and interest. This basically encourages lifelong learning. Multi-skills staff leads to a flexible productive organisation with a flatter organisation structure which can access skills levy fund to pay for RPL.

2.6.3. Education and Training Institutions

Nieman (2009:144) points out that the higher education personnel can benefit in their support of learners who submit RPL applications as it increases the tertiary participation rates of non-traditional learners. The learning outcome approach encourages curriculum development, in the sense that a student's RPL application may suggest ideas for new modules and the updating and development of existing modules, or new techniques for assessment. The importance of issues in the work or recreation environment is stressed, and faculties could utilise learners' existing knowledge in their programmes.

The above process makes this study to be relevant to professional and personal development and this ensures a stronger link between classroom learning and real world experiences. The mechanisms for assessment of prior learning often demand that faculties should reflect on the changing of their established assumptions about teaching and learning. This reflection often encourages changing of course content and assessment, in order to produce learning outcomes that are more meaningful. RPL applications are often based on recent experiences, and therefore represent up to date and dynamic interaction with the world of work, and yield material for discussion and research. Learning and teaching partnerships with employers are encouraged, in that the learning outcomes that are connected with the current work practice can be negotiated.

Students are inclined to study at institutions where their prior learning is recognised, rather than to study at institutions where this is not the case. They often return to the same institution where this recognition took place, to upgrade knowledge further. RPL not only frees students from having to unnecessarily study required modules or courses, but since the demand for higher education is universally at a premium, RPL allows institutions to offer more training opportunities to other students, who have to study required modules or courses. Those, to whom prior learning recognition had been granted, do not take up space unnecessarily at training institutions. RPL identifies learner's needs, decreases ad hoc credit transfers, internationally considered an academically sound mechanism, fosters partnerships between

academic and industry, cuts costs and reduces time in system (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs 2011).

2.6.4. Benefits for the Society

The MQA (2009) identified the following benefits for the country, which are most relevant to the South African education: improved policy decisions, certified skills workers, attract investors to be positioned in the global market, reduction of cost of training people and optimisation on the use of human capital. Moore and Van Rooyen (2002:293) mentioned that “in terms of the current political, social and economic context in the country, RPL has the capacity to contribute to redress equity by opening up more ways for people to attain qualified status, enabling more people to reach higher levels of qualification and expertise by beginning with an acknowledgement of existing skills and knowledge, and contribute to enhancing international economic competitiveness by building on often invisible and acknowledged workforce skills; and offer the first step in attaining the goal of developing a multi-skills and flexible workforce by acting as an auditing tool to quantify existing competence”.

The OECD (2009) argues that RPL shortens the formal education process and reduces direct costs of learning and opportunity costs to individuals, which means that the cost of learning is reduced or its duplication. This is supported by Smith (2009) who said that the process shortens the time necessary to earn a formal qualification. Werquin (2010) and Duvekot (2007) indicate that RPL increases the visibility of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. SAQA (2013) and OECD (2009) argue that RPL facilitate access to and allowing more mobility within the labour market, ensuring labour force to support economic growth by the active use of the potential labour population (older workers, women, immigrants, unemployed youth, etc.).

The OECD (2009) have also identified the social benefits, that they include building social institutions to arrange smoother transition from education to work and from work back to education; increasing socio cultural equity and social cohesion by providing pathways for formally excluded disadvantaged groups to be included, learning for better societal values (e.g. promotion of democracy, intercultural understanding, better health, lower criminal rates, etc.), enhancing flexibility to allow more mobility within the education and training sector (e.g. between VET and HE and from FE to HE, etc.) and building a stepping stone for prisoners to be integrated into the society.

Although all the benefits mentioned are important, the benefit for individual, education and training, country and for the society are the significant in this study because the majority of unemployed people will be able to have job opportunities, learners will have access to education and training while people will be able to participate in the global market. Learners are regarded as the main beneficiaries of the RPL. This is supported by Dhlamini (2009) who points out that RPL should meet the needs of the role players, including providers of education and training and the main beneficiaries of the process.

2.7. IMPLEMENTATION

Theron (2008:70) defines implementation as the process of translating policy goals into visible results in the form of specific programmes of action. Although it is a very broad term, it includes anything that needs action by the government to achieve the set goals. Prinsloo (2009) defines implementation as a process whereby a course of action or recommendation adopted by parties in pursuit of an action is carried out. The matter of concern in policy implementation is to take action.

The National Independent Research Network (NIRN) (nirn.fpg.unc.edu/lear/2014) defines implementation as a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or a programme of known dimension. Fixsen and Blase (2011) give the same idea that implementation is a mission-oriented process involving multiple decisions, actions and corrections. All these definitions come to the conclusion that there is a specific programme which has to be carried out to be able to achieve the set goals. The RPL policy encourages clients to strive for their goals. Prior Learning Centre (PLC 2010) supports the matter when noting that RPL is a structured programme offering a wide range of custom-tailored services to provide prior learning based services for specific needs and unique goals, and in this case, access to learning programmes and social inclusion to those who were previously denied the opportunity of learning.

Implementation is the fourth stage of a normal policy cycle. The first stage is the identification of the problem; second, agenda setting, third, policy development, fourth, implementation and lastly policy evaluation. PLC (2010) provides examples of programmes and services which can be tailored for implementation of RPL in FET colleges to meet the needs of the society:

- Portfolio Development Programme

The PLC (2010) has two types of Portfolio Development Programmes: Skills and Learning Portfolio Development Programme for general public and for adult learners.

- *Skills and Learning Portfolio Development for general public*

This programme is valuable for individuals to guide them in peer learning area through a systematic, holistic and reflective environment. It benefits learners in understanding their competencies and developing a portfolio, to enable them to identify the skills and knowledge acquired through life. The concern is whether this type of programme is available in South African FET Colleges. Skills and Learning Portfolio Development for Adults programme is specifically developed for adults who have language problems such as reading, writing and speaking. In Netherlands, according to Zubizarreta (2008), the programmes are available but are developed according to goals and content of learning. In South Africa the FET colleges have a close link with Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) which provide

learnerships and apprenticeship skills programmes aimed at promoting growth in employment and capacity building. What needs to be investigated is whether the FET colleges have these programmes (SETA 2014) for successful implementation of RPL.

- *Professional Portfolio Development Programme*

This type of programme is directly delivered to professionals to assess their skills and in finding out whether the skills are still relevant in their careers and job related competencies. In South Africa there is a plan especially for educators, SACE (Act 31 of 2000) as amended by the Basic Laws Amendment Act 2011 for promoting the CPTD to expand their career opportunities and that they become lifelong learners. The professional body will then provide evidence of the skills acquired so that the appropriate body can assess the claim.

- *Practitioner Certification Programme*

According to PLC (2010) this programme is specifically designed for facilitators of RPL so that it could be easy for them to implement the programmes in their various institutions. The training programme is important because the facilitator is involved and able to display and be guided throughout the whole process. The programme will help the facilitator to train others. The ETDP SETA as a training body is responsible to offer these programmes that allow practitioners to develop the skills necessary to train other people and receive the skills in designing and presenting their own workshops. The programme is valuable if an RPL programme has to be implemented. This study intends to establish whether the colleges have the facilitator certification programme.

- *Customised Training Programme*

This training workshop is established to enhance the skills of practitioners that interact directly with learners in their service delivery. These types of programmes are beneficial to the institutions because the training programme will be aligned to the vision and mission of the institution. Institutions can also identify their training needs which will ultimately improve productivity. The programmes are therefore tailored to fit the desires and aspirations of the institution. Pandor (2006) at the

DoE/HSRC conference declared that “colleges are central to our agenda of developing skills. It is our intention to build and sustain a well-designed set of institutions offering flexible programmes and ensuring that we have students qualified in critical skills”. The concern is whether such programmes are available or implemented at the sampled FET colleges in this study.

Although there are factors inhibiting implementation of RPL in FET colleges, RPL cannot be ignored and compromised as indicated in Government Gazette (2012 No. 35747) which indicated that there are factors for implementation:

- firstly, to initiate a comprehensive quality-assured and resource-driven approach to optimise the delivery of RPL services and programmes, including RPL assessments;
- Secondly, they are to ensure quality assurance and benchmarking of RPL by designated authorities and agencies;
- Thirdly they should acknowledge the roles of SAQA and the three Quality Councils: the Council on Higher Education (CHE); Umalusi: Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training; and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO);
- Fourthly, they are to recognise that the challenges to implementation exists, such as: limited incentives; lack of resources including lack of trained RPL personnel; inadequate support systems such as administrative systems (that are unable to grant credits for part-qualifications), and admission systems (without robust alternative access routes); institutional resistance and lack of capacity; over-subscription in some sectors;
- Fifthly, they should recognise that that there are different kinds of RPL and purposes for RPL in relation to different contexts and classifications of knowledge, skills competencies, qualifications and part-qualifications in the national learning system; and
- Lastly, that they must provide support for a national co-ordinating mechanism to assist the Quality Councils, institutions of learning, and RPL practitioners to deal with challenges, accessing government funding, building capacity and expanding RPL provisioning in a comprehensive RPL.

Literature survey on RPL revealed that there is a low level of implementation in so far as the FET colleges (DoE 2013) are concerned. Some studies indicate that RPL has failed to act as a mechanism for social inclusion (Cameron 2006). This is supported by Deller (2006) who studied implementation of RPL in the workplace and concluded that it has not been available for working adults because the models available do not cater for the working adult. RPL implementation is a mandate to acknowledge people with skills and knowledge but there is no formal certification to verify the existing knowledge and/or to generate qualifications to be recognised under the NQF (SAQA 2011).

For RPL implementation, the responsibility is on SAQA, Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) and education and training bodies authorised to transmit or teach skills, whilst further monitoring and accrediting training through the agency of accredited training providers. Given the experience or practice-based approach to the training programmes, the training providers evidently follow the RPL legitimisation view. Institutions are therefore obligated to ensure that policies and procedures are put in place that will transform the demographics of the learner population in terms of the racial and gender composition (DoE 1996). However, JET (2009) argues that the principle of redress can only be realised if equitable access mechanisms are in place, and if a culture of providing equity of opportunity prevails at institutions.

Implementation problems will take place if the activities that have been planned are not able to achieve the goals they were intended to in the light of the developed policies. Makinde (2005) argues that implementation problems result from four critical factors; communication, resources, attitudes and bureaucratic structures when the desired goals do not reach the beneficiaries targeted.

Communication is defined in the Collins Dictionary as an act or an instance of communication, the imparting or exchanging of information, ideas or feelings. It

entails the act of sharing information from one individual to another, either verbally, non-verbally, written or through visualisation to reach a common understanding. It therefore involves participants who have to receive information. When the participants cannot receive the information, it could be a barrier to implementation processes, especially if the participants could not understand what was communicated to them. Although there are a number of communication channels, it is important that the communicator chooses appropriate channels to convey the message intended for the receivers. Good communication during the implementation phase will enable a buy-in from stakeholders; assist in managing resistance, assist in learning and reinforcing the achievements that have been gained. Any provision of relevant information reduces fears and anxieties from people who are likely to resist changes.

A resource can be described as a productive or economic factor required to accomplish an activity to accomplish the desired results. The most basic resources in this study are capital, labour and land. Resources are important in institutions as it will help institutions to facilitate services to maximise their output. Labour involves human resources which are important to utilise the resources to provide services needed in institutions. Labour also involves management of activities which are necessary to oversee and manage the workers by coordinating and monitoring the activities of people who are labouring. Poorly planned implementation will cost the institutions so it is vital to minimise problems by identifying what needs to be put together before the real implementation such as setting priorities, investing in training of employees and whether sufficient funds are available.

Attitude is described by Merriam Webster Dictionary (2011) as a way of thinking, behaving or feeling about something which can either be negative or positive. It is regarded as one of the good change agents that can be overlooked during implementation processes. Some people have relevant knowledge and skills but if the attitude is not appropriate, they will not be able to contribute much in a community or the organisation. Bureaucracy can be described as the complex structure of the system of government where most of the important decisions are

taken by the officials of the state rather than the elected representatives. There are a number of problems including a lack of accountability, fairness issues, and general unresponsiveness.

According to Makinde (2005) there are four factors that restrict the implementation of policies in education system.

- *Ego of leaders*

Makinde (2005) argues that the policy usually has challenges if the policy emanates from the government rather than from the target groups, the planning is top down and the beneficiaries are not allowed to contribute to the formulation of the policies that affect them. Makinde (2005) also indicated that another challenge is when the leaders try to change names for the similar project of which they should have just amended a few things. These have been evident in the South African FET system when a new minister is appointed, names of programmes change. The researcher shares similar sentiments with Makinde when looking at how the technical colleges' names have been changing since democracy. People lose interest and courage to send their children to a college if they are not sure what will happen in the future.

- *Lack of continuity in government programmes*

Leaders are not able to continue with the project that someone has initiated even if it means changing only a few things from the initial policy. Makinde (2005) argues that this retards implementation or programme failure. For example, in South Africa, there have been technical high schools and technical colleges before and names have been changing from one minister to the other, (to boost the leaders ego), as Makinde (2005) highlighted.

- *Social, economic, political and administrative variables*

Makinde (2005) indicates that another challenge is when the policy makers do not take into consideration the social, political and administrative variables when policy formulation is analysed.

- *Bribery and corruption*

Mankinde (2005) argues that other problems of implementation failure arise when bribery and corruption have contributed in a situation where large amounts of money have been earmarked for a project but the money is mismanaged.

2.7.1 Implementation Process

Process can be described as a series of steps that can be taken for the work to be completed. RPL consists of various educational and training activities through which the learner can be supported when engaged with RPL. SAQA (2012) includes the provision of information, advice, coaching, administrative services, access programmes, integrated curriculum designs and other practices such as formative and summative evaluation. RPL can however be implemented differently in institutions of learning. Whittaker (2005) identifies the following:

- *Personal Development and Career Development*

Career changes have been very rapid ever since democracy of the country and this gives individuals an opportunity for career development as well. For example, the advancement in technology in various workplaces requires that individuals should be able to manage their own lives by pursuing career objectives by using different and available opportunities. Organisations and institutions also need the workforce that has been developed, either through training or workshops for production. So development help an individual to recognise his value as confidence and motivation are increased. When faced with RPL applications the individual will be able to plan ahead of time.

- *Guidance and Counselling*

Guidance and counselling can be described as services or programmes for helping individuals to discover their educational, vocational and personal and social development. RPL is a new field in the FET colleges and therefore the colleges have an important supportive role to play for candidate seeking their knowledge and skills to be recognised. The candidates have to be supported from the beginning when they start to make the claims for RPL and throughout the whole process. Guidance and counselling is important because it lays a foundation for the candidate's career and self-development, self-awareness, world of work, and placement opportunities and making decision

- *Preparation for Assessment*

The candidate has to meet with the advisor for preparation of RPL assessment who will advise the candidate on the competencies to be assessed and supporting the learner with the preliminary counselling. The advisor will also advise on qualifications and how to structure the portfolio of evidence (PoE). Once the preliminary advice and counselling has been done, the candidate will meet with the assessor who is an expert of the subject. Both the assessor and the learner will review the selected subject and the unit standards against which the prior learning has to be assessed and also on the type of methods to be assessed with. They will lastly agree on the dates of the assessments. The moderator at this stage will review the assessment tools to check whether they meet the SAQA standards. Moderation will take place after judgement of the evidence has been completed.

SAQA (2004) provides the generic model for RPL implementation:

Step 1: Interview	<p>The applicant meets with the RPL facilitator to gain information regarding the requirements for successful RPL assessment.</p> <p>The RPL facilitator will explain how the</p>
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	<p>evidence should be gathered and presented and how to fill out the RPL application form.</p> <p>If the applicant is not available for an interview, communication can occur via email or telephone.</p>
Step 2: Identification Process	<p>Applicants must submit an RPL application form inclusive of the relevant application fee.</p> <p>The RPL facilitator is responsible for the verification the validation of the provided RPL application information and identification of RPL possibilities after the RPL applicant has completed and submitted all necessary administrative documentation.</p> <p>The learner will receive a list of criteria for which the learner has to provide evidence to illustrate their competency in the module/course outcomes for which they want to receive recognition of prior learning of RPL Policy</p>
Step 3: Portfolio Submission	<p>When the applicant feels satisfied that s/he has fulfilled all the required criteria s/he may submit the portfolio to the RPL facilitator.</p>
Step 4: Portfolio Assessment	<p>The portfolio is assessed by the Academic Head and moderated by the Academic Quality Committee. The assessment and moderation process may take up to 2 weeks to complete.</p>

Step 5: Additional information	Should the evidence provided by the applicant, demonstrate the required competencies, the applicant will be given the opportunity to submit additional evidence and will be charged a reassessment fee.
Step 6: Assessment Feedback	The applicant will receive a detailed assessment sheet reflecting on provided evidence as feedback
Step 7: Appeal Process	Should the applicant wish to appeal the assessment decision s/he must follow the learner appeal procedure.

Table 2.2: RPL Process (SAQA 2004)

The processes used to assess RPL applications may take several (not mutually exclusive) forms, for example:

- participation in exactly the same or modified versions of the assessment the student would be required to complete as part of the full course;
- assessment based on a portfolio of evidence;
- direct observation of demonstration of skills or competence;
- reflective papers, journals or portfolios that relate past learning to the learning or competency outcomes of the current course or qualification;
- provision of examples of the student's work drawn from the workplace, social, community or other setting in which the student applies their learning, skills or competence;
- testimonials of learning, skills or competence;
- combinations of any of the above;
- of a comparable standard to those used to deliver and assess the qualification;
- be evidence based, transparent and accountable; and,

- explicitly subject to the quality assurance processes used to ensure the standard and integrity of assessment processes within sectors or institutions, and be validated and monitored in the same way other assessment processes are validated and monitored.

2.7.2. Roles and Responsibilities of Players in Implementation of RPL

SAQA (2013:9) identifies the key government departments, statutory bodies, stake holders and role players that are responsible to the successful implementation of RPL and they are identified as follows:

Responsibilities of SAQA is to develop national policy and criteria, after consultation with the Quality Councils for RPL, to coordinate the Sub-frameworks of the NQF including the alignment of Sub-framework policies on RPL and articulation across the system, to recognise professional bodies and register professional designation that meet the SAQA policy including the specification of an RPL route as an integral requirement for attainment of the professional body's professional designation, to oversee the national coordination of RPL, including research, professionalization of RPL practises and practitioners strategic RPL projects, support, advice, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and marketing of RPL.

Responsibilities of Quality Councils are to:

- develop a policy on RPL for their sectors, taking into account the relevant national SAQA policies and the broader context of their specific Sub-frameworks and related policies,
- monitor and evaluate the implementation of RPL including the development and implementation of standardised approaches, collaborate with SAQA, NAMB, SETAs and the other role players to advance the development of RPL in their sectors,
- foster close working relationships with professional bodies in and across the sub-frameworks where appropriate to facilitate RPL,

- facilitate and monitor the training enabling agreements to increase RPL provisioning in their sectors,
- support and monitor the training of RPL advisors, facilitators, assessors, moderators and administrators in their sectors, monitor providers that offer RPL in their sectors, in accordance with criteria established for this purpose,
- ensure consistency in the application of RPL policies by providers and delegate bodies in their sectors, support the coordinated development of generic RPL toolkits and instruments relevant to the particular context for their sectors,
- wherever appropriate and possible, monitor the RPL admission rates of providers and make this information public in an appropriate format, while maintaining the strictest confidentiality with respect to individual candidates and individual institutions,
- ensure that no distinction other than that for data analysis is made between qualifications awarded through conventional and RPL routes,
- develop and maintain an information management system that is compatible with the National Learners Record Database (NLRD) and other relevant government information management systems, and
- submit the relevant data to SAQA and conduct and oversee RPL-related research in the sub-framework sector in collaboration with SAQA.

Responsibilities of SETA according to the report are:

- to develop overarching and sectorial RPL policies and procedures in collaboration with the RPL institute,
- to work with the RPL institute to develop criteria and procedures for registering and accrediting RPL providers and practitioners,
- to agree on, and implement the necessary systems including data collection systems,

- to report on all aspects of RPL implementation including RPL candidates and their achievements,
- to contribute to the implementation of RPL in all its aspects and SAQA, quality councils and SETAs, and
- to ensure that the bodies/organisations they each regulate deliver on their RPL commitments and comply with regulatory requirements.

Responsibilities of education institutions and skills development providers are to seek accreditation by the relevant Quality Councils. In the case of private education providers that offer qualifications and part qualifications, the registration will be with the DHET or Department of Basic Education. Their role is to develop and enhance the capacity to implement RPL according to the policy the specific RPL policy of the sub-frameworks within which their qualifications are offered collaborate with SAQA, NAMB and the Quality Councils to advance the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of RPL.

They also have to ensure that they have the necessary staff capacity to deliver quality RPL services and programmes, ensure effective planning and funding for RPL administrative and logistical systems to support all programmes and services, put systems and procedures in place to incentivise and support the registration and continuing professional development of RPL practitioners, provide advice, counselling and support services to assist the RPL candidate prior to, during and after RPL processes, establish an appeal process for RPL candidates to engage with RPL related judgements, ensure an equitable fee structure for all RPL programmes and services including those programmes and services that involve the assessment of experiential learning for credit against existing formal qualifications; and develop an information management system that meets the requirements of the relevant Quality Councils, NLRD, and other relevant government information management system.

The responsibilities of RPL practitioners include to adhere to the requirements which are set out in the policy document and as determined by the relevant bodies and government structures. These includes the Quality Councils, a workplace and a professional bodies which their responsibilities is the participation in continuing professional development activities, to be developed and agreed with the community of RPL practitioners, relevant bodies and governance structures through the national coordination of RPL. The responsibilities for RPL candidates are to accept core responsibility as equal partners in the RPL process, expect to be treated without unfair discrimination, respect the processes and procedures of institutions and workplaces. The MTT RPL (SAQA 2013) added the roles and responsibilities of the DHET as to establish and coordinate inter-ministerial and inter-department initiatives.

Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (Palama) are to work closely with the RPL institute to develop and implement an RPL process for the public sector, including reviewing their policy to ensure alignment with the national RPL policy, and to collaborate with the RPL institute to identify and support RPL projects across other states departments.

Public and private education and training institutions are to ensure that RPL policies and procedure are in place and publicly available, work with the RPL institute and the DHET to ensure that RPL funding is accessed, work with RPL institute to capacitate RPL implementation within and across each institution and to implement the necessary systems to report on all aspects of RPL implementation, including RPL candidates and their achievements.

The employers are to work with SETAs and the RPL institute to build RPL into workplace skills plans and training plans and processes and to implement the necessary systems to report on all aspects of RPL implementation including RPL candidates and their achievements. The trade unions are to work with SETAs, the QCTO and the RPL Institute to ensure capacitation of union office bearers and members.

With all the above roles and responsibilities, the MTT RPL (SAQA 2013) identified the key principles underpinning their roles and responsibilities, which are cooperation which can be described as mutually beneficial interaction between organisations or institutions to achieve common goals; collaboration, which can be described as a working practice that enables individuals to work together to produce common goals; and development of communities of practice and trust.

FET colleges are therefore obligated to ensure that policies and procedures are put in place that will transform the demographics of the learner population in terms of the racial and gender composition (DoE 1996). JET (2009) argue that the principle of redress can only be realised if equitable access mechanisms are in place, and if a culture of providing equity of opportunity prevails at institutions.

2.7.3. People Responsible for Implementation and their Responsibilities

The following table displays the people responsible for the implementation of RPL and their responsibilities.

RPL PRACTITIONER	ATTRIBUTES	ROLES
Advisory/ Evidence facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • should not necessarily be a subject specialist • understand the RPL processes and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides and council the candidate • Interviews candidates • Assist with compilation of portfolio of evidence • Evaluate available evidence
Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A subject specialist • Trained and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducts assessment

	<p>declared to be a competent assessor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible and open to the wide variety of ways in which people may have gained competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arranges assessment venue • conducts pre assessment meetings, explains the assessment procedure • Provide assessment feedback to the candidate • Records assessment results
Moderator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A subject specialist • Trained and declared to be competent as a moderator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the quality of the assessment • Checks to ensure if all procedures have been followed. • Compiles report. • Provide feedback to the assessor
Candidate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims to have informed learning and knowledge that could be recognised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compiles a portfolio of evidence • Undergoes practical assessment • Writes a knowledge test • Attends pre and post assessment meetings

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lodges an appeal where necessary
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Table 2.3: People Responsible for RPL (SAQA)

2.8. MODELS OF RPL

Implementation of RPL plays a crucial role and the RPL process is regulated by SAQA for quality purposes. The proper use of RPL models is essential in RPL programmes to ensure access by persons who have been marginalised in the past. The following three models will be discussed as proposed by Osman (2004).

	Credit Exchange Model	Developmental Model	Transformational Model
Definition	Candidate provide evidence having achieved the skills and knowledge prescribed for the course	Candidate required to assess and evaluate prior learning acquired formally, informally and experientially	Interventions seek to reshape values, beliefs and paradigms within institutions of learning
Aim	Give credit for qualifications obtained elsewhere	Facilitate a personal statement of learning and achievement	Recognise the diversity and richness of individual experience
Advantage	Simple for candidates, assessors and institutions	Strong emphasis on in-depth reflection to further personal and professional development	Places social change on the agenda of educational institutions and offer the opportunity to work dynamically with change
Disadvantage	Does not take account of learning acquired informally through experience	Requires substantial tutor support which is complex, more	Doubt about this intervention's capacity to challenge dominant

		specialised and expensive	discourses about social transformation due to complexity
Assessment practice	Standardised tests, challenge essays and exams	Portfolio development	Critique and assessment of curricula in academic programmes and institutions

Table 2.4: RPL models (Osman 2004)

2.8.1. Credential Model / Credit Exchange Model

According to Osman (2004), candidates provide evidence for having achieved the skills and knowledge prescribed for the course, so as to give credit for qualifications that have been obtained elsewhere. Nitko (2004:12) argues that the credentialing and certification decisions reflect whether a student has attained certain standards of learning. This form of assessment decides whether the learner meets the standard of competence for a diploma or a certificate that enables the individual to apply for employment. Cameron and Miller (2006) indicate that the model is market oriented and emphasise that knowledge and skills acquisition is measurable. It makes use of human capital theory and is based on vocational education.

2.8.2. Developmental Model

The development approach model was developed with the emergence of Kolb's theory on learning cycles and its emphasis is on what the learner has learnt through experience. The development model helps to develop the student not only assessing existing levels of competence acquired formally, informally and experientially but also in the case of prior learning to help the learner obtain credits (Osman 2004). The aim is also to enhance critical thinking, communication and problem solving and can also help develop the learner's confidence, improvement and self-actualisation.

2.8.3. Transformational Model

This model values all forms of learning including non-formal, informal and non-formal learning. Cameron (2004) indicates that the model is learner centred, encourages autonomy and self-direction and it is holistic. The model could be very relevant because it focuses on the learners' current needs which are also embedded in the needs of the current situation in the country. Cameron (2004) argues that the model is targeted to those groups of people in transition and is community based. They also believe that the model is based on four components, firstly; the self-concept component addresses the key concepts of self-confidence, self-esteem, self-knowledge and development planning strategies. Secondly, it addresses learning and recognition component, which addresses different types of learning, formal, informal and non-formal. But the key concept is self-recognition where the learner will be able to develop and maintain a portfolio. Thirdly, career and life planning which involves aspects of career planning and guidance, and lastly the new literacies, which is based on new world of work and contemporary research into conceptions of the new millennium for the new knowledge economy.

With the number of challenges facing the FET colleges, the model needed for implementation of RPL should focus on the challenges faced by the FET colleges and strategies to solve them. A model needed for implementation is therefore of paramount importance. Assessment in RPL plays a crucial role and the RPL process is regulated by SAQA for quality purposes. The proper use of RPL models is essential in RPL programmes to ensure access by persons who have been marginalised in the past.

2.9. FACTORS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION OF RPL IN FET COLLEGES

Numerous challenges emerged during the implementation of RPL across different sectors, bands and delivery sites. The challenges vary from personal, institutional, providers and procedural. The most peculiar challenge in South African FET colleges is that RPL has not lived up to its promise of social inclusion and economic development of the country. OECD (2009:68) said that "South Africa has not yet

gone beyond the initial stage represented by inspirational promoters of recognition, even though it has a network of excellent specialists and exhibits scattered signs of very good practice." South Africa has in fact failed its beneficiaries by not keeping its promise of social redress and access to opportunities to those barred from education and training in the past.

It has to be noted that South Africa depends on the FET college subsystem for the provision of priority skills to see the country competing in the labour market and curbing unemployment. Nzimande (2010) in the national address at the FET summit said, *"We are aware of the many difficulties that have been experienced in recent years in the FET college sub system as a result of a complex and incomplete transition, with multiple and overlapping changes of a profound nature for which many were ill equipped. These difficulties have affected the colleges as institutions to different degrees"*. Although the minister spoke of a number of challenges in the FET college subsystem, the issue of RPL was not addressed which denotes that the implementation is not yet been given priority. The challenges identified will, however, play a significant role in this research as the researcher assumes those challenges are a hindrance to the implementation of RPL.

Although there is little research in South African FET colleges about RPL, significant contributions have been reported by Mbuyane (2007), Prinsloo (2009) and Mahlangu (2013) in their studies on RPL in public FET colleges. Their studies revealed a number of challenges experienced by the institutions in implementation of RPL. The challenges identified are the following: Lack of RPL policy guidelines, lack of understanding and awareness, limited resources, quality assuring systems, leadership and management, admission requirements, and stigma and accessing practical workshops.

2.9.1. Lack of Policy Guideline

The lack of RPL policy guidelines was identified as a major factor in the implementation of RPL in FET colleges. RPL policy was formulated in 2002 and the policy guideline and criteria in 2004 (SAQA 2002). According to Blom (2004), a

survey conducted by JET found that in 2000, the implementation of RPL in Higher Education and training institutions was limited. Where some universities had policies, others did not have, and some were implementing RPL even without an institutional RPL policy. This is evident at University of South Africa which, according to Kizito (2006), started implementing RPL in 2002. Lack of RPL policy denotes lack of interest and reluctance to implement, therefore, the challenges that South Africa is facing such as unemployment and poverty are far from being solved. FET colleges are colleges of choice for skills shortages and therefore the policy should be implemented. Non-implementation denotes that the majority of the youth and those who have to benefit from RPL in the country will continue to live in poverty if resistance in FET colleges still continues. SAQA (2013) states that unless proper policies, structures and resources are allocated to a credible assessment process, it could only become an area of contestation and conflict.

2.9.2. Lack of Understanding and Awareness

Mbuyane (2007) identified that the educators understand the concept of RPL. Mahlangu (2013) established that there is no thorough understanding of RPL process and its implementation. Although these two researchers have different views on how educators understand RPL, they both agree that there are challenges in the concept of implementation which the researcher thinks implies lack of understanding. The finding by Mbuyane (2007) was that the NCV programmes are not unit standards and as such create problems for the application of RPL, and that the fundamental subjects would have problems because the learners cannot read and write. This is supported by Cameron and Miller (2006) and Sims (2010) who argue that a lack of understanding and awareness is associated with illiteracy and low levels of socio-economic status which was also found by Mbuyane (2007) who indicates that the learners cannot read or write. While Sims (2010) also argues that lack of awareness is as a result of lack of demand from the candidate.

2.9.3. Limited Resources

Mbuyane (2007), Prinsloo (2009) and Mahlangu (2013) identified a lack of resources as a major factor for implementation of RPL. Mbuyane (2007) argues that there should be variables to support implementation of RPL and this should be internal and external. According to SAQA (2004), the support structures are required at different levels for the education and training providers to critically engage with their proposed methodologies and tools, and to ensure that there is consistency in the interpretation and assessment of learning. Besides the challenges with infrastructure, SAQA (2004) identifies the training of staff as a prerequisite for quality and integrity of assessments. A finding by JET (2010) indicated that most of the staff that has been trained has left the colleges after receiving training. However, SAQA (2013) indicated that resources are a priority for the implementation of RPL which include training of staff for development in the college.

2.9.4. Quality Management Systems

Quality Management System (QMS) is identified as another factor affecting implementation of RPL in colleges. SAQA (2001:9) defines QMS as the sum of the activities and information an organisation uses to enable it to better and more consistently deliver the products and services that meet and exceed the needs and expectations of the customers and beneficiaries, more cost effectively and efficiently, today and in the future. Mbuyane (2007) argues that the systems to support the implementation of prior learning in colleges have not been put in place. According to Manghani (2011), the top management commitment and active involvement is paramount in the establishment, management and monitoring of quality systems which can be achieved by having a quality policy and objectives, and ensuring that they are understood and implemented by all employees at all levels, ensuring that processes are implemented to satisfy consumer's needs and expectations. SAQA's (2001:19) ultimate objective of QMS is to enhance learning in South Africa by increasing the number of learners, the frequency of learning, and the relevance and durability of what is learned and to establish a framework of qualifications and standards that are relevant, credible and accessible. Mahlangu (2013) found that the quality of assessments, aptitude and psychometric testing are marked after learners have registered for their programmes. This means that the quality is compromised

and that the quality of RPL results may be compromised as well and are not giving the true reflection of what they are.

2.9.5. Leadership and Management

Leadership and management in education are seen as an integral part of a successful academic institution to realise the required institutional reforms (Dhlamini 2009). Mbuyane (2007) argues that the senior management are not committed to RPL, there are no measures for implementation, and policies have been put on hold. There is uncertainty over the benefits of RPL, and that RPL does not feature in colleges' strategic plans. However, commitment to RPL is critical for the success of RPL and as a transformation tool to address the dire needs of the society. Mbuyane (2007) argues there should be support from the provincial and national government, as the colleges will be limited in providing education and training to those who require it. The lack of leadership and management commitment may have a negative impact on the college as the educators could be frustrated as there are no clear expectations about what needs to be done.

2.9.6. Admission Requirements

One of the drivers of RPL in FET colleges is access to learning programmes for the purpose of alleviating unemployment and for young people to have opportunities that will make them economically active citizens (SAQA 2012). Nzimande (2010) indicated that he would like to see more youth in colleges and to increase the number of artisans in the country for addressing shortage of skills. This can only be achieved if there is an increase in the number of young people and the unemployed engaging in programmes. The only criterion for admission of learners in FET colleges is grade 9 for the learners to be admitted in the NCV programmes and grade 12 for those who are to study for the Nated programmes. According to Mbuyane (2007), the colleges have not yet made RPL an entrance requirement, which makes it difficult to access learning programmes by disadvantaged groups. The promise of social inclusion by the FET colleges is a dream to those who were hoping to get jobs fifteen years ago. Non- implementation in the FET Colleges

therefore means that the promises are futile and poverty, as well as unemployment, will continue to grow, and that the minister of HE's target of 1 000 000 learners by 2014 was very ambitious whilst Nzimande (2012) in an operational plan for 2011/12 said that FET Colleges should be seen as colleges of first choice.

2.9.7. Stigma

Prinsloo (2010) indicated that another factor that impedes implementation of prior learning is stigma. Stigma may be described as traits of disapproval by a number of people in a society as unacceptable. According to the FET Act (Act 16 of 2006), the aim of the FET colleges are to provide post compulsory general education, which is focused on vocational education, preparing students for occupational fields and increasing employment opportunities. However, the perception towards the FET colleges has been negative, because it is thought that the FET colleges are for learners who did not make it at high school and those who do not have money for the university. Even during the apartheid era, there was a stigma attached to FET colleges, because the majority of whites who went to the technical colleges were those who had passed standard six, who have been graded and classified as not intelligent (Badroodien 2004). When technical schools were opened to blacks, it was also only for manual work. Even presently, the FET college admissions is for those who have passed grade nine and those who did not pass grade twelve, and they are looked down upon by the society. Another challenge is that the FET college campuses are those that have been used previously for various purposes, which do not depict the college status very well. The entrance requirement for the NCV programme is grade 9 which is regarded as a lower grade for the college and hence people are embarrassed to enrol in FET colleges

2.9.8. Accessing Practical Workshops

Mahlangu (2013) indicated that one of the challenges for the implementation of RPL is accessing workshops for practical skills, and that learners spend less time in the

workshops. The DHET (2010) plan was to strengthen the FET colleges and employer relationship to support and expand the delivery of vocational education and training programmes to enhance youth employability (Suleman&Marock 2009). According to Suleman and Marock (2009), the partnerships will enhance growth and stability in the FET colleges by improving the effectiveness of the learners and ensure that learners are better placed in the workplace, learnerships and internship programmes for experiential learning, and that they get employment opportunities. When the NCV was introduced, it was to directly respond to the government mandate because the programme is directly linked to industries. According to Suleman and Marock (2009), the FET challenges with regard to FET colleges and partnerships, and came to the conclusion that there should be relevant partners that are involved in determining who to engage with.

2.10. SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

Successful implementation is defined by Pinto and Slevin (1987) as a project incorporating four basic facets; comes in on time, comes in on budget, achieves all the goals originally set and is accepted and used by the client for whom the project is intended. Economist Intelligence Unit (2010:7) indicates that the implementation of new policy is critical, because failed execution results in regulatory negligence, exposing public and private organisations to a legal issue. Deller (2007) mentioned the following factors for achieving successful implementation:

- obtain a buy-in from all relevant parties to ensure successful implementation. This means there should be support from various stakeholders, even people from the ground. Makinde (2005) argues that the beneficiaries should be allowed to contribute to the policy that affects them. The researcher supports what Makinde indicated because if the beneficiaries are involved, when there are challenges, they would come with insights to help solve the problems and they will be committed to the project that they have knowledge of.

- understand the context (the environment or setting in which RPL is to be implemented) and understand the prevailing learning culture.
- offer alternatives to onsite RPL. If RPL cannot take place at the work site, then candidates should be able to complete their RPL off site through an independent RPL centre set up specifically to offer RPL.
- profile RPL candidates for RPL readiness. Deller (2007) says that RPL candidates should be assessed prior to RPL commencement to ensure they have the required level of prior learning and the required level of personal mastery to manage the RPL process.
- develop the logic model that is context specific. Deller (2007) means that there should be research done before implementation of programmes to determine the goals before designing whether there is a need for such a programme.

The methods would not be the same for every FET colleges and there is no single method which is appropriate. It is the institutions who have to make their own decision about the model that best suits them and their clients before they can implement.

2.11. ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a process of knowledge production directed at the generation of inferences concerning developed competencies, the process by which such competencies are developed, and the potential for their development (Gordon 2012). Assessment serves a number of purposes; to inform instructional planning, inform instruction, evaluate effectiveness, assess learning, identify learner needs and strengths and evaluate learner achievement against predetermined criteria for the purpose of grading and reporting (DoE 2011). Assessment defines for the students what is important, what counts, how they will spend their time and how they will see

themselves as learners (Gordon 2012). Assessment is not new in the South African education. The difference is how it was implemented before democracy.

The apartheid regime created inferior education opportunities for the Africans. According to the Bantu Education Act, (No 47 of 1953), it was meant to provide mass education to Africans with the aim of training Africans to do unskilled labour. This was indicated by Verwoerd in 1953 who declared that African education should be inferior to that of other races, and that they should be educated only far enough to be useful labourers. It was therefore necessary that there should be transformation in the curriculum. This became evident when seventeen education departments were unified into a single ministry and with the introduction of Outcome Based Education (OBE) in South Africa. The past education system was predominantly rote-learning, content based, inflexible, oppressive, fragmented and segregated in terms of race (Alexander et al.2011).

The National Policy Act (No 27 of 1996) provides a policy on curriculum frameworks, core syllabus and education programmes, learning standards, examinations and certification of qualifications. The policy was developed in response to a need to phase in assessment practices that are compatible with the newly introduced OBE (SAQA 1998).

The major achievement in South African education was the dismantling of the previous apartheid education structures which were racist (DoE 2001). The first curriculum change came with the introduction of Curriculum 2005 in 1998 which was based on the OBE method of teaching and learning and was linked to formative and continuous assessment rather than summative assessment (DoE 2002). OBE according to Lekgoathi (2010:107) opposed the traditional Bantu Education approach, which primarily focused on the resources that were available and required the learners to demonstrate the required skills and content.

Butler (2004:3) defines Outcome Based Education as a comprehensive approach to organising and operating an educational system that is focused in and defined by the successful demonstrations of learning sought from each student. OBE implies that what learners are to learn are clearly defined, progress is based on demonstration of achievement, learners' needs are accommodated through multi-teaching, learning strategies, assessment tools and each learner is provided with the time and assistance to realise his or her potential. OBE produces active learners, outcome assessment are ongoing, encourages critical thinking, is learner centred, and emphasis is on the outcomes. Different aspects of the learners' abilities and assessment are seen as an integral part of the whole system. Assessment in OBE focuses on the achievement of clearly defined outcomes, which would be possible for learner's achievement to be credited. Assessment in OBE requires the tools that appropriately assess learner achievement and encourages lifelong learning skills.

As a new curriculum, OBE had many innovative and positive features as indicated by the DoE (2002). These features are:

- it breaks with the authoritarian and rote learning styles of the past
- it is fundamentally committed to equality in teaching and learning and recognises the urgent need to create more and better opportunities for entrance to and from all levels of teaching and training
- it recognises the skills and a qualification obtained in job-related training and identifies the need for lifelong learning
- it promotes a more direct integration of learning and training of knowledge and skills to educate and train people to apply them to their needs in the real world
- it advocates more rational integration of knowledge and skills in different learning areas and emphasises cooperative learning and the development of a basic understanding of what is learnt and why it is learned
- it recognises the importance of an outcome based approach to teaching and training, and promotes critical thinking and civic responsibility.

Curriculum 2005 was revised and renamed the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which became an educational policy in 2002 (DoE 2002). The aim of the NCS was according to Pandor (2010) to actively participate in globalising the 21st century world. The review of NCS led to the development of Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). The DoE (2002:2) stated that the RNCS will strengthen the implementation of OBE, human rights and inclusivity. The key principles underlying the RNCS were the outcomes and assessment standards which indicated the skills and knowledge required by the learners. The RNCS is based on the following principles: outcome based, clarity and accessibility, progression and integration, high level of skills and knowledge for all and social justice, healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity (DoE 2002).

SAQA (2001) identified assessment methods that could be used to assess learners as well as the purposes for such method used which has been tabulated below.

2.11.1. Methods of Assessments

The following discussion will focus on the various methods of assessment which may be applied in determining students' RPL.

Assessment method	Purpose
Interviews	To clarify issues rose in documentary evidence presented and to review scope and depth of learning. May be particularly useful in areas where judgment and values are important.
Debate	To confirm capacity to sustain a considered argument demonstrating adequate knowledge of the subject.
Presentations	To check ability to present information in a way appropriate to subject and evidence.
Examinations	To set concepts and basic skills and applications using practical examples.

Performance testing	To test applications of theory in a structured context in correct or safe manner
Oral examinations	To check deep understanding of complex issues and ability to explain in simple terms.
Essay	To check the quality and standard of academic writing and use of references, ability to develop a coherent argument and to confirm extent, understanding and transferability of knowledge and critical evaluation of the ideas.
Examples of work done, performed or designed	To check the quality of work, relevance to credit sought and authenticity of production.
Portfolio	To validate applicants learning by providing a collection of materials that reflects learning achievements. Will include own work, reflections on own practice and indirect evidence from others who are qualified to comment. The portfolio will identify relevant connections between learning and the specified or unspecified credit sought.
Book review	To ensure currency and analysis of appropriate literature is at satisfactory level.
Special projects	To add to greater currency to knowledge and assess analytical and writing skills and issues involved in the current debates on the subject.
Reports, critique and articles	To indicate level of knowledge and assess analytical and writing skills and issues involved in the current debate on the subject.
Annotated literature	To illustrate the range of reading done by the applicant and ensure appropriate coverage to fulfill subject requirement

Table 2.5: Methods of Assessments (SAQA 2001)

Any type of assessment can be used for measuring the candidate's competence. The assessment should, however, be fit for purpose. It is the discretion of the RPL practitioner on which tool can best be used to suit the candidate. However, the most

commonly used assessment method in many countries such as Australia, United Kingdom, and Canada is the PoE. The Australians are presently researching and developing e-portfolios for professional accreditation and recognition against professional standards (Cameron 2011).

2.11.2. Forms of Assessments

Assessment benefits the student and the lecturer. It informs the students about their progress and helps educators to make informed decisions at different stages of the learning process. Depending on the intended purposes, different types of assessment may be used.

2.11.2.1 Baseline Assessment

The baseline assessment establishes the knowledge, skills, values and attitude students bring to the classroom. This knowledge helps educators to plan learning programmes and learning activities.

2.11.2.2 Diagnostic Assessment

This assessment diagnoses the nature and causes of learning barriers experienced by specific students. It is followed by guidance, appropriate support and intervention strategies. This type of assessment is useful to make referrals for student requiring specialist help.

2.11.2.3 Formative Assessment

This assessment monitors and supports teaching and learning. It determines student strength and weaknesses and provides feedback on progress. It determines if a student is ready for summative assessment.

2.11.2.4 Summative Assessment

This type of assessment gives an overall picture of student progress at a given time. It determines whether the student is sufficiently competent to progress to the next level.

Assessment of learning for promotion or certification in the NCV consists of two components; namely the Portfolio of Evidence (PoE), of achievement gathered during the year and external assessment (DoE 2007). According to the NQF on DoE (2007), the weighting of the assessment component is as follows:

- The PoE mark for each of the three fundamental subjects is 25% and the external mark is 75% of the total mark.
- The PoE mark for each of the four subjects in the vocational component will be 50%, and the external mark 50% of the total mark.
- The PoE and the external assessment will consist of a combination of theory and practical component.
- A practical component is a compulsory component of both the PoE and the external assessment of each of the four subjects in the vocational component of the NCV. The practical component can either be conducted in a work-based environment or in a simulated work-based environment. A practical assessment involves direct and systematic observation of specific skills. Practical assessment covers the practical component of the four vocational subjects and is aimed at determining how students put theory into practice.
- The practical assessment is externally moderated through a process either conducted or delegated by Umalusi Council for this purpose.
- A minimum of 50% applies to the practical component in both the PoE and external assessment component.

Assessment in the NCV is underpinned by the objectives of the NQF (SAQA 2003). These objectives are to: create an integrated national framework for learning achievements, facilitate access to and progression within education, training and career paths, enhance the quality of education and training, redress unfair discrimination and past imbalances and thereby accelerate employment

opportunities, and to contribute to the holistic development of the student by addressing: social adjustment and responsibility, moral accountability and ethical work orientation, economic participation; and nation building.

There are three types of assessments that take place in the colleges. The researcher wanted to establish whether these assessments affect implementation of RPL in FET colleges. In terms of the SAQA RPL policy, *“It should be noted that there is no difference in the assessment of previously acquired skills and knowledge, and the assessment of skills and knowledge acquired through a current learning programme. The candidate seeking credit for previously acquired skills and knowledge must still comply with all the requirements as stated in unit standard and qualifications. The difference lies in the route to the assessment.”* (SAQA 2002:8). If there are no fundamental differences in assessment, the challenge will be that the learners will not have a good reason to engage in the RPL process especially that the learning they have is from experience. In Australia, the learners choose to attend full time (NCVER 2003).

Although RPL is not mentioned as another assessment, there are other important assessments that are administered. The assessments are the Competency and Placement Tests (CAPS), Integrated Continuous College Assessment Schedule (ICCAS) and the Integrated Summative Assessment Tasks (ISAT) which has been explained in the SAQA guideline for integrated assessment (SAQA 2003).The following discussion will briefly outline the above forms of assessment.

- **Competency and Placement Tests (CAPS)**

The CAPS test is administered to determine if the student is ready for college. The test is administered at the beginning of the term for admission purposes at various FET institutions. The test is administered to help learners make informed choices regarding the faculties in which they want to register. These tests are not administered to deny them registration, but to determine their level of competency in

the field selected. The test is to determine whether the applicant is best suited for the programme or whether the programme is appropriate for the learner. The test is also for advising learners so that they can best be placed in the appropriate programme and not necessarily to change what learners have initially suggested. It is therefore the opinion of the researcher that RPL could be administered with the placement test for access into the learning programmes.

- **Internal Continuous Assessment (ICCAS)**

ICASS refers to an Internal Continuous Assessment, which is referred to as College Based Assessment. It is conducted throughout the year. The knowledge, attitude and values are assessed by using projects, tests investigations etc. The practical component of the ICCAS is undertaken either in the workplace, workshop or a structured environment. All ICCAS evidence is contained in a PoE. The Skills, Knowledge, Values and Attitude (SKVAs) are assessed throughout the year by using instruments such as projects, tests, assignments, investigations, role play, case studies etc. The final mark is therefore a combination of theory and practice. The assessment of the learner for promotion is therefore based on the PoE of achievement gathered during the year and the external assessment of the learner. All internal continuous assessment evidence is kept in a PoE and must be readily available for monitoring, moderation and verification process.

- **External Summative Assessment (ESSAS)**

External Assessment is formed by practical and written assessments. The ESSAS is either a single, or a set of, written paper(s) set to the requirements of the Subject Learning Outcomes. The written assessment is set internally, moderated by DoE and externally moderated by Umalusi. Quality assurance therefore forms the basis of the assessment in FET colleges. QMS means the combination of processes used to ensure that the degree of excellence specified is achieved. SAQA (2001) defines QMS as the sum of the activities an organisation uses to enable it to better and more consistently deliver products and services that meet and exceed the needs and

expectations of its customers and beneficiaries, more cost effectively and cost efficiently today and in the future. Motaung (2007) indicates that it is a way of ensuring that an organisation is consistently in control of the quality and product service which it provides to its customers. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) administers the theoretical component according to the relevant assessment policies. A compulsory component of external summative assessment is the integrated summative assessment task (ISAT).

- **Integration Summative Assessment Task (ISAT)**

The National Standard Body Regulation describes integrated assessment: as a form of assessment which permits the learner to demonstrate applied competence and which uses a variety of formative and summative assessment methods (SAQA 2003). The definition, according to the NSB, suggests that integrated assessment is not a once-off event as it uses the formative and summative assessments methods. The summative assessments takes place throughout the curriculum to make a judgement about the learner, whether the learner is to progress to the next level, while formative assessment is developmental with the aim of providing feedback to the learners, and track whether the learner has progressed to the next level or not. It helps day to day teaching and learning, and may suggest ways in which the learning activities can be changed to suit the diverse needs of the learner (DoE 2007).

Hargreaves (2006) indicated that assessment in general requires experienced professionals confident about making necessary judgements. The maintenance of industry standards, the credibility of qualifications and the reputation of training agencies are very much dependent upon assessors having the skills and knowledge necessary to manage the risks associated with assessment. With RPL, this ability is critical. This is supported by Knight (2006), who stated that the cost effectiveness of RPL requires RPL professional assessors. Papier (2008) indicated in the Further Education and Training Institutions (FETI) report that educators were trained as assessors and moderators, and there were others who went through the NPDE programme; although data is not available on how many still need training. RPL is

mostly summative, therefore quality assessment is needed. It is therefore the opinion of the researcher that unless thorough training of assessors is done, the goals of the FET colleges for supplying the skills currently in short supply is not promising.

2.11.3. Quality Assurance trends in FET colleges

Quality assurance may be described as a process used to monitor and evaluate quality in an organisation to reach a certain level of operation. Dhlamini (2009) described quality assurance as a comprehensive programme that includes the assessment and assurance which involve problem identification, initiation and monitoring of remedial actions. SAQA (2001) defines quality assurance as the sum of activities that assure the quality of products and services at the time of production and delivery. Quality assurance procedures are frequently applied only to the activities and products associated directly with the goods and services provided to external customers. It includes:

- clarifying and describing accurately and comprehensively what the customer expects and wants,
- ensuring that those who make the product have a clear comprehensive and accurate understanding of the quality standard,
- ensuring that those who make the product or deliver the service have available resources and system that can deliver the required quality,
- ensuring that those who make the product or deliver the service have the skills, knowledge and motivation to make the products or deliver the services,
- ensuring that those who make the product or deliver the service have the means and skills to monitor the quality of what they make or deliver to modify what they do better to meet the required standard, and
- independently auditing and monitoring quality and feeding back this information to those who produce or provide or are otherwise in a position to contribute to enhancing quality (SAQA 2001:9).

Quality has always been the need in education and training systems and has always been regulated. According to Umalusi (2012) and Allais (2009), there were external

examinations which were set to evaluate learners on what they have learnt. Umalusi (2012) identified four models of quality assurance: examination, accreditation, inspection and systemic models. According to Umalusi (2012) and Allais (2009) the examination model was used to approve institutions as accrediting centres. A moderator, chief and assistant markers were appointed based on their qualifications, monitoring standards were set, appointment of subject panellists were appointed which were responsible for syllabuses, specifications, marking guidelines and awarding of certificates. According to Umalusi (2009) the examination model was not transparent and also not responsive to transformation as they rely solely on written tests and assessing what the learner knows than what the learner is capable of doing.

According to Umalusi (2009) the accreditation model is midway between a centralised examination model and delegated assessment model developed by SETAs ETQAs which are more associated with vocational qualifications. The individual institutions carry out the assessment of students which is verified externally. The model emphasises outcome and processes more than content, encourages written and non-written assignments and continuous assessment. The main advantage of accreditation models is flexibility of institutions to build links with employers and organisations, the opportunity to be accountable to students and the community.

The inspection model focuses on the activities of the institution as a whole, achievements and the observation of the individual students. They involve once-off visits and the presentation of inspection reports to the national government for evaluation purposes and to individual institutions for support and motivation. Umalusi (2012) and Allais (2009) indicate that the systemic evaluation model involve institutional visits, testing of individuals students and reporting of institutional practices and outcomes. Their goal is according to Allais (2009) to obtain some measure of system, band or sector performance by means of sampling. In South Africa, according to Allais (2009), systemic models is used at the lower level of the

school system particularly for grade three and six learners and only to the sampled school and the results are used to measure the standard of the country as a whole.

Even if there are quality assuring systems in place, the FET (2010) report has identified poor quality and teaching in the FET colleges. According to this report the ideal college is that: more young people must be absorbed into social participation through learning and skills development opportunities, many young people have not attained an adequate standard of basic education to enable them to proceed with post-school learning pathways. While there is an anticipation of an increase in the labour absorption capacity of the economy, many young people will remain unemployed and post-school education and training systems must facilitate learning and experience that will equip young people for self-initiated productive activity.

The PMG (2012) report on some of the challenges in the FET colleges indicated that there are the low standards and consideration of FET colleges and the ongoing problem that there are some colleges accredited by Umalusi but not registered with DHET, lack of quality management and teaching within the FET colleges and the Adult Learning Centres. Another challenge faced by Umalusi was funding as they reported was sometimes insufficient.

Umalusi was established through the promulgation of the GENFETQA, 2001 amended in 2008 (Rakometsi 2014, PMG 2012; Government Gazette 2000). Umalusi followed the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) which was established in 1918. The JMB operated from 1918 to 1992, with the following mandate:

- certifying applications for exemptions from the matriculation endorsement requirements,
- benchmarking international and regional qualifications such as those from South African Development Community (SADC) and maintaining international profiles on 176 countries, and
- providing critical advisory services to schools, parents and higher education institutions regarding minimum requirements (PMG 2012).

The JMB was followed by the South African Certification Council (SAFCERT) that was established in 1986 (Government Gazette No 21907 2000). The SAFCERT was established in terms of the South African Council Act (No 85 of 1986) amended in terms of Education Laws Amended Act no 48 of 1999 to provide control over norms and standards at the different points of withdrawal in general and further education and training.

The PMG (2012) report indicates that SAFCERT was established to provide for control over the norms and standards of subject matter and examinations and the issuing of certificates, at different points of withdrawal in general and further education; and for that purpose to establish the South African Certification Council; and to provide for the conducting of examinations and to provide for matters connected therewith. One of the key functions was moderation of assessment and decisions made and the Norms and Standard Committee was established to ensure the validity of the assessment instruments used in the public examinations, how they are applied and the reliability of the assessment decisions. For SAFCERT to execute its duties, Norms and Standard Committee was established to oversee the moderation of the senior certificate. The Government Gazette (2000:10) identifies the following functions of the Norms and Standard Committee:

- to take responsibility for the design and moderation system and to identify and define the moderation functions and methods,
- to establish the management structure for the moderation system,
- to oversee the implementation of the moderation system,
- to formulate criteria in accordance with which moderators are appointed,
- to formulate the terms of reference and the functions of the moderators,
- to provide clear guidelines to the moderators on the format of the moderation reports,
- to make recommendations to Council regarding the review of qualifications, standards, curriculum and assessment,
- to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the system periodically, and

- to make recommendations to Council on the approval/verification or otherwise of the final results of the Examining Bodies (Government Gazette 2000).

Umalusi then took over from the SAFCERT and started operating in 2002 (PMG 2012). The aim according to this report was to quality assure NQF levels 1-4, but it is currently quality assuring levels 1-10 and it is also quality assuring the exit points assessments for qualifications in schools and FET colleges and this included the NCS, National Technical Certificate N3, NCV and the GETC for adults. Umalusi also accredited independent schools such as private FET colleges and Adult Training Centres and private assessment bodies that included the Independent Examination Boards (IEB) and the provisionally accredited South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI).

PMG (2012) indicated that the mandate of Umalusi from 2002 was to monitor and report on norms and standards of curriculum and assessments, provided for the quality assurance of assessment, issued certificates and exit points; accredited independent institutions as well as public institutions were deemed accredited; provided for the development of a national framework for quality assurance for GFET. The Umalusi 2002 mandate was amended in 2009. This followed the 2008 amendments of the GENFETQA Act in 2008 which created Umalusi as the three Quality councils with extended mandates. The other councils were the CHE and QTCO. Umalusi was then responsible for the development and management of the sub framework for General and Further Education and Training (GFET) and the related quality assurance processes (Rakometsi 2014). Umalusi was mandated to be responsible for the development and management of the sub-framework for GFET and the related quality assurance processes, to quality assure qualifications, assessments and provisioning of private and public education and training assessments, to do research in respect of the General and Further Education and Training Quality Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) and to make recommendations and advice the minister of HET on issues relating to GFETQSF (Rakometsi 2014). Above

all the series of changes in the bodies responsible for quality assuring learning and teaching, SAQA (2013) indicates that quality assurance must be undertaken with the explicit intention to protect the integrity of the process outcome concerned.

This research set out to find out if procedures and processes used for quality assurance affect implementation of RPL in colleges. The FET sector is supposed to deliver on its mandate, to produce quality learners for the HE and the world of work (Dhlamini 2009) which seems not to be taking place. This statement is supported by SAQA (2013:12) which indicates that quality should be about what students have learned institutions' responsiveness to the learner's needs and accountability to the tax payer. The fact that there are challenges, means that quality is compromised and this becomes a contradiction of the RPL policy. According to Motaung et al (2008) the use of RPL in higher education to assess RPL candidates for admission into programmes of study were viewed with criticism and as a threat to the institutions' reputation or an erosion of academic standards. Motaung (2007) alludes to the fact that RPL is associated with risks, therefore inconsistencies and contradictions will create confusion if not done correctly.

2.11.3.1 Quality Assurance Principles

A quality assurance practice for Umalusi is based on FET curricula, assessment, monitoring, evaluation, certification at FET schools and colleges. According to SAQA (2012: 14) the following QA principles need to be adhered to:

- quality assurance of the RPL will include the establishment and adherence to policies, standards, processes and assessment practices and ensure that the knowledge, skills and value of individual learners are recognised and validated to successfully engage in the subjects and levels of learning that contribute meaningfully to their educational and/or employment goals,
- standardised practices can only take place between similar types of RPL. An effort must be made to allow standardised practices to grow

within sectors, as one approach does not necessarily work across different sectors,

- the concept of quality in RPL needs to include quality indicators such as acceptability to stakeholders, fitness for purpose, transparency, and fair outcomes,
- the measurement of comparability is complex but attempts to find ways of assessing if it needs to continue, and
- quality assurance of RPL must be undertaken with the explicit intention to protect the integrity of the process and outcomes concerned.

All these principles were motivated by transformation policies in South Africa to ensure that the beneficiaries of RPL successfully enter the labour market and further learning in higher education institutions. Education remains the government's major investment to the lives of South Africans. Skrzypek (2012) indicates that the important thing in quality assurance is the internal systems of quality assurance and support for educators and trainers and a system of external evaluation of learning outcomes are achieved. Therefore effective quality assurance practices can be achieved if there are well developed processes and well-structured support services.

2.11.3.2 Criteria for Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is used to avoid mistakes in assessment and monitoring of the learning processes. It is also used to keep expectations at the appropriate levels and to provide accurate and measurable standards for both the learner and the assessor. The following criteria were formulated by SAQA (2002) to guide the quality assurance in implementing RPL by education and training providers and for quality assurance of assessment policies in general.

- *Institutional policy and procedures*

For many institutions, effective management requires institutional policies for sufficient support and guidance and it also ensures productivity and satisfaction of

clients. The practices of quality assurance of RPL need an enabling environment and commitment to RPL. SAQA (2002) indicates that unless there are proper policies, structures and resources allocated to a credible assessment process, it will become an area of contestation and conflict. SAQA (2002) also indicates that assessment need discussions and proper guidelines because the policy reflect planning and management in accordance with relevant legislation. However, the policy should not be rigid but be able to encourage the RPL implementers on their intended purposes and outcomes of the learning areas.

- *Training and registration of staff*

The SAQA (2013) RPL policy is very clear on the need to train assessors and key personnel dealing with the RPL process. There are a number of people involved in the implementation process such as assessors, facilitators and coordinators. Each one of them has specific roles to play in the implementation process. If they are trained they will be aware of their roles and responsibilities as well as the particular needs of the candidates and they will be able to support, encourage and motivate them. SAQA (2002) argues that through training of assessors and key personnel the quality and integrity of the assessment is ensured and as such they will be able to provide holistic learner centred services in keeping with the objectives of NQF and other related policies.

- *Methods and processes of assessments*

The quality assurance methods and assessment are set in place to ensure that the approaches to assessment are reliable, valid and transparent to the learner and at the same time providing the teacher with guidelines and the best practices. SAQA (2002) indicates that the assessors require too much evidence. So the approaches used should be consistent so that learners could be given appropriate feedback.

- *Quality management systems and the quality of reporting*

The QMS is a regulatory framework in Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA). The QMS is the combination of processes used to ensure that quality is maintained at all levels of assessment. It is used to ensure that there is consistency in delivering the products needed by the clients and especially the beneficiaries of RPL. QMS also provides the generic framework to standardise quality assurance activities. SAQA (2002) indicates that the QMS systems are in place to ensure the continuous improvement of assessment, reporting and recording at provider, sectoral and national level.

- *Fees for RPL services*

SAQA (2002) indicates that the fees for the RPL should not be seen as a barrier for RPL assessment processes because RPL is seen as an investment in lifelong learning in the South African context.

- *Curriculum Development*

Curriculum development is a dynamic process, a continuously changing series of planned learning experiences that will help learners to achieve specific academic or occupational goals. SAQA (2002) indicates that the curriculum development and RPL practice increasingly inform the development of new standards, qualifications, learning programmes and curricula. The providers of RPL increasingly use methods of instruction and delivery to provide curricula to meet the diverse needs of learners. However, the curriculum should be flexible to accommodate all learners and be linked to educational, personal or professional development of learners.

The QA criteria discussed represents the national approach to the establishment of assessment system in RPL and as such include services, procedures and policies of the education and training system. SAQA indicates it is the responsibility of the ETQA to take it to their constituencies and contextualise it to suit the needs of the sectors. The needs in the sectors may include the need for access, redress, capacity building, and programmes.

2.12. FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

FET College means Further Education and Training College that is established in terms of section 9 of FET Act 25 of 2010 and section 1 of FET Act 3 of 2012. The two sections pointed out that FET's refer to education and training provided from grade 10 to 12 and also include career oriented systematic instruction which was offered in technical colleges, community colleges and private colleges. Thus, it provides learning and training programmes leading to a qualification at levels 2 to 4 of the NQF or determined by SAQA and contemplated in the SAQA Act (Act No. 58 of 1995).

The study acknowledges that there are other terms that could be used to define FET and are as follows:

- technical education which has been used in technical colleges and by technicians of South Africa,
- technical and vocational education and training (TVET), a term widely used internationally to emphasise theory and practice,
- Or FET colleges as has commonly been used after the amalgamation of colleges in 2007 and has become more commonly used terminology.

This research is limited to those institutions which were declared as public FET colleges, which were an outcome of the restructuring process and were merged from 152 technical colleges to 50 FET colleges (ETDP SETA 2012). The study investigated what are the challenges in delivering the mandate of RPL by establishing whether the assessment criteria and quality assurance affect the implementation. DHET (2013) indicated that the mandate of RPL is for skilling and reskilling candidates by offering programmes that are effective and relevant to increase learners' attendance, improve (post-basic) literacy and numeracy, increase throughput rates and equip educators with relevant qualifications to meet the needs of the industry.

2.12.1. The Development of FET

The concept of vocational education is not entirely a new concept in the history of South African education. Prior to 1994, the South African FET colleges were called technical colleges which were established for white and black students. The provision was however shaped on apartheid policies which gave advantages to white learners' educationally and economically. The apartheid policies did not favour access to college education and training and the resources provided were biased at the expense of blacks in furthering education (Badroodien 2004).

The apprenticeship was introduced from Europe in 1700s and 1800s and was promulgated as a special category of learnerships in respect of a listed trade (Gamble 2012). The apprenticeship is a form of training in industries and it enables practitioners to gain a licence to practice in the profession as artisans. The aim of apprenticeship is to basically avoid shortage of skills in the country and to ensure adequate supply of training at all levels. According to Gamble (2012), four routes for providing with training were envisaged: single apprenticeship contract, multilayer learnerships contract, a single internship or skills programme contract and through a single RPL contract. Badroodien (2004) traced its development from 1920 during the colonial period when vocational education was developed for two purposes, social and economic development of South Africans, as a way to help the poor young whites who were stricken by poverty and were ill equipped for life; and also for the skills need of the growing industries.

Apprenticeship Act of 1922 allowed only the white workers a secure position by setting educational qualifications for apprenticeship in numerous trades. It was impossible for most Africans to be apprenticed, since they lacked the means to meet the prescribed education level (Thompson 1990:169, in the O'Malley archives). It also adjusted the educational provisions for admissions to trades, and it gave white trainers real advantages over their coloured rivals (Davenport 1987:531).

In South Africa, according to Wedekind (2013:40) apprenticeship was a coercive and exploitive relationship, instead a benign relationship between the master craftsman and a novice. This was supported by Akojee, Gonon, Lauschidt and Hofman (2013:39) who indicate that the slaves were first indentured to their former owners and retained as apprentices for a period of four years before they were freed.

The Nated system was introduced in 1935 with the creation of technical colleges to cope with the growing demand for skills labour of the South African harbours and railway system (Mbatha, Wildschut, Mcwango, Ngazimbi&Twalo 2014). There was a decision to phase the Nated programmes out as the department felt that they were out-dated, and should be replaced with the NCV because the programmes were not supported as they were mainly theory-based. The other challenge with the Nated system was that it was the student who had to find training to acquire practical skills. There was a lack of support from industries. The Nated programme underpins the apprenticeship system, and is closer to what is required by industries and as such the Nated programmes were not phased out as envisaged (Gewe 2010).

Vocational Education Act 77 of 1955 sought to regulate the establishment of maintenance, management and control of vocational schools and part time classes. Together with the Nated systems, the structures formed a strong foundation for technical skills training in the country. The skills output was, however, not enough to meet the increasing demand of the country. Hence, there was a need for transformation of the FET colleges' programmes, and the desire to make them institutions of choice (Nzimande 2010).

The Manpower Training Act 86 of 1981 was the first act to give the black workers opportunities to receive skills training and enter into apprenticeships, alongside a broader set of developments that essentially led to the expansion of vocational education and training, although it was still racially segregated. The apprenticeship

system was restructured into a competency based modular training system run by industry training boards (Mbatha *et al.* 2014).

In 2009 the DHET, SETA and FET became part of the legislative starting points for apprenticeship and learnerships to produce skills workers (SAQA 1998). DHET (2009) and SAQA (2010) indicated that SETA was specifically established to plan and coordinate skills development processes in specified sectors and among relevant stakeholders.

SAQA (2008) introduced amendments that created new qualifications: National Senior Certificate, National Technical Certificate, National Certificate Vocational, General Education and Training Certificate provided for the establishment of quality councils, the CHE, Umalusi and the QCTO to set up and maintain associated standards (Mbatha *et al.* 2014).

When South Africa gained its democracy in 1994, there was a need for transformation in the technical colleges (Badat 2010). The FET Act (Act 16 of 2006) declared all technical colleges to become FET Colleges and was merged into 50 FET Colleges. The aim was to improve access to learning and skilling opportunities for the socially excluded members in societies. In addition, to develop the skills needed for economic growth, reduce poverty and unemployment, to make VET more attractive and this led to the delivery of NCV programmes (DoE 2007). However, the researcher is of the opinion that the NCV programmes have not lived up to the expectations of the country and have not been able to deliver their mandate irrespective of the recommendation made by the FETI report. This could be done by acknowledging experiences of learners who come to the college with experience from their workplace environment.

The FET colleges have a mandate of supplying the mid-level skills including artisans and other vocationally oriented careers which are currently in short supply. RPL implementation is therefore to respond to all these needs and to reduce poverty and unemployment in the country and to be globally competent. The researcher is of the opinion that the structure of vocational education provided is similar to the structure provided by the apartheid regime which did not produce better results for the country. The entrance certificate for the technical colleges was standard six, learner's intelligence was tested and these produced poor white youth who were ill equipped for life. There has also been an indication that learners who are taken to FET colleges are poor in literacy and numeracy, hence the poor results that have been received when the NCV was started (Papier 2012).

2.12.2. The Role of FET College in Delivering the RPL Mandate

The college system is central to the government programme of delivering the mandate of RPL by skilling and reskilling the youth and adults as a way to respond to the priority skills of the country (DHET 2013). The main aim of FET colleges is to impart the skills and knowledge about how to do particular kinds of jobs to members of the next generation. According to South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE 2005), the primary role of the FET colleges is to support the transition of young people from education to work and to expose the young people to further learning. The researcher is however of the opinion that the youth are further marginalised from the mainstream education and this may be the reason for an escalating unemployment and poverty in the country (NYP 2009-2014).

According to the DHET (2013:15) in NSD III, the colleges are responsible to offer programmes that are more effective, so as to increase attendance, to improve (post-basic) literacy and numeracy, to increase throughput rates and equip educators with relevant qualifications to meet the needs of the industry. RPL was established as a transformational tool in the context of the South African FET college subsystem. The developed tools are:

- they are seen as instruments of social inclusion to those who could not have opportunities to be included in the mainstream education.
- changes in the labour market demand opportunities for the youth and adults to be able to contribute to socio economic development of the country. For the FET Colleges to be able to meet the objectives of economic development, UNESCO (2012) indicates they should be accountable to the demands of the labour market and focus on skills development for the global market.

With regard to the role of the FET colleges with respect to skills and economic development, the Minister of Education, Pandor (2007) stated:

“The expectations and pressure for the delivery of vocational education in South Africa and worldwide has never been higher. South Africa is short of priority skills that are necessary to ensure wide access and participation in the country’s growing economy. FET is central to the delivery of these priority skills. As part of our plans for economic growth and social development, we have to ensure that the FET colleges are given a proper platform to contribute to South Africa’s competitiveness. This is essential for us to create opportunities for economic participation for our youth. It is crucial that we should be internationally competitive in order for us to be able to retain our skills youth”.

Minister Pandor indicates that South Africa and the world at large are facing major problems with regard to shortages of skills in various sectors of the economy. She indicates that that these challenges could be addresses by ensuring that there is access in the FET colleges as they are the avenues and centres of delivery of skills. She further indicates that for the country to be able to compete globally is when the youth are taking part. This is supported by UNESCO (2012), when they indicate that the FET system should have well-structured programmes for the youth and adults who have been socially exclude from the mainstream education. RPL is found within the context of NQF and offer possibilities for adults to lifelong opportunities and to contribute to the knowledge economy, promotion and competitiveness for knowledge workers through equity and redress. Rasool (2007) therefore, provides a model, (Figure 2.2) that helps to explain the various opportunities that are available in the FET sector. They are the NCV programmes, learnerships programme, RPL assessment, short courses, liaison with communities and CTFL projects have been

cited as important in the FET colleges specifically to provide relevant accessible high quality technical education and skills development in the country.

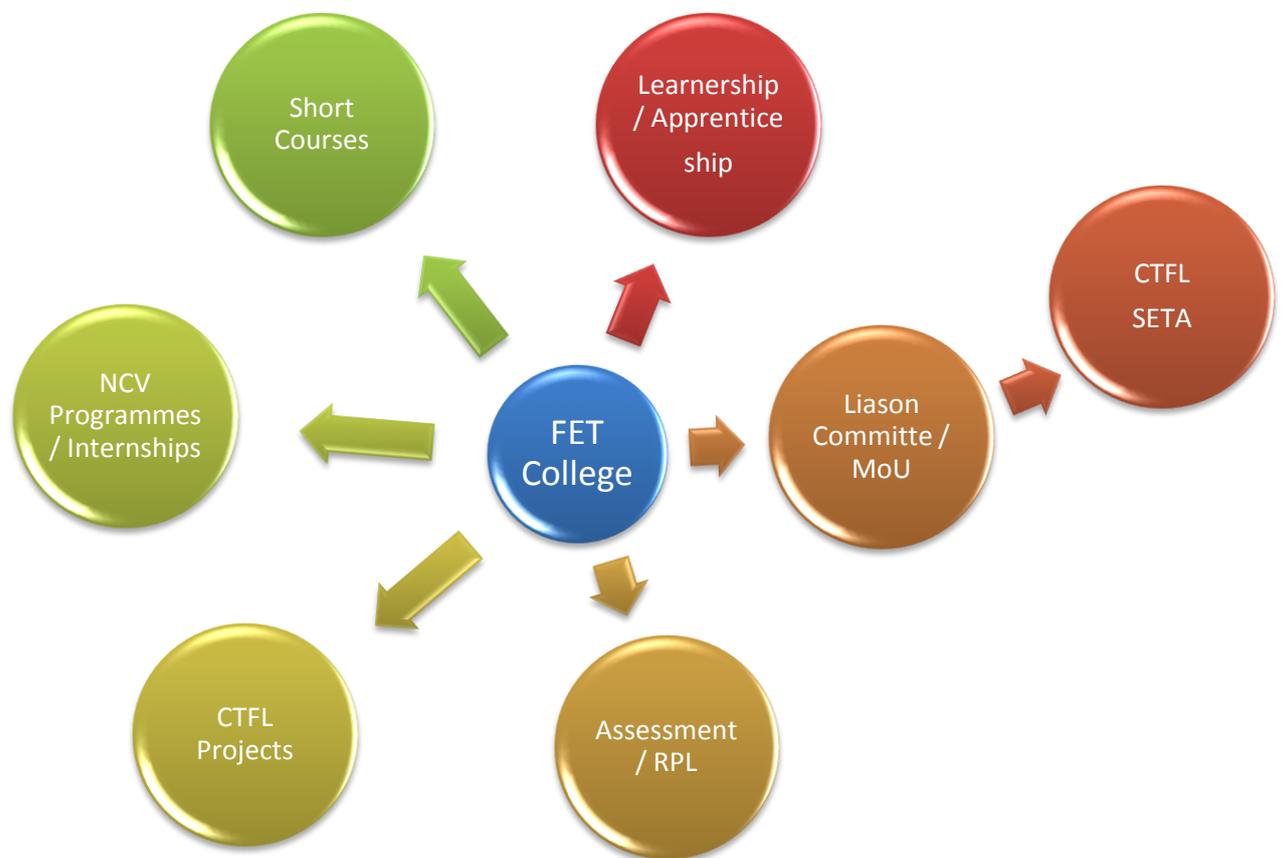


Figure 2.2: Opportunities in the FET Colleges (Rasool 2009)

NCV programmes

The introduction of the NCV in FET colleges was to help learners acquire both theory and practice. The learners can do internships in industries which equip them with practical experience and can offer a wide range of employment opportunities.

Short courses

The FET colleges offer short courses that are responsive to the needs of the economy. They allow one to register and attend just for a few hours. They can be attended even while one is employed. A person is able to have an improved job and career opportunities and learners can also be supported.

Learnership/ Apprenticeship

A learnership is a training course which combines theoretical training at an FET College with relevant work experience after completing a formal education which leads to a job opportunity. An apprenticeship is training for practitioners of a trade involving on-the-job training which also enables the practitioners to acquire a licence to practice as an apprentice.

Liaison Committee and Memorandum of Understanding

There has been a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between universities, technicons and FET colleges with the aim to develop governance and leadership in colleges, articulation, development of staff and curriculum development, the joint offering of NQF 5 HE programmes, the sharing of education and training facilities and engaging in research regarding FET Education.

RPL assessment

RPL assessment is a requirement for admission at the FET College. This helps learners acquire credit and qualifications without going back to classes. RPL also helps learners to identify the learning, which is formally assessed and acknowledged.

Clothing, Textile, Footwear and Leather (CTFL) Sector Education and Training Authority SETA

SETAs are basically training providers who are responsible for training and development, counselling and guidance, national skills development and expanding.

They are central to contributing and promoting youth unemployment and youth employability. They are important to learners and youth launching their careers. The SETA enhances the skills of those already working, whatever workplace experience they may have had. They can also be started through short courses that are offered in FET colleges. They provide highly skills workforce within Clothing, Textile, Footwear and Leather (CTFL) economic sector. They also promote effective learning programmes and skills development to increase productivity and increase employment opportunities. CTFL are the preferential market access to factories. Learners therefore have the opportunities to be placed for training. There is a training provision from the CTFL where learners are able to be trained so as to acquire skills and knowledge and effectively participate in the workplace activities within the CTFL manufacturing industries. Learners who qualify are able to relate to what they see and they experience the technological principles and concepts. It also prepares the learners for further development in their careers and employment.

The roles identified by DHET (2012:15) such as increasing the pool of people with intermediate level skills, to responding to the skills development needs of South Africa, offering comprehensive programmes, making learning more attractive, increasing attendance, improving (post-basic) literacy and numeracy, increasing throughput rates and equipping learners to meet the industry needs can all be made possible in the FET college subsystem.

2.12.3. Challenges Facing Public FET Colleges

There are a number of challenges that are facing the college sub system and this research will only concentrate on those ones that this study considers will delay the implementation of RPL. Nzimande (2010) and the FET (2010) report mentioned a number of challenges in the college sub-system. These were supported by Papier (2012), Maharaswa (2013) and SACE (2013), and reported in the following manner:

Effective quality teaching and learning is the core business of every institution of learning and it is the priority of the government. Teaching and learning was identified as a challenge in the college sector by Minister Nzimande (2010) and the same challenge was reiterated by Maharaswa (2013) who indicated that there are low

throughput rates, inadequate lecture qualifications and industry-linked experience and a limited Programme Qualification Mix with insufficient programmes relevant to local communities and industries.

However, the plan by FET (2010) was to offer higher quality and relevant programmes, to address low retention and throughput rates through quality support interventions.

While it is imperative that colleges should have a good financial plan to be able to address issues relating to finance, Maharaswa (2013) reported that only 20 colleges submitted their qualified financial audits in the 2011 financial year, and that there is a lack of capacity in relation to the functions of the Chief Financial Officers. This challenge will impact on the implementation of prior learning and many other programmes available in colleges. It has been indicated by SAQA (2013) that RPL is costly and as such a funding model for RPL activities is needed. The SAQA (2013) report gave three options, namely; on the basis of the time spent by the assessor, on the basis of the amount of credit applied for and lastly on the basis of the cost of enrolling in relevant subjects. SAQA (2013) MTT RPL and FET (2010) identified funding as a challenge in the FET sector. There is no accountability for the college finance. SAQA (2013) report also suggested three possible approaches for the funding model for South Africa: wholly state funded, state and employer funding and state and employer funding plus student fees. The model that was used by UNISA to fund the NPDE programmes for unqualified and under qualified educators seems to be very appropriate for the unemployed and vulnerable group of people in the country. There has also been an indication by SAQA (2013) that for RPL to be implemented it should be properly resourced.

Another key challenge reported by Minister Nzimande (2010) and Maharaswa (2013) is on the FET college examinations and assessment system. They noted that not all examiners and moderators possess the necessary subject knowledge to set good quality papers. They also indicated that the examiners and moderators are contracted to set question papers and marking guidelines for all the Nated and the NCV subjects and programmes. What is more serious is that the Nated examiners

and moderators are never convened, and this has quality and control implications for setting and moderation of papers. While the Nated papers are moderated by internal moderators, the papers have not reflected the vocational nature of the qualification. Another factor is that the quality and content scope of the papers varies and in some instances conceptual progression is absent across the levels with NCV level 4 sometimes appearing easier than levels two and three. Another concern is that educators are not always clear what to assess and as such the NCV ISAT are not yet set to be conducted in an authentic or simulated workplace environment. Internal ICASS component of the NCV does not provide structure beyond the number of tasks and total weighting, and it is this reason that candidates are sometimes heavily penalised in the statistical moderation process adopted by Umalusi as the quality assurer. No examples of tasks have been made available to campuses to support the implementation of ICASS and that the poor collaboration between colleges and industries widens an unemployment gap.

Another challenge facing the FET sector is staffing. Papier (2012) indicates that allocation of resources was not proportional when it was made for colleges in all the nine provinces. This is supported by the research done by SACE (2013) when indicating that there are a number of educators who are either unqualified or under qualified, as some of them do not have the necessary qualification as well as experience in trade and industry. However, Ramdass (2009) argues that the first priority should be the allocation of relevant resources. Education staff should be one such priority for quality teaching and learning. The fact that the academic staffs do not possess the trade and industry experience could pose a challenge to assess experiential learning, therefore disadvantaging those who need their skills and experience validated.

Another challenge in the FET sector is a link to the workplace. Experiential learning means learning from experience which provides learners with an opportunity for growth and development to be able to get opportunities of the workplace learning environment. This has been illustrated in Chapter 3 in Kolb's experiential learning

cycles. Learners benefit as they are given an opportunity to explore, have hands on experience and address individual growth, develop knowledge, skills and values.

These challenges may impede implementation of RPL in colleges which is seen as an access route for the marginalised group of people in society. SAQA (2013) indicated RPL to be fully realised as part of the democratic learning system which needs to be given its concrete expression in the policies and practices of education and training. It should be properly resourced and supported by providing quality RPL programmes and services.

2.13. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has conceptualised RPL, discussed the history of RPL, core principles and forms of RPL, the benefits, implementation of RPL, roles and responsibilities, Osman's RPL models, credentialing, developmental and transformational models of RPL as well as factors affecting implementation and successful implementation of RPL. The researcher also discussed assessment, types of assessment and forms of assessment and quality assurance. The FET, its development, the role of FET and challenges facing FET colleges were also discussed. With the scarce skills shortages, unemployment and poverty in South Africa, the best possible way is to use RPL as an access route to education and training and for lifelong learning. Therefore failure to implement RPL means failure to practice social inclusion for all the people who did not have the opportunities to education and training. In addition, the economy of the country will also be doomed. Learning for the youth and the unemployed adults has to be encouraged so that individuals should remain relevant to the needs and demands of a society which could be provided by FET colleges through their RPL programmes.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The key feature in RPL is recognition and accreditation of knowledge acquired formally, informally or non-formally through experience. The adoption of RPL in FET institutions in South Africa is based on equity and redress, accessible education opportunities, transformation and recognition of knowledge from experience. The theories that informed this study are based on two learning theories of RPL as developed by Kolb (1984) and Mezirow (1991). Kolb's Experiential Learning theory and Mezirow's Perspective Transformation theory are invaluable in this study as they draw on the realm of interior experience and therefore warrant exploration and discussion.

3.2. THEORIES OF LEARNING

Shuell (2013) defines learning as an enduring change in behaviour, or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or other forms of experience. Although there are many definitions, the difference lies in the how the theories of learning are interpreted. Learning theories are conceptual framework describing how information is absorbed, processed and retained during learning. <http://www.p21.org/> (2010) identifies different types of learning theories such as behaviourism, cognitive, humanistic, social theories and experiential learning. Shuell (2013) argues that learning theories inform teaching and the use of different

resources. Behaviourism generally assumes that the learner is passive recipient of information from the environment. Cognitive theory believe that people are rational beings that require active participation in order to learn, Humanistic theories view learning as a personal act to fulfil ones potential. Social learning theories attempt to explain how people think and factors that determine their behaviour, cognitive, behaviour and environmental behaviour. Experiential Learning Theory builds on social and constructivist theories of learning but situate experience at the core of learning process (<http://www.p21.org/> 2010). Therefore learning is about meaningful experience. This study focuses on Experiential Learning Theory by Kolb and a socialist theory, Perspective Transformation Theory by Mezirow.

3.2.1. Experiential Learning Theory

There have been various definitions in literature about experiential learning. Tsui (2013:55) defines experiential learning as

“the kind of learning that requires students to tackle real-life issues and problems by drawing on theoretical knowledge that they have learnt in the formal curriculum. It is a process of learning through experience when a learner is actively involved in the learning process. It differs from rote learning where the learner learns passively. Unlike classroom situations, real-life situations are often unfamiliar to students, and in these situations, problems are not easily identifiable or not well defined. Dealing with real life problems require students to integrate knowledge within and across disciplines, to go beyond technical considerations, and to take into account social and human factors that come into play. It is in these situations that students put theoretical knowledge to the test, gain deeper understanding of theories and, most importantly, construct knowledge. It is also in these situations that students develop their core values and generic skills. As such, experiential learning is relevant to all programmes”.

Kolb (1984:38) provides a very comprehensive definition of experiential learning “as the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience”. Kolb (1984:41) emphasises several critical aspects of the learning process as viewed from the experiential perspective. Firstly, emphasis is on the process of adaptation and learning as opposed to content and outcome. Secondly, is that

knowledge is a transformation process continuously created and recreated. Thirdly, learning transforms experience in both its objective and subjective forms. Simply stated, experiential learning is learning by doing. Experiential learning is found in theory and practice of adult education, informal education and lifelong learning which is more appropriate in FET colleges which are institutions of lifelong learning.

The theory guiding this study is Kolb's experiential learning theory, as drawn from the proponents, Dewey (1938), Lewin (1946) and Piaget (1970), who gave experience a central role in their theories of human development and believed that learning is holistic as it involves the whole person. The experiential theory of learning is rested on two central principles; continuity and interaction. Studies by Neill (2010), Ahmed (2010) and Illeries (2007) believe that continuity denotes that valuable experience should be connected to the past experience and have consequences for future experience. Illeries (2007) believes the principle of interaction explains that the past experience is linked to a transaction between the individual and the environment in which the individual find himself/herself. Therefore the principle of continuity and interaction determine the quality of an educational experience (Dewey 1938:42).

Kolb (1984) believes that effective learning entails the possession of four different abilities as explained through a cycle of four stages (1) does something concrete or has a specific experience that provide a basis for (2) the learner observation and reflection on the experience and his or her own response to it. These observations are then (3) assimilated into a conceptual framework or related to other concepts in the learner's past experience and knowledge from which implications for action can be derived; and (4) tested and applied in different situations.

Kolb's (1984) learning cycles can be explained as follows.

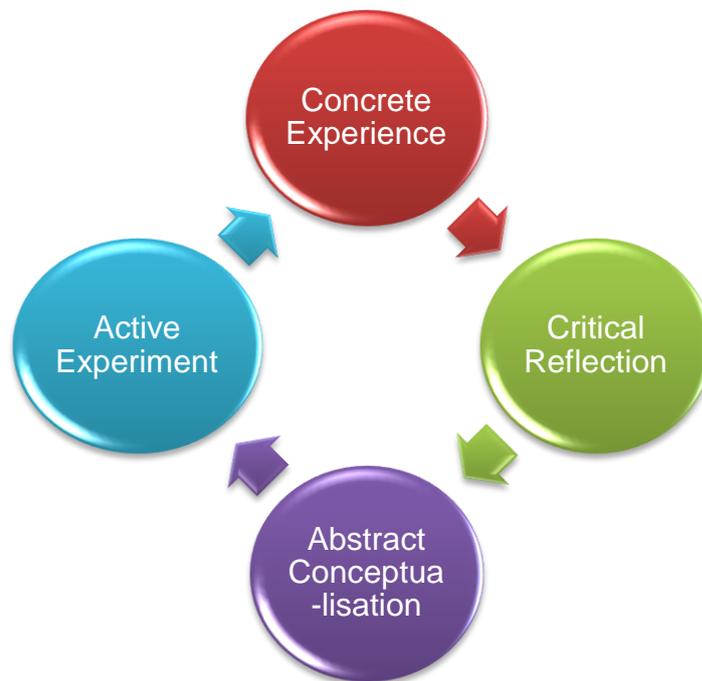


Figure 3.1: Experiential Learning Cycle: Kolb (1984)

Stage I: Concrete Experience

Kolb (1993) sees concrete experience as the basis for observations and reflections. According to Kolb, learning starts when a person encounters a new concrete experience and deals with it or a reinterpretation of the existing experience. Honey and Mumford (1992) believe it is knowledge by acquaintance, direct practical experience as opposed to knowledge about something which is theoretical. It puts involvement of the person in everyday situations. Kolb maintains that learners should become actively involved. Schellhase (2006) believes experience is used to validate and test abstract concepts, personal application, understanding and memory. In an RPL process the learner is assessed against unit standards to measure performance, make judgements and support and award credits for a qualification. Therefore, feedback is done for building successful organisations and motivating individuals to help them perform their best.

Stage II: Reflective observation

Reflective observation means reviewing or reflecting on the new experience which Honey and Mumford (1992) believe concentrates on what the experience means to the *experiencer*. Honey and Mumford (1992) argue that the students will share the results, reactions and observation with their peers and will also get other peers to talk about their own experiences, share their reactions and observations and discuss feelings generated by the experience. The learners rely on their own thoughts and form opinions of what they have learned.

Stage III: Abstract Conceptualisation

Kolb (1984) indicates that reflection gives rise to a new idea or a modification of an existing abstract concept. The learner therefore develops theories to solve problems. Students will also discuss how the experience was carried out, problems and issues emerged as a result of the experience.

Stage IV: Active Experimentation

In this stage, the learner plans or tries out what has been learned, the learner experiments, instead of simply watching. They apply and try out strategies of what was learned to see the results, and they improve based on the previous cycle. Students will apply what they have learned in the experience and what they have learned from the past experiences and they practice this to a similar or different situation. The students will also discuss how the acquired process can be applied to other situations.

Anderson, Boud and Cohen (2005) and, Weil and McGill (1989) categorise experiential learning into four 'villages': which not virtually but exclusively interact and intersect with each other.

Village One is concerned particularly with assessing and accrediting learning from work and life experiences with the notion to create new routes to higher education, employment and training. Reflection here is about recording and assessing the learner's experiences with the belief that learning from experience can be assessed and if assessed it can lead to entry into programmes or study to shorten a course or for advanced standing. This village can be used in FET colleges for RPL or in the workplace for promotions or securing jobs.

Village Two focuses on experiential learning as a basis for bringing change and innovation in the structures of post-school education and training. This village, according to Weil and McGill (1989) incorporates a wide range of people in post school education whose emphasis for experiential learning may span from the use of techniques in teaching to a philosophy for justifying learner-centred and learner controlled learning as the basis for an entire course, department or institution. The people in this village tend to share two main concerns, that the prior experience of learning and that learning is active, meaningful and relevant to life agendas.

Village Three emphasizes experiential learning as a basis for group consciousness raising learning from experience as a core of education for community action and social change. A particular concern is how internalised dominant assumptions or ideologies in the wider societies are recognised. Reflection on prior learning in this village is seen as a means towards personal and collective empowerment. People in this village are concerned with not only liberation from dominant meaning systems and structures, but also aware of their societal context and are empowered to change them through personal and collective action.

Village Four is aimed at personal growth and self-awareness, development to increase self-awareness and group effectiveness. The emphasis is purely on personal and interpersonal experiencing as a basis of growth and development. For others, the emphasis is on increasing awareness of how to relate to others. Personal

growth, according to this village, provides opportunities to explore new ways of being in the world.

Experiential learning includes development of understanding how emotions, fears and anxiety influence behaviour. Approaches operate on the assumptions that social change will result from increased opportunities for people to become more aware, genuine and understanding of other perspectives and experiences and more self-attuned to factors influencing group and interpersonal effectiveness. These 'villages' of approaches, according to Anderson, Boud and Cohen (2005), retain a focus on primary experience although they make concern for secondary or indirect experience occurring through linguistic communication. The model is important as it provides a basis for learning and if used it may assist in planning and giving guidance and support to learning activities.

3.2.1.1. Why Use Experiential Learning

Experiential learning theory is a necessary and appropriate instructional component of higher education for various reasons. Experiential learning theory, according to Cantor (1995), is found in all disciplines and argues that experiences vary while there is an increasing number of a valuable opportunity to apply theory and practice, this in particular, the FET Colleges. The technical discipline in particular provides students with competencies necessary to pursue careers after graduation.

Cantor (1995: 80-84) argues that faculties are concerned with optimising the chances for their students to more easily enter their chosen professions or meet their desired goals upon graduation from the college programme due to increasing job markets and increasing competition among college graduates across most all fields of study. Valkanos and Fragoulis (2007:2) identified reasons for using experiential learning in education and training as:

- for continuous advances in technology that requires new knowledge, new skills and application of new methods and processes to perform work;

- divergence between theory and practice, mergers and acquisition of enterprises that require new job positions;
- new organisational culture and different content of work, changes in working methods in which various problems are dealt with;
- continuous change in conditions that requires job positions with a new or even a different content; and
- redesigning of operations and organisational changes that require new competencies, increased duties, a different and a new content of work.

Domask (2010:54) in a research on achieving goals in higher education argues that experiential learning can be used to complement a lecture-centric approach to reach the four educational goals. Firstly, it is by connecting the academic with practice. Domask (2010:60) argues that students could be brought directly with real life environments through the addition of experiential learning through the use of site visits and travelling which the students could be directly exposed to. Secondly, by fostering interdisciplinary curricula and achieving goals in higher education. Domask (2010:61) argues that environmental or sustainability studies and international study fields and interdisciplinary curricula is important and essential for equipping students with knowledge and skills that they will need prior to entering the workforce. Therefore educators can partner with others to meet the challenge. Thirdly, linking students to work experience and job opportunities. Domask (2010:62) argues that the students should be exposed to the world of work and should be assisted to find an appropriate internship where the learners should be able to reflect on their internship experiences, challenges they see in the organisations and office environments. This also helps students to know more about other professional opportunities. Lastly, by engaging and empowering the individual. Domask (2010: 63) argues that when you create a personal connection between the student and the issues which they study, it is the most powerful element in improving a student level of engagement and performance in the classroom. This could be done so that the students could not feel that they are left out and therefore drop out of school.

3.2.1.2. Assessment of Experiential Learning

Recognition of prior learning has been described as an assessment process aimed at determining credit and recognising the competencies the learners have obtained in formal, informal and non-formal environments while experiential learning is defined as learning achieved through the appropriate use of experience. According to Cantor (1995), assessment is an integral part of the experiential learning process and enables participants and instructors to confirm and reflect on the learning and growth that is occurring. The centre for teaching and learning describes two types of experiential learning: the field-base and the classroom-based experiential learning. The field-base exposes learners to real world settings where learners interact with an environment that reflects concepts that were taught.

Cantor (1995:80-85) argues that several steps can be taken to incorporate assessment into experiential activities.

These are:

- analysing your learner population and determining their needs
- identify appropriate activities for your learner population and course content
- identify potential issues when integrating experiential learning.

Accreditation of prior learning is concerned with rating learning outcomes gained through experience especially from the work place. Credit is awarded on the basis of what the candidate has learned from that experience.

Criteria for assessment

- Evidence must be valid and reliable
- Evidence is sufficient to demonstrate the achievements claimed
- Evidence indicates the candidates efforts and attainment
- Achievements claimed are relevant to the award to which the claim is made
- The achievements are equivalent in depth and level to the successfully completed structural learning for which equal credit is to be granted

- The achievement can be authenticated by external referees

3.2.1.3. Challenges in Using Experiential Learning

There are a number of benefits for using experiential learning in Higher Education, work place and by individuals but it is not without challenges. Experiential learning provides students with the opportunity to engage and apply their knowledge through practical work or hands-on experience while learning new information which they will at a later stage apply to their field of study. Some challenges often cited by authors include:

- the risk of failure and interpersonal tension that often occur when collaborating with other people and new environments.
- struggling with assessing experiential learning. Experiential learning is evaluated through a combination of techniques, reports, surveys, portfolio, and so on. Cantor (1995) argues that assessment of experiential learning activities present a unique problem to instructors, so unique assessment methods to measure success requires a separate learning outcome and criteria.
- another challenge is to cooperate with instructors as they shift their roles. It has been noted that the student is not the passive recipient of knowledge, but an active participant in the experience.
- another difficulty is with the variability of experiential activities because students do not engage on the same activity (Cantor 1995).
- integrating experiential learning into a course so that it helps to achieve the learning outcome of a course in a powerful way (Tsui 2013).
- supervision is important but most labour intensive part of the learning, and
- assessment of experiential learning is the least explored area in higher education and the most challenging (Tsui 2013). Though the model in itself is believed to have flaws, Cantor (1995) argues that it provides an excellent framework for planning teaching and learning activities and can be usefully employed as guide for understanding learning difficulties, vocational counselling, and academic advising.

3.2.1.4. Experiential Learning Theory Critics

Despite the fact that Kolb's theory on experiential learning is the most popular and influential theory of management and learning), it has been criticised much by a number of authors. Coffey (2011) argues that the learning model does not align with the high stakes of standardised testing movement and that there is not enough time to integrate experiential education and prepare students for proficiency testing. Pickles (2005) identified the following limitations in Kolb's experiential learning theory:

- it pays insufficient attention to the process of reflection. While Kolb's scheme "has been useful in assisting to plan all learning activities and in helping to check simply that learners can be effectively engaged", Pickles argue, "it does not help... to uncover the elements of reflection itself";
- the claims made for the four different learning styles are extravagant. Pickles argues that the experiential learning model does not apply to all situations. Even though the four learning styles neatly dovetail with the different dimensions of the experiential learning model, this does not necessarily validate them. Kolb is putting forward a particular learning style. The problem here is that the experiential learning model does not apply to all situations. There are alternatives - such as information assimilation and memorization. Each of these may be appropriate to different situations;
- the model takes very little account of different cultural experiences or conditions;
- the idea of stages or steps does not sit well with the reality of thinking. The problem here is that of sequence;
- empirical support for the model is weak. This was also supported by Kayes (2002) who also believes that the initial research base was small, and there had only been a limited number of studies that have sought to test or explore the model. Furthermore, the learning style inventory has no capacity to measure the degree of integration of learning styles; and
- the relationship of learning process to knowledge is a problem. Kolb is able to show that learning and knowledge are intimately related. There are two problems mentioned, the first is that Kolb does not explore the nature of knowledge in any depth but discusses the structure of knowledge from a

social psychology perspective. Kolb focuses on processes in the individual mind, rather than seeing learning as situated, and second, that learning is concerned with the production of knowledge.

The other criticism arose from Kayes (2002) which arose from two striking factors, empirical limitation (as already mentioned) and theoretical limitation. Kayes (2002) argues that the theoretical limitations decontextualizes the learning process and provides a limited account of many factors that influence learning. Kayes (2002) believes that these criticisms converge on the proposition that emphasis on individual experience comes at the expense of psychodynamic, social, and institutional aspects of learning.

- *Psychodynamic*

Kayes (2002) points to five limitations of ELT. Firstly, that ELT does not adequately consider the context of power relations such as social status, gender and cultural dominance. Secondly, that ELT fails to give ample status to the influence of these power differentials on learning. Thirdly, that ELT fails to focus on the “here and now” of experience, instead giving undue status to retrospective reflection. Fourthly, ELT ignores the “unconscious” learning processes and defence mechanisms that may inhibit learning. Fifthly, that ELT does not adequately propose a ‘second order’ or higher meta-learning process, such as the questioning of the assumptions of learning communities.

- *Social*

A second line of criticism by Kayes (2002) views individual learning as a process inseparable from the social and historical position of the learner, as an alternative to Kolb’s four learning styles of experience, reflection, conceptualization and action.

- *Institutional*

A third set of criticisms focuses on the humanist epistemology of ELT that ELT is founded on a misreading of Lewin, Dewey and Piaget, that diverse theoretical foundation of ELT leaves its agenda searching for an epistemological home amongst higher consensus fields. Kayes (2002) believes ELT lacks strong institutional standing, the institutional standing necessary to contribute to codified knowledge and therefore it remains important in furthering any one profession. Kayes (2002) criticisms of ELT suggest that the theory's emphasis on the centrality of the experience of the individual has come at the expense of psychodynamic, social and institutional aspects of learning.

Although Kolb's model has been criticised by various authors, it is still important and can be used in FET Colleges' vocational and occupational studies and vocational counselling support as a framework for different approaches in FET colleges. What is more important in Kolb's model is that the learners are able to reflect on what was taught and make their own interpretations. They are not passive learners.

3.2.2. Perspective Transformation Theory

According to Imel (2009) transformational learning theory was developed by Mezirow about how learners interpret, validate and reformulate the meaning of experience. Dirkx (1998) defines transformation as a learning process that fosters change as a form of adaption to the needs and demands of the society. According to Dirkx (1998), there is always new information, new skills for a different job or ways of doing current jobs, self-improvement or greater involvement in a community. Transformative learning therefore attempts to explain how peoples' expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions directly influence the meaning they derive from experiences.

According to Taylor (1998), three common themes underpinning Mezirow's transformational learning are the disorienting dilemma, critical reflection and rational

discourse. Mezirow (1991) refers to disorienting dilemma as one type of significant stimulus that leads many people to undergo a meaning perspective transformation. He believes that learning usually results from disorienting dilemma, which is triggered by life crises, disruption or disturbances or major life transition such as death of a spouse or child, life threatening illness, a divorce or job loss or maybe engaging in a professional development programme, attending a university, a new career, or reading a particular disturbing book. Mezirow (1991) believes that critical reflection and rational discourse would not take place without disorienting dilemma taking place.

The second theme, which is central to Mezirow's theory of transformational learning, is critical reflection which is considered a characteristic of adult learning. Taylor (1998) defines critical reflection as questioning the integrity of assumptions and believes it is based on prior experience. Mezirow (1991) believes that for learners to change their meaning schemes they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences. According to Imel (2009), for learners to change their meaning schemes (beliefs, attitudes and emotional reactions) they must engage in critical reflection on their experience which in turn leads to perspective transformation. Mezirow's work suggests that the responsibility of education, based on the equity principle is to foster critical reflection in students. Mezirow (1991) believes that if people understand cultural, economic and social structures in which they live, they can reassess personal experience and what has been learnt from it. Mezirow's critical reflection is supported by Freire who sees its purpose as based on rediscovery of power such that the more critical the learners become, the more they are able to transform their societies (Taylor 1998). Transformative learning, therefore, offers an explanation for change meaning structures that evolve in two domains of learning (Mezirow 1981).

The third theme of transformative learning is rational discourse which is an essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed (Taylor 1998). According to Taylor (1998), it is used when there are reasons to question the

comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness of what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making the statement. According to Taylor (1998) perspective transformation rests on the following assumptions:-

- it is rational as long as it meets the conditions necessary to create understanding with another;
- it is to be driven by objectivity;
- all actions and statements are open to question and discussion;
- understanding is arrived through the weighting of evidence and measuring the insight and strength of supporting arguments; and
- the primary goal is to promote mutual understanding among others

For Mezirow (1997), one of the benefits of transformational learning was the development of greater autonomy as a person, a defining condition of adulthood. RPL has therefore the potential to value transformational learning fully and also to revert to its true purpose, to empower the individual. This is in line with the purpose of NQF and RPL, which is transformation of the education and training and to contribute towards the full development of the nation at large.

Dirkx (1998) believes that transformation can be seen in four ways: transformation as consciousness raising, transformation as critical reflection, transformation as development and transformation as individuation.

- Transformation as consciousness raising

Dirkx (1998) was guided by the works of Freire (1970) through the desire for political liberation and freedom of expression the learner develops the ability to critically analyse and ask questions. Dirkx (1998) argues that education should foster freedom among the learners enabling them to reflect on the world and change it. For Freire (1970), transformative theory is liberating. His work has influence on adult education and on social change. This is basically important in FET colleges; they are seen as colleges that will bring change in the lives of people, and for them to be

aware of what is necessarily important is adhering to the social structure of inequity and injustices.

- Transformation as reflection

Critical to Mezirow's thinking was the process of making meaning from our own experiences through reflection which is basically perspective transformation. According to Dirkx (1998), perspectives are made up of sets of beliefs, values and assumptions that have been acquired through life. For Mezirow, the outcome of transformative learning reflects individuals who are more inclusive in their perception of their world, differentiate various aspects and integrate differing dimensions of their experiences holistically.

- Transformation as development

In the works of Mezirow, Dirkx (1998) argues that development can be regarded as growth such that when adults participate in formal learning experiences they become motivated and therefore develop in all areas of their lives. Some adults would like to attend FET colleges to complete their degrees or diplomas.

- Transformation as individuation

Jung (2011) believes that individuation means becoming a single, homogeneous being and implies becoming one's own self and that the goal of life is individuation, the process of coming to know, giving expression to, and harmonising the various components of the psyche. He continues to argue that if a man realizes his uniqueness, he can undertake a process of individuation and tap into his true self. Each human being according to Jung (2011) has a specific nature and calling which is unique and can be fulfilled consciously or unconsciously.

3.2.2.1. Critics of Perspective Transformation

There are a growing number of Mezirow's critics on his theory of perspective transformative theory from authors such as Taylor (1997, 1998) Pelkonen (2011), Howie (2011) and Moore (2005). Howie (2011) argues that perspective transformative learning theory has been marginally investigated, inadequately defined and poorly understood. Some facts will be discussed from major critique of this theory. This does not mean that other critical theorists are not relevant. The researcher has chosen these ones on the basis of how they reflect on the work in the FET Colleges.

According to Pelkonen (2011), Mezirow does not ground his concepts in most commonly based humanistic approaches. Instead, he puts forward an alternative critical view of self-directedness. Mezirow's ideas on critical reflection and consciousness have been based primarily on studies of middle aged female students, as such could not be seen as representative for all or even most of the adult learner population. Despite the fact that other authors think that Mezirow's theory cannot be used because he used middle aged rich women, the same theory was used for adolescence high school learners and was found to be valuable. The 21st century challenges needs students to be offered access to education and learning at a younger age so that they will contribute to the global community earlier in life.

Frere's (1974) idea on consciousness rising is relevant in the South African FET education. People must be aware of issues around them and make critical changes where necessary. Pelkonen (2011) argues that Mezirow does not address lifelong learning, childhood or education for the youth. According to Pelkonen (2011) Mezirow sees the adult person as the product of a successful primary socialisation. Pelkonen (2011) argues that Mezirow does not pay attention to situations in which socialisation has not succeeded and the child opposes socially and accepted norms through criminality or drug use.

The argument seems to be baseless because through reflection of your own life, you are able to identify things you did not succeed at doing, critically analyse them and look for ways to improve on things you could not do better in the past. Mezirow was an educator and therefore that his education excluded youth does not seem to be valid. NYP (2009) defines youth as any persons between the ages of 14 and 35 years and embraces categories of the youth, which have been exposed to different socio-political and historical experiences.

Pelkonen (2011) did not indicate what Mezirow referred to when he said adult learners; whether it relates to age or to maturity and the legal age of an adult is 18 years. Pelkonen (2011) also argues that adult education according to Mezirow only exists when there is a crisis, dilemma or disturbance. Even though Mezirow talks about the disorienting dilemma, it cannot be argued that adult education exists when there is a crisis. Mezirow (1991) included significant areas such as professional development programmes, attending a university, new career or reading a particular disturbing book that could lead to one undergoing a perspective transformation. He argues that this will lead to the disoriented person identifying why he or she is doing what they are doing in their lives. Pelkonen (2011) argues that Mezirow was not concerned about the knowledge or skills but with the need to reflect on the essence of the world. However, in Mezirow's ten phases of transformative learning, the seventh phase includes acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing ones plan.

Baumgartner (2003) argues that Mezirow excluded the social and political context in his theory and gave minimal attention to them. Although he might have paid much attention to individual transformation, there are elements of social transformation and conscious raising which were discussed earlier in this study. The more learners become critical, the more they would be able to transform society. Transformation means changes either socially, politically, technologically or otherwise. Therefore, Mezirow's individuation is valuable for a person to know the self and this will lead them to know others as unique beings. He sees an individual as an autonomous

thinker by learning to negotiate his own values, meanings and purpose rather than uncritically acting on those of others.

Although there have been many critics of transformative theory in literature, Howie (2011) mentioned a few in his dissertation for a master's degree which are valuable. Howie (2011) argues that transformative learning is complex and a sophisticated model of learning, the model lacks cohesion, transformative learning is a metaphor, it does not give sufficient weighing to the position of context, it overemphasises rationality as part of critical reflection and that Mezirow gives little attention on other ways of learning, such as rational learning (Howie 2011). He, however, concluded that Mezirow's transformative learning theory is relevant and valuable if transformation is the goal. Moore (2005) argues that the goal of transformative learning theory is to achieve self-emancipation through self-knowledge, overcome systematically induced distortions of perception and communication and strengthens ones autonomy through rational discourse. Transformative learning in adult and higher learning can help learners and educators develop insight as they are encouraged to fully participate in political and social activities.

A prominent feature of RPL is participants prior knowledge, skills and competencies gained informally, non-formally or formally wherever or however. The process is focused on what the participant needs and therefore can decide what they have to study. Therefore, there is a relationship between prior learning and perspective transformational learning, which is learning through action while Howie (2011) believes it, should be used to address injustices of the past.

3.3. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter discussed two theories of learning: experiential learning theory, why it is used, how it is assessed, the challenges in using it and the criticisms of experiential learning theory. Perspective transformation theory was also discussed as well as the criticism against them. However, notwithstanding all the challenges and criticisms, these theories are still useful in education. Experiential learning provides technical support and therefore it should be linked to the learners' prior experience. Learning is a transformation process which is geared towards addressing and meeting the challenges experienced by the society. Therefore, both experiential and transformational learning are important as they instil new skills in the learners for empowerment or self-improvement in different types of careers. It is therefore the responsibility of the FET college sector to foster critical reflection and the development of learner.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The theoretical frameworks presented in chapter 3 explored the theories of learning: experiential learning theory and perspective transformation theory. This chapter reports on the methods used in collecting data for the study that was aimed at investigating the challenges for the implementation of RPL in FET colleges. The methodology dealt with the approach used, research design, unit of analysis, area of study, data collection instruments and ethical considerations.

4.2. RESEARCH APPROACHES

Research approaches are plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell 2007). There are three main approaches to research: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Johnson and Christenson (2004:359) define qualitative research as the study relying primarily on the collection of non-numerical data meaning. This means it can be analysed using words rather than numbers. Different authors give different definitions of qualitative research. Litchman (2011:12) defines qualitative research as a way to study social interactions of humans in naturally occurring situations. Johnson and Christenson (2004:359) define qualitative research as a research relying primarily on the collection of non-numerical data. Tracy (2013:36) refers to qualitative research as an umbrella phrase that refers

to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of interview, participant observation, and document data in order to understand and describe meanings, relationships and patterns. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual description of how people experience a given research issue. Qualitative research is the approach that is usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm which emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality. It is about recording, analysing and trying to understand the meaning and significance of human behaviour and experience of people. This is supported by De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011) and Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996) who argue that it attempts to understand and describe people. It provides an opportunity for the researcher to report the personal experiences of people.

Quantitative research, on the other hand, is the collection of data using statistical inferences and methods used in the natural sciences. Quantitative research is usually associated with the positivist paradigm which involves collecting and converting data into numerical form to make statistical inferences to be able to make conclusions. Quantitative design focuses its research on the experiencing of human behaviour. The mixed method usually involves using any of the methods, techniques and procedures typically associated with qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell 2007:4). A difference between these methods is usually the nature of data collected. Qualitative is soft, rich and in-depth while quantitative is hard, objective and standardised (Patton 2002).

The problem being investigated necessitated a qualitative approach. This study adopted the qualitative approach to data collection and analysis because it is an effective method of studying things in their natural settings whilst attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of meanings people bring to them. It is also understanding a social and human problem and building a complex, holistic picture formed with words and reporting detailed views of the informants (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Qualitative researchers seek data that represent personal experience in particular situations (Stake 2010). Creswell (2011:53-55) argues that the use of

recognised approach to research enhances the rigor and sophistication of the research design and provides some means to evaluate qualitative study. This research also shows a comparison of groups of factors or themes. This allows the researcher to “turn the world into a series of representation including memos, interviews and recordings” by also using a multiple forms of data instruments and adequately summarises the data gathered in detail (Creswell 2011:36).

4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Welman *et al.* (2005:52) defines a research design as a plan through which research participants are obtained and information is collected from them. Yin (2009:26) describes it as a plan that guides the researcher in the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting observations. De Vos *et al.* (2011:143) define the research design as the process of focusing the perspective for the purposes of a particular study. In simple terms, a research design is a structure through which a researcher outlines how an investigation will be carried out. Yin (2009:27) argues that the main purpose of the design is to help to avoid the situation in which the evidence does not address the initial research questions. The plan helps the researcher to describe procedures and arrange the study vividly so that the results are accurate and of quality.

The researcher adopted a qualitative case study design in order to explore and understand the challenges that affect the implementation of RPL in FET colleges. Welman *et al.* (2005:193) define a case study as an in-depth examination of a single instance with the purpose of examining and understanding the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy of a particular case in all its complexity. Stake (1995) defines a case study as an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case, intended to capture the complexity of the object of study and indicated that the case study depends on the purpose of the inquiry.

Stake (2000), Guba& Lincoln (1981) and Yin (2003) use different terms to describe variety of case studies. Stake (2000) identifies case studies as intrinsic, instrumental and collective and indicated that they depend upon the purpose of inquiry; intrinsic case study is undertaken to gain deeper understanding of the case; instrumental case study is used to provide insight into a problem and collective case study is a number of cases to inquire into a particular situation. Guba and Lincoln (1981) described three types of case studies as factual, interpretative and evaluative; factual case studies depicts the real situation, people and organisations which are able to provide a wealth of information; interpretative which takes a critical stance; and the evaluative case study which can be used for generalisation of cases.

Yin (2003:3-4) describes three case studies as explanatory, exploratory and descriptive; explanatory case study explains the casual links in real life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies; exploratory case study is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes; and a descriptive case study is designed to depict the participants in an accurate way and that they can yield rich data that leads to important common methods including surveys, interviews, observations and portfolio.

Yin (2009:18) however defines the case study research method by describing the characteristics of a case study:

- ✚ as an empirical inquiry that:
 - investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; especially when
 - The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

- ✚ The case study inquiry
 - copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result

- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- benefits from the prior development of theoretical proposition to guide data collection and analysis (Yin 2009:18).

All the definitions, however, bring to the knowledge that a case (person, group, events or community) is examined in detail and holistically with one or more methods to rebuild or improve on available theories. Yin (1994) argues that the case study should have five components which should include questions, propositions, a unit of analysis, determination of how data is linked to the propositions and criteria for interpretation of the findings.

This design is effective because data is collected from a variety of sources using different methods. It also excels at enabling researchers to understand complex issues or objects and can extend experience to what is already known through previous research (Yin 2003, Kumar; 1999:99). However, a different view of a case study is held by Simons (2009:20), who argues that the case study definition is not defined by object or particularity but as a comprehensive research strategy, incorporating data collection approaches to investigate phenomena in real life context. In other words, the case study covers the design, data collection techniques and approaches to data analysis.

Simons (2009:17) believes case study is important because it is one way of conceptualising an alternative methodological approach to evaluating a particular programme or policy and enable generalisations. Cohen *et al* (2007:253) argue that the best thing about case studies is that they can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to situations, develop a theory which can help researchers to understand other similar cases, phenomenon or situations and that its strength is that they observe effects in real context. This research study has given the researcher the opportunity to interpret lived experiences of participants in an accurate way. This research have used Yin's five components which was obtained

by extensive description, rich and full of information that came from a multiple data sources, including first-hand observations and analysis.

This case study research has employed both the exploratory and descriptive case study research strategies. RPL has been a topic of interest nationally and internationally in education and training. There is limited research in South African FET Colleges and limited availability of cases. It is conducted on a research problem where there are few or no earlier studies to refer to. RPL is a new area of study in FET Colleges and very few cases have been researched. An exploratory case study strategy in this research is relevant as it strives towards a comprehensive understanding of how assessors and coordinators relate and interact with learners and how they make meaning of RPL implementation. Thomas (2011:104) argues that it is the most common purpose of a case study. It is done when the researcher is faced with a problem or an issue that perplexes him/her. It is effective because it tries to look for patterns in the data and come up with a model to view the data.

This type of a case study is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. Implementation is usually influenced by local context, college type, management practices and student body and in particular their social and religious practices. The researcher therefore described the assessor's assessment practices and procedures used in colleges to credit learners or for a qualification. This method helped the researcher to collect accurate information from the informants through in-depth interviews. Where the researcher could not interact with the informants, observational studies of people and policies or records were used. As a result, concepts or events that were not well understood have been described. It is in the light of the above observation that this research study will establish how assessment criteria and procedures are used by FET colleges to credit learners for courses. It is also exploratory in that the researcher was prompted to get ideas of possible causes of non-implementation of RPL in FET colleges. The study provided systemic evidence supporting or not supporting the initial ideas about the causes of non-implementation. The data

collected also provided systemic description of causes of non-implementation of RPL.

The goals of an exploratory design, according to Mouton (1997:21), are to establish the facts, gather new insights into the phenomenon and to determine priorities for future research. Babbie (2001:92) argues that exploratory research is appropriate for a more persistent phenomenon, in this case implementation of RPL in FET Colleges.

The interviews with students could help get answers and identify if changes need to be made. Although the interviews with students may not yield a precise and accurate picture of student results, it could suggest a more intensive study on the subject. Babbie (2013:95) argues that exploratory studies are done for three purposes: firstly, when the researcher is breaking new ground, secondly they almost always yield new insights into a topic for research and lastly they are a source of grounded theory. In this case, the design was used to explore and investigate the reasons for a delay in the implementation in education and training that was especially designed for socially excluded members of the society.

A descriptive case study is a study designed to depict the participant in an accurate way. It is about describing people who take part in the study. The descriptive function is heavily dependent on instrumentation for measurement and observation. The intention is to produce information about aspects of education that interest policy makers and educators. Descriptive design is effective because it yields rich data that leads to important recommendations (Borg & Gall 2000) and it provides an accurate and valid representation of the factors of the variables that are relevant to the research questions. Gray (2009:35-36) indicates that they provide a picture of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs, and it comprises a normative study comparing the data against some standards.

Case studies include both single and multiple case studies. The single case study explores a case in its totality with units or processes within a single case. Multiple case studies enable the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. It is imperative that the cases should be chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases or predict differing results based on theory (Yin 2003). Welman *et al.* (2005:193) argue that case study basically investigates the dynamics of some single bounded system, such as an institution, and in this case the FET colleges.

The case study enquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as a result, relies on multiple sources of evidence with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefit from the prior development of theoretical positions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin 2009:18).

4.3.1. Unit of analysis

Unit of analysis is defined by Babbie (2010:99) as that which is examined in order to create summary descriptions of all such units and to explain differences among them. It simply means what or whom to be studied. The term population was not used because population only includes people and disregards other valuable things such as journals and events. Unit of analyses involves focusing on different parts of the programme which can be people or individuals, communities or programmes, geographic regions, organisations, journals and or events. Patton (2002:229) argues that the key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate units of analysis is to decide what is it you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study. In this research study, individual people have been chosen as unit of analysis. With learners the researcher has noted the characteristics on the basis of gender, age, the highest standards passed, years in the institution, the courses they have enrolled for, language, educational qualifications and whether they were working before enrolling at the colleges and their previous experiences. With the academic staff, the characteristics on the basis of age, gender, highest qualifications,

position in the school, number of years in the school and the number of years in the position they are holding were noted.

4.3.2. Sampling

Sampling means the selection of research participants from an entire population, and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours, and/or social processes to observe (Blanche, Durkheim and Painter 2009:134). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003:715) define it as a means of selecting units in a manner that maximises the researcher's ability to answer research questions that are set forth in a study. De Vos *et al.* (2011:223) argue that it comprises of elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. Its goal is to understand the population from which the sample was drawn. Two major groups of sampling have been identified, the probability and non-probability sampling. The researcher used purposeful sampling for the members of staff and the learners and for the FET Colleges.

4.3.2.1. Purposive Sampling

When choosing purposive sampling, researchers rely on their experience, ingenuity and / or previous research findings to deliberately obtain a unit of analysis in such a manner that that the sample obtained may be regarded as being representative of the relevant population (Welman *et al.* 2005:69). Babbie (1998:192) indicates that the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgement about which ones will be the most useful or representative. De Vos *et al.* (2009:329) argue that purposive sampling involves the researcher making a critical assessment concerning the characteristics and attributes of the population and then selecting the sample. The sample consisted of academic staff comprising of the manager coordinators and assessors. The college manager was sampled as a representatives of the Department of Education and also because they have suitable knowledge on policy formulation and implementation. The assessors and coordinators were sampled because of the responsibilities they have in assessing learners, moderating

and evaluating question papers for purposes of quality. This team provided the researcher with the required information on challenges for implementation of RPL, assessment criteria and procedures used in FET colleges for awarding of qualification and for accreditation. The learners were also purposefully sampled. The first group were those who were working prior to being admitted in the college. The second group were those who are presently working and the last group are those in the Nated and the NCV programmes. The researcher selected information rich cases in order to study the cases in depth. Blanche *et al* (2011:139) argue that it allows generalisation to population even though they are expensive and difficult to obtain. The learners provided the researcher with suitable information and vast knowledge with regard to challenges and assessment of programmes. The researcher conducted the study at three campuses, Pietersburg, Dr CN Phatudi and CS Barlow.

4.3.3. Area of study

The study was carried out in three FET campuses of Limpopo Province: Pietersburg, Dr CN Phatudi and CS Barlow district. Capricorn College is a product of the merger of three colleges with very distinct and diverse historical backgrounds. Capricorn derived its name from the geographical line, Tropic of Capricorn which cuts across Limpopo, South Africa's northern most province. Capricorn comprises of Seshego FET College, which became Northern Province Community College (NPCC) after the merger between Shikoane Matlala Technical College and Tseke Maboe. These were the former Pietersburg Technical College (PTC) which was formerly built for whites only during apartheid, Bochum College of Education which was built to train black educators and which later became Bochum Community College in the Blouberg Municipality. According to the South African skills portal at www.FETcolleges (2010) the college has a jurisdiction over the towns of Mogwadi (former Dendron) and Morebeng (formerly Soekmekaar), Alldays and Senwabarwana (formerly Bochum), and is situated in the fast growing economic area where there is a shortage of skills. Capricorn has positioned itself to offer programmes in line with the main industries.

The South African skills portal at [www.FET colleges](http://www.FET_colleges) (2010) indicates that Sekhukhune FET College is situated in the South Eastern part of Limpopo Province and services mainly the rural areas of the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality which incorporate five local municipalities, namely Elias Motsoaledi, Greater Marble-Hall, Greater Tubatse, Fetakgomo and Makhuduthamaga local municipality. The college emerged as a result of the merger process between two colleges, CS Barlow which was formerly a technical high school and DR CN Phatudi which was a teacher training college.

4.4. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Yin (2009) and Stake (2005) recognise the importance of organising data. Research is designed to gather accurate data in order to explain concepts or events that are not well understood. Data collection is a technique through which data is gathered from the participants or participant. Mouton (1997:67) argues that data collection involves applying the measuring instrument to the sample or cases selected for the investigation. Cohen *et al.* (2007:181) indicates that there are several types of data collection instruments that are used more widely in qualitative case study research such as observation of data, document review, interviews and questionnaire. This research employed the use of observations, documents, interviews and questionnaires.

4.4.1. Observations

Marshall and Rossman (1989:79) define observation as the “systematic description of events, ongoing behaviours and artefacts in the social setting chosen for the study”. Maree (2007:84) described observations as an essential data gathering technique as it holds the possibility of providing an insider’s perspective of the group dynamics and behaviours in different settings. It means that the researcher described events, behaviours as they occurred in the setting that was selected wherein the researcher provided a report under study. They gave the researcher an

opportunity to collect live data. Simons (2009:54) argued about its importance, especially in case studies and give five reasons for observations which are, firstly, that one can gain a comprehensive picture of the site and a sense of setting which cannot be obtained by speaking with people. Secondly, documenting observed incidents and events provides rich description and a basis for further analysis and interpretation. Thirdly, through observing one discovered norms and values which are part of an institutions or programmes culture which can be seen through the rules of an organisation. Fourthly, they offer another way of capturing the experience of those who are less articulate or the less privileged and the socially excluded. Lastly they provide a cross check on data obtained in interviews which strengthened the validity of the report. What made observations very special is that it is present throughout the whole research process.

Two principal types of observations had been identified; the participant observation in which the researcher engaged in the activity they set out to observe (Cohen *et al* 2007:258), and the non- participation observation in which the researcher stands aloof from the group activities the researcher is investigating. Case studies necessitate the use of participant observation however the researcher had been cautious of not disturbing and changing the natural situations of participants. There are some inherent advantages in participant observations. Firstly they take place over an extended period of time, researchers can develop more intimate and informal relationships with the participants in a more natural setting and secondly the researchers are able to discern on-going behaviour as it occurs and are able to make appropriate notes about the salient features (Cohen *et al* 2007: 260).

Observations are purposeful, systematic and selective. The researcher relied on first-hand information by looking and listening to conversation, events and interactions in their natural settings. Observations were useful in this study as Simons (2009:55) argues that they allow the researcher to closely observe specific case which could not be possible by simply describing them and interpreting their findings. Yin (2009:101) argues that observations provide rich description of data

which could be further interpreted and analysed which cannot be obtained solely by speaking with people and documenting observed incidence and events. Borg and Gall (2000:474) argue that people often bias information about them and cannot accurately recall events and aspects of their behaviour. This mean the observations provided the researcher with ways on how to check for non-verbal expressions and determine who interacts with whom and as well as verbal expressions of feelings.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the participatory observations which allowed the researcher the opportunity to gathered live data from naturally occurring situations (Cohen *et al* 2007: 396). It also provided reality check on the institution sites on issues of implementation, which can include facts, number of learners, events and behaviour of qualities. The researcher used the unstructured observations. Though an observation tool had been developed it is not possible to observe everything in case studies. The researcher visited the colleges a number of times before the actual recording of any observations. Borg and Gall (200:475) argue that people being observed will react normally unlike if the researcher enters the college for the very first time. The observations had extended to lecture halls, computer centres and workshops for skill training. The researcher used a notepad for descriptive accounts. The notes were arranged into themes and categories. The following aspects were recorded: quality of support to learners, behaviours, events, time and sites visited (resource availability).

4.4.2. Document review

A document is a written text produced by individuals or groups which have value or facts about a certain phenomenon. In this study it refers to any written material including formal documents such as prospectuses, vision and mission statements, reports on meetings and informal documents such as newspapers and memos. The study made use of documents such as reports, information on the internet and articles which were collected from the library and integrated with the data that was available. De Vos *et al.* (1998:31) simply define document review as a technique for examining symbolic material. Simons (2009:64) argues it is an important tool for

gathering data in case studies because it provides a context for interpretation of interview and observational data.

Simons (2011:63) further argues that documents have the potential for adding depth to a case that has not been fully exploited, and can include anything written or produced about the content or the site, e.g. prospectus, annual reports, audit reports, equal opportunity statements, vision statements, rules and regulations, examination results, photographs, newspapers, bulletins, all of which may contain clues as to how the organisation envisages itself or how the programme has evolved. The documents which were reviewed included the RPL policy document. Respondents also indicated how learners were admitted into the learning programme, what they do, what the coordinators do and whether they are using appropriate strategies to support and advice learners. According to Yin (2009:102), documents are stable and can be reviewed repeatedly, unobtrusively. The data gathered was organised using a database including notes, key documents and tabular materials and stored for later use.

4.4.3. Individual Interviews

One of the important tools of a case study is the interview. According to Johnson and Christenson (2004:178) an interview is a data collection method that asks questions. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:645 and Cohen *et al*/2007:349) believe individual interviews to be the most powerful method used by researchers to understand human beings and enabling multi-sensory channels to be used. It is one of the important sources of case study information. Yin (2009:107-108) identifies three types of interviews. The first is an in-depth interview in which the respondent can be asked about facts as well as their opinions for a matter. A second type is a focused interview, in which a person is interviewed for a short time and the interviews can still be open ended and be able to ask the questions that you think have been established. The third type of interview entails more structured questions, which is the survey. The researcher used in-depth interviews with open-ended questions for providing first-hand information from the participants who were interviewed. In this

case the principal, three heads of departments, three educators and twenty one learners were interviewed. In an interview the aim is to guide the conversation. De Vos *et al.* (1998:298) believe it is important in that they guide conversation when responses lack sufficient detail, depth or clarity. The interviewer asks probing questions to clarify the answer and lastly follow up questions to pursue the implication of answers to the main question. Participants can also suggest other persons to be interviewed and provide other sources of evidence. An in-depth face-to-face interview enabled the researcher to gather information from the heads of department and educators on the challenges for RPL implementation and assessment used to credit learners for a qualification and of their strategies in supporting learners who go through the assessment process. Individual interviews were conducted during official hours. The learners were also interviewed to find out their knowledge and understanding of RPL. An audio tape recorder was used, with the participants' permission, as they do not tune out conversation or change what has been said. The researcher developed the interview guide with variables before the fieldwork.

A literature study helped the researcher to prepare and organise for the probing in-depth interviewing. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researcher used the following steps for the interviews:

- Made an appointment with the participant to establish their willingness to participate in the research.
- Prepared a tape recorder to record the interviews.
- Conducive office for interviews was secured.
- Before conducting the interviews, the participants were thanked and reminded of the purpose of the research.
- Participants were reminded that participation in the research is voluntary and that they can withdraw from participation at any time without negative repercussions.
- The participants were assured that the research is confidential and that their names will not be used.

4.4.4. Questionnaires

Gray (2009:337) describes questionnaires as research tools through which people are asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order. They are valuable in this research as the study involves the in-depth opinions and perspectives of the participant's thoughts, feelings and opinions of the information-rich participants (Johnson & Christenson 2004:164). Gray (2009:338) argues that they are the most popular data gathering tools. The questionnaires were decided upon because it was difficult for the researcher to interview some participants who were selected because of their busy schedules and the fieldwork was done at a time when some campuses were on strike.

There are advantages of using questionnaires as indicated by Gray (2009:338). The inflow of data is quick and from many people, Participants can complete the questionnaire at a time and place that suits them, data analysis of closed questions is relatively simple, questions can be coded quickly. Participants were assured that their names will not appear but instead by writing letters of the alphabet for names and also by keeping the questionnaires in a safe place and the transcribed information was stored on a computer. This helps to remove interviewer bias. Different interviewees get different answers because of the way in which they place different emphasis on individual words in questions and because of the different probes that they follow up with.

There are also disadvantages of using questionnaires. It is always difficult to get a sufficient number of participants and if a question was forgotten, you cannot usually go back to the participants (because they are anonymous). Of the twelve questionnaires which were given to heads of departments, educators and principals, only nine were returned. The researcher personally collected some questionnaires whilst some were mailed.

4.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis takes place throughout the data collection process. The researcher constantly reflected on connections, relationships and impressions while data was collected. The aim of data analysis is to yield significant and valid answers to the research questions. The variety of method was used from four different instruments: observations, documents, interviews and questionnaires. Data was reduced into themes for better interpretation (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe 2013). Themes and codes were used to establish a variety of complex data (Boyatzis 1998).

4.5.1. Observations

The data from observations was analysed immediately after recording because the large quantity of information increases data overload (Cohen *et al* 2007:260). The notes were arranged into themes and categories and stored electronically in MSWord on the researcher's personal laptop to ensure that the information is safe.

4.5.2. Document analysis

Newman (1997:272) defines content analysis as a technique used for examining and analysing the content of a text usually aiming at an interpretative inference external facts and circumstances. De Vos *et al.* (2005:315) identifies two types of content analysis methods, the primary source which are seen as the original written materials of the authors own experiences and observations, and the secondary source which consists of materials derived from the original source.

Babbie (2010:338) argues that content analysis is essentially a coding operation. According to Babbie (2010:357) coding is the process of transforming raw data into a standardised form. They are used to retrieve and organise information gathered and to categorise the data easily so that the researcher to find and cluster the information into themes (Miles & Huberman 1994:57). The coding scheme with the schedule and manual were used to analyse the content. The codes that have been created before

fieldwork helped the researcher to analyse the work. The researcher arranged the codes in the form of letters of the alphabet.

4.5.3. Interviews

The information gathered from the participants using the audio tapes was transcribed and copies made from the transcribed data to preserve them in their original format. A highlighter was used to identify and mark variables and they were categorised. The elements were sorted according to themes and those which did not have a bearing on the topic were set aside. The researcher investigated variables which were defined in terms of the theoretical perspectives and research purposes. The quotations extracted from individual interviews were cited without changing the tenses or the language use.

4.5.4. Questionnaires

All notes were stored electronically in Microsoft word on a personal laptop with a backup device to ensure that the information is safe for the period of the research. The research folders were protected. The researcher used a password to ensure confidentiality of the reports. The transcribed notes were filed and the participants' names do not appear on the files. The researcher used letters of the alphabet to distinguish them from each other and to protect their confidentiality.

4.6. DATA PRESENTATION

Although the study is qualitative, some quantitative data is also presented. It must be emphasized that although quantitative data is presented, it is narratively analyzed.

4.6.1. Qualitative Data

The qualitative data analysis is presented by interpreting data and also using verbatim quotes from the participants' individual interviews. The data from the interviews also used to support the interpretation from the questionnaires.

4.6.2. Quantitative Data

The quantitative data will take the form of narrative form and discussions and is also presented in tables and pie-charts.

4.6.3. Integration of Data

The findings of qualitative and quantitative data will be interpreted in a narrative form to reflect the challenges of implementing RPL in FET colleges in Limpopo Province as reflected in the interviews and questionnaire of the academic staff in FET colleges.

4.7. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Trustworthiness of research is generally questioned by positivists because concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed the same way as constructivists (Shenton 2004:63). Guba (1981:77) proposes four criteria that he believes should be considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of a study that is trustworthy. They are dependability credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

4.7.1. Credibility

Credibility requires that the research should demonstrate that the research was designed to describe what it was meant for (Gray 2009:371). This means it must not measure anything else except what it was intended for. Shenton (2004:64) provide

the following strategies that can be used to enhance credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observations, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, member check and critically examining and evaluation of research by an outside qualified researcher. The questionnaire content concentrated directly on the research objectives. For honest responses, good rapport was established with the participants as the researcher visited the site before actual research activities. The participants were given an opportunity to withdraw from the research activities at any time during the study and the participants were also encouraged to be frank with their answers. The same procedure for asking questions was employed and the questions were the same for all the participants. All interview records were basically the participant's verbatim accounts of conversations, transcripts and quotations from documents. The researcher avoided poor reviews and selective use of data.

Data was carefully reviewed by the researcher and codes verified by external coders. The research guarded against the researcher's own expectations and faulty perception that would support the researcher's preconceived notions about the research. Newby (2010:121) argues that what is gathered should represent the situation it was intended to examine. For example, if another researcher was to investigate the case using the same approaches, the results should be the same. The issue of reliability was addressed using different strategies to approach the investigation through observations, document review, interview and questionnaires.

4.7.2. Transferability

Transferability involves demonstrating the applicability of the result of the study in one context to the other context (Shenton 2004:69). The researcher gave a full description of data to make the judgement possible showing that the results could be applicable in other context. The researcher ensured that sufficient information about the fieldwork sites had been adequately provided to enable the reader to make a transfer. The findings of the research were compared to one another during analysis so that the emerging themes and categories could be established so that transferability could be improved.

4.7.3. Dependability

Dependability involves the account of all changing conditions in what was studied involving changes in design of the study that were needed to understand the context of the research better (Shenton 2004:71). Shenton (2004:71) believes that if the same work was repeated using the same methods of data gathering procedures such as observations, documents, interviews, questionnaires and the same participants, the research would yield similar results. For this study the researcher has described in detail the design of the research, implementation and how data was gathered and analysed and a multiple gathering procedures were used (Denzin& Lincoln 1994: 513).

4.7.4. Conformability

Conformability entails the full revelation of the data upon which interpretation is based. This means that the steps should be taken to ensure that the findings of the research are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants, not the characteristics and the preferences of the researcher. To avoid biasness, procedures to collect and analyse data were recorded and defined. Findings need to be confirmed by other resources and methods. The researcher presented the responses of the participants accurately and they were confirmed against existing literature which proves that the findings were not the reflection of the researcher's observations.

4.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher adhered to the following ethical principles as cited by Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2007:142-143): no harm, privacy and anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent. Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmeister (2000:65) argue that the researcher is obligated to seek ways to benefit participants even after the

research is completed, by using debriefing procedures. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:447) allude that case studies often deal with matters of public interest. The value of best research is not likely to outweigh injury to the person exposed. Limits to access were suggested and agreements heeded.

4.8.1. Do No Harm

Case studies deal with matters of public interest. Therefore the value of best research is not likely to outweigh injury to a person exposed. Researchers are guests in private spaces of the world and therefore participants should not be harmed physically or emotionally (De Vos *et al.* 2009:58). This research activity avoided harm at all cost to participants to ensure a good code of ethics.

4.8.2. Privacy and Anonymity

Anonymity refers to the situation where the researcher cannot identify specific information with the individuals it describes, and confidentiality refers to the situation in which the researcher promises to keep the information about subjects private (Johnson & Christenson 2004:112). The names of participants are not published in this study. Only pseudonyms were used. Anonymity of participants was crucial; close relationship was maintained with the participants. The college was also made aware that taking part in research was voluntary therefore the informants were free to end participation if they so wished.

4.8.3. Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the situation in which the researcher promises to keep the information about subjects private. Johnson and Christenson (2004:112) define confidentiality as not releasing the identity of the participant to anyone outside of the research. For this study the researcher has removed the participant's names and all identifying labels, including those of participants to conform to confidentiality of the data and the researcher replaced them with pseudonyms.

4.8.4. Informed Consent

Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in research activities so that a decision could be made whether they want to participate or not (Johnson & Christenson 2004:102). Research should as far as possible be based on participants freewill. It is, however, the responsibility of the researcher to explain fully to the participants what the research is about and what steps are to be taken during the process. Cohen *et al* (2007:52) allude that research necessitates obtaining consent and cooperation from participants and those who would assist in providing facilities for research. De Vos *et al.* (2009:59) argue that it allows participants to have a complete understanding of the study. Participants should also be made aware that they have the right to refuse to participate. In this study letters requesting the participants to take part in the research was written and the purposes for the study were disseminated. The participants were informed that data would be collected unobtrusively. The participants were also informed that they were free to ask questions. The researcher promised that the data would be shared with the participants after study has been completed.

4.9. ETHICS OF THE RESEARCHER

Bless *et al.* (2007:140) assert that research ethics helps to prevent abuse and assists researchers in understanding their responsibilities as research scholars. The names of participants were kept anonymous. The researcher ensured that the research was ethically grounded. The researcher had an obligation to ensure that the participants' rights, freedom, justice, welfare, privacy and fidelity were respected. The researcher requested permission from the Limpopo Department of Education to carry out her research activities at public FET Colleges. Permission was also requested from the Ethics Committee of the University of Limpopo. This was done because cooperation was needed from the participants who assisted in the investigations in the institution and provided research facilities (Cohen *et al* 2007:52).

4.10. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter highlighted the methodology used to carry out this research study. The qualitative approach of the study was used with a case study design. The researcher identified the purposes of using the approaches and justified their use for this research. The researcher explained how the plan was carried out throughout the investigation. It was also appropriate to discuss trustworthiness in particular credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, as used in qualitative methods. Ethical considerations were explained. The next chapter presents an analysis of data and findings.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND LATER ANALYSIS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the researchers' findings resulting from the research activities that were gathered from three public FET colleges of education in Limpopo Province. The researcher used observations, documents, interviews and questionnaires to collect data. This chapter is dedicated to the systematic analysis of both learners and academic staff on qualitative data obtained through the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The first objective within this analysis was to present the challenges for the non-implementation of RPL within the public FET colleges. The second objective is to present whether the assessment procedures and principles used affect the implementation of RPL. Lastly, this chapter establishes whether quality assurance principles and criteria affect implementation of RPL. This data has been used primarily to determine the challenges facing RPL implementation and highlights significant issues pertaining to the study under review.

5.2. DATA MANAGEMENT

Miles and Huberman (1994:45) argue that there is no dividing line between data management and data analysis. Data for observations was collected and recorded in the observation sheet that was created before the fieldwork. The observations were typed, photocopied and stored in the researcher's personal laptop in the form of MSWord format. For the personal interviews, the researcher typed the responses

from the participants and transcribed the recordings from the tape which was also stored in the researcher's personal computer. The researcher used letters of alphabet for each response to be able to identify them. The questionnaires are locked in the researcher's cabinet.

5.3. DATA ANALYSIS

The aim of data analysis is to extract as much information as possible that is pertinent to the subject under consideration. Data analysis is defined by Creswell (2009) as a systematic search for meaning and as a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learnt can be communicated to others. Miles and Huberman (1994:10) define data analysis as consisting of three phases, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and reflection.

5.3.1. Data reduction

Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written up field notes or transcriptions (Miles & Huberman 1994:11). The aim of the reduction is to reduce the amount of data available to meaningful parts. Miles and Huberman (1994:11) explain that "data reduction is not something different from analysis. It is part of analysis. The researcher decides which data chunks to code and which to pull out, which evolving story to tell. Data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn and verified". The investigation was done with principals, heads of department, educators and learners and the data that was obtained from the field notes and the transcriptions were analyzed using the hermeneutic approach. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interviews from learners and educators and the hermeneutic approach was used to interpret them.

Mills *et al.* (2013) describe thematic analysis as a systematic approach to the analysis of qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns of cultural meaning and classifying data while Boyatzis (1998) indicate it as a process of encoding qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis is a tactic of reducing and managing large volumes of data without losing the context, organising and summarising and for focusing on the interpretation of data. Themes were there identified and coded for later analysis and interpretation.

5.3.2. Data Display

Miles and Huberman (1994:11) suggest that good data display is designed to assemble and organize information in an immediately accessible compact form. Therefore interviews from the participants and observations were reduced to a short report in which a useful rating scale was identified for categorization to enable the qualitative results to be summarized into simple forms so that the results could be further analyzed.

5.3.3. Conclusion Drawing and Reflection

Based on the research questions in chapter 1, the researcher noted patterns and recurring themes from the educators' and learners' responses about the challenges of implementing RPL, whether the assessment criteria used affect implementation and whether quality assurance affects the implementation of RPL. Their responses were clustered and compared for later verification so that conclusions could be drawn. On the basis of the study the researcher found that:

- there are numerous reasons for not implementing RPL.
- the assessment procedures do not affect RPL implementation but that the placement test could be used for RPL.
- quality assurance practices in FET colleges are still a challenge.

5.4. PRESENTATION FROM OBSERVATIONS

Data was gathered from observations, documents, interviews and questionnaires in three FET Colleges. The following are the variables which were used during observation of the case study sites.

5.4.1 Background of the sites

The background of the sites was important to the researcher as it affects school learning. Literature indicated that there is stigma attached to FET colleges because of the way they originated. Two of the campuses were previously technical high schools, while the other one was formerly a teacher training college. This could generally have a major impact in teaching and learning activities.

5.4.2. Accessibility

Accessibility means easy to be reached, obtained or approached. It also means whether the colleges' learning environment and quality programmes are easily attainable even without matric. The researcher wanted to find out whether the colleges programmes could easily be accessible to all the learners. It has been pointed out that these colleges are colleges of first choice for skills development and that they should be able to reach the communities they are serving. The researcher found out that with regard to transport and distance all the colleges are easily accessible to the communities they are serving but that programmes are not easily accessible. The reason is that one campus does not offer all the programmes as the programmes have been spread over the campuses. For example, campus A offers management courses only whilst the other campuses offer engineering programmes. This is a disadvantage to the learners in that community as they do not have choices over the programmes at the campus. Hence the learners take anything that is offered at the campus. Accessibility is also restricted by admission of learners to programmes especially the Nated programme which requires a matric certificate for entrance.

5.4.3. General Surroundings

Generally, clean surroundings can attract people to work harder and can attract potential customers. In all the colleges there are people specifically offering cleaning services. However, in some colleges, the surroundings were not clean and this could have a negative impact at the college as a whole. Two colleges were particularly clean and very attractive despite the fact that the college was busy constructing classes and offices. Clean and tidy offices, halls and workshops make work easy and enjoyable.

5.4.4. Resources

SAQA (2000) and Motaung (2007) have indicated that infrastructure and resources (human and physical) are a prerequisite for any successful programme implementation. Implementation planning ensures that resource expectations by the college are aligned to support the achievement and to advance fundamental objectives of the college strategic planning. The researcher wanted to observe whether resources are available for the implementation of RPL. The researcher noted shortages of academic staff in most of the departments. There were also shortages of physical resources such as classes, offices and dilapidated staff rooms. The offices where support services are given are small and not used for the services only but also for keeping other equipment, such as sporting equipment. Sufficient resources (human and physical) ensure that the services provided will be effective and efficient. RPL requires a conducive environment with adequate supportive resources. The equipment in the workshops are not adequate in some campuses, while in college C where infrastructure is available, basic tools for practical work were not available and the researcher established that this was due to insufficient funding.

The preliminary study noted that there are various opportunities in FET colleges. FET colleges are the centres of learning even for those who are outside the campuses. The structure provided by Rasool (2007) is important hence the programmes are to be occupationally directed and with the availability of resources.

This is also confirmed by Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycles which explain the active experimentation which can only be done when resources are available.

This also becomes a concern if resources are limited in colleges where assessment of learning programmes have to be followed by a practical which forms part of learner's examination. This research explained two types of experiential learning: classroom based and field-work based learning which exposes the learner to real world settings and this is possible when resources are available.

5.4.5. Lecture Halls

Lecture halls are places of social and personal interaction, where learning takes place and where creative thinking is encouraged. The researcher visited most of the lecture halls and established that the colleges do not have sufficient lecture halls. Shortage of lecture halls would suggest that there is congestion of learners in halls which would have a negative impact on learner's learning. Comfortable and pleasant spaces usually provide a good environment for the acquisition of knowledge. Although most of the colleges are located within reach and with buildings with easy access by students, they are not isolated from noisy places. The sizes of the rooms have not been designed to accommodate large number of learners, so support space is not available. Learners were seated close to each other and this could be a challenge during assessment of learning activities. In some lecture halls, the floor was not cleaned for a few days. In some cases, the lecture halls were being renovated or upgraded.

5.4.6. Computer Centres

Computer centres are also resources, but they were singled out because of their unique function and rise in technology use by college students. The colleges have well equipped computer centres which are networked and linked to printers. Learners have access to the computers and learners attend structured computer skills classes. What was found was that the network was slow running which was a

challenge to most learners who could not complete their assignments due to the slow running of the network.

5.4.7. Student Support Centres

It was indicated that the student support centres enhances learners' learning and offers a variety of student services to make the lives of students in colleges exciting and easy. The student support centres basically cater for both academic and broader social and psychological needs of the learner. The researcher therefore wanted to find out whether there are structures available in FET colleges to support learners' needs during their stay in colleges. The literature review indicated that the RPL learners need support from the beginning when the learner applies for recognition, during the process and after assessment. It was found that the colleges have well established centres in terms of the services which they offer such as financial assistance, career guidance, job placement, information and support on HIV/AIDS, sports, counselling and referrals. However the centres are not those required for services such as an RPL programme. The colleges use very small old offices which are not suitable for RPL assessment.

5.4.8. Venue for Interviews

In college A the interviews took place in a hall where all facilities were available. Electricity, plugs and tables were well arranged for the purpose. In college B the interviews took place in an HOD's office and well arranged. In college C the interview took place in a small office next to the support centre. The learners were busy doing follow-ups on issues relating to their bursary applications. So there was a lot of disturbance.

5.4.9. Attendance of Classes

The researcher attended learning in practice sessions and could observe the interaction between the educators and the learners. This was to ascertain whether the learners attend classes. The researcher found that there were some classes that

were fully attended while there were others where learners did not attend. The preliminary study found that there is poor performance of learners in the FET college which could be as a result of the non-attendance of classes which could result in learners failing programmes. There could be various reasons which cause learners not to attend classes. This decision could also emanate from the fact that learners did not want to come to the college and that the college was the only option because of bursaries given by the FET college.

5.4.10. Participation of Learners in Programmes

The researcher was a participant observer and as a result was able to observe learners' participation in the programmes. The intention was to observe the principal techniques and principles of practical assessment in various centres such as the mechatronic, hospitality and computer centre as they form part of their examinations. What the researcher observed was poor participation of learners in the programmes. It was indicated in the literature that the internal examination mark emanates from their participation in the practical component. What the researcher also observed was that in many programmes, there were no resources used for the practical. This could also be a reason for learners' non-attendance in the programmes and this could also be a cause of frustration for the educators offering such programmes.

5.4.11. Learnerships and Internships

The researcher had the opportunity to attend a presentation by Cooperative Governance of Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (COGHSTA) which is responsible for providing support services in FET colleges in a form of learnerships and internships. The most important thing noted was the explanations that were given to learners so that they could understand what to do when they needed the learnerships. Only a few learners attended the workshop. This raises a concern if learners do not attend important workshops and presentations where they will be able to develop connections for future employment, networking, getting a clearer perspective on the most difficult challenges and for development. The reason for the failure to attend could be that they were not informed, lack knowledge or that they

are not interested. Major industries and mines are located near the campuses where major activities are taking place and learners can take advantage of such.

5.5. PRESENTATIONS FROM DOCUMENTS

The intention of this research is not to compare data gathered in the three FET Colleges but to present the data as is. There are some assumptions and RPL reports that have been noted and expressed in the literature review of this study as well as some findings on implementation of RPL. Some of these findings have influenced this data analysis with regard to the barriers for RPL implementation which has been mentioned that impede on RPL implementation. This study has indicated that there is little research in FET colleges with regard to implementation. Therefore, some of the findings are for higher education.

5.5.1. Variables

VARIABLES	College A	College B	College C
Vision	To be the leading further education and training institution of excellence	To be globally attractive and recognised education and training institution	To be globally attractive and recognised education and training institution
Mission	To achieve the vision by offering responsive, flexible and quality programmes that is accessible to all learners through	To provide quality education and training programme that responds to the needs of the community – programmes that are	To provide quality education and training programme that responds to the needs of the

	formal learning, skills development and learner-ships. This is performed by forming partnerships with the relevant stakeholders, making use of committed human capital and employing appropriate physical and fiscal resources	relevant, accredited, accessible and affordable	community – programmes that are relevant, accredited, accessible and affordable
Values	<p>Respect: We treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. Abusive or disrespectful treatment is not tolerated. We strive for fairness and equality</p> <p>Integrity: We are committed to work with customer openly, honesty and sincerity</p> <p>Communication: We have an obligation to communicate. We believe information is meant to move and that information moves people.</p> <p>Excellence: We are satisfied with nothing less than the best in everything we do.</p>	<p>Integrity</p> <p>Excellence</p> <p>Accountability</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Response</p>	

Table 5.1: Mission and Vision Statements

The vision and the mission statements have implications. Institution A claims to be the leading further education and institution of excellence (which represent significant expertise and best practice of education) by offering responsive flexible and quality programmes that will be accessible to skills development and are responsive to the needs of the community. The literature review mentioned that there are challenges in colleges with regard to accessibility of programmes at FET colleges. The admissions are still restricted to grade 12 and no consideration is given to experience. The mission statement claims that colleges are to be globally attractive although the indication to redress the imbalances of the past is not indicated in the vision.

The mission of college B is to provide quality education and training programmes that responds to the needs of the community. This becomes a concern that the majority of young people are not employed. The preliminary study indicated that the majority are not in employment or at school. The needs of the community could only be visible when the majority of the youth are in employment. The other issue of concern is when the majority of the community members are not able to develop their skills in colleges. The vision indicated therefore seems not to be addressing the community needs. If the programmes seem to be addressing the needs of the community, therefore programmes in community A cannot be similar to programmes in campus B. For example, there are mines in campus C but programmes offered seem to be irrelevant to the needs of the community.

The colleges are situated where industries are available. The college sector plays a very crucial role in industries but the curriculum is not geared towards the mining and agricultural industries in the province. This is a concern because if learners from the FET colleges cannot be employed in the mines, it means that the money that is spent by the department of education through the NFSAS bursary schemes is futile.

5.5.2. Prospectus for Admission Requirements

The prospectuses of the institutions were perused especially with regard to admission of learners into the learning programme or a course. The admission requirements of the colleges do not include RPL as an addition to the ones they have. The literature review has however noted that the RPL should serve as another requirement for admission into the NCV programmes of the colleges. The major concern for not using RPL is that the colleges are denying students with benefits for RPL that have been identified in this research, which are personal, institutional and for the community as a whole. The purposes of RPL as well cannot be accomplished. In a report by Kapueja (2010) on a national conference on RPL, the indication was that RPL has differing purposes, few have been given here:

- Workers could have for instance have acquired skills in the workplace and have few or no formal qualifications and thus be barred from certain career pathways. In some cases it is possible for individuals to go through a process of assessment which this experience is recognised with an appropriate certificate.
- When learners seek access to college, undergraduate or post graduate study where they have not met all the entrance criteria of the institution of learning they wish to enter. In some of these cases learners may again go through a process of preparation, sometimes referred to as portfolio development towards assessment of their readiness to enter these courses of study.
- There are those already doing certain jobs and holding positions for which they have qualifications other than those currently recognised for that work. To comply with the new national and internationally comparable laws and criteria, these individuals may need to acquire new legal certification. There are RPL preparations and assessment processes toward this certification.

5.5.3. Placement Test

The issue of assessment criteria and procedures in colleges was an objective of this research. According to the Skills Development Amendment Act (2008), placement opportunity means an opportunity for work or learning employment that could be offered to an individual as well as an opportunity for self-employment, or a learning programme and community service. An important finding was that the placement test

is administered. The colleges administer a placement test for Maths and English to check the academic skills level of entering students. This is done before they are accepted in the college. The college can then place the learners in classes at the right level. The test result may mean that the learner can skip some of the introductory courses or they can show that the learner needs more preparation before taking on college level work. The college may require the learner to take a remedial course to allow the learner to improve the skills in the subject so one can take on college work in the area selected.

5.5.4. Procedures for Assessment

There is a policy on assessment and laid out procedures and principles as they appear in the assessment guidelines of the Department of Education. A portfolio of evidence is used. There are internal and external examinations and learners have to pass both internal and external examinations to move to the next level. The assessments are moderated internally and externally by Umalusi, the quality assurance body in the colleges.

5.6. PRESENTATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS

The reasons to use the in-depth, open-ended questions as a method to collect data were clearly indicated. The interviews enabled the researcher to obtain first-hand information on the challenges for implementation of RPL, assessment, quality assurance and improvement from the academic staff and the learners. The method also helped to enable the participants to freely express their views and understanding, and to clarify certain issues that the interviewer has.

Interviews were conducted at each college at the stipulated time agreed with the management of the college. Each interview took about an hour. A number of similar

questions were asked to each respondent under the following headings: challenges in implementation of RPL, assessment procedures and principles, assessment criteria and additional improvement required. The colleges were assigned A-C in no particular order to keep them anonymous. The identities of academic staff have been kept anonymous and they have been assigned numbers E1 - E7. The learners were assigned L1 - L21 to keep them anonymous. The quotes were repeated verbatim but the spelling and grammar have been corrected so that it could be more readable.

The following table was used to show the categories, themes and subthemes that emerged from the coded data.

Categories	Themes	Subthemes
Challenges of RPL implementation	Management issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy not constituted • Management challenges • Leadership commitment • Understanding and knowledge of RPL • Awareness and perception • Access on admission of learners
	Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality management systems • Infrastructure • Equipment and tools • Funding • Staff needed • Training and development of personnel
	Interpersonal Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication
	Government and industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government under administration • Collaboration for placement, learnerships and internships • New appointments
	Learners' problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor performance • Registration • Results • Support
	Types of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline • Diagnostic

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative • Summative
	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests • Examinations • Practical • Portfolio
Quality Assurance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination • Results
Improvement	Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission process
	Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Marketing • Leadership and management
	Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SETA

Table 5.2: Categories and Themes

5.6.1. Challenges of RPL Implementation

There were a number of themes which emerged from different respondents in connection with the challenges for implementation of RPL. The following themes emerged: management issues, physical environment, funding, personal practices, interpersonal relations, government collaboration, partnerships in industries, learners' and educators' problems, and they will be discussed and interpreted.

5.6.1.1. Management Issues

- *Policy not constituted*

There were differing responses with regard to the availability of RPL policy in FET Colleges. Three sub-themes emerged: lack, awareness, and perception about the RPL policy. Forty per cent of the respondents acknowledged the availability of the policy and indicated the intentions of the colleges with regard to the policy while the other respondents indicated that the RPL policy is not available. Sixty per cent of the respondents denied the availability of the policy and the general feeling is that the RPL policy is not available, in FET colleges which support the findings of Mbuyane

(2007) who found that the RPL policy and the systems that support it are not available and Prinsloo (2009) whose findings were that policy is not known to some practitioners and that the intentions do not translate into practice. Authors such as Wheelahan (2003), Motaung (2007) and Hargreaves (2006) argue about institutional barriers that institutions are not willing to effect changes and that there is a form of resistance as the RPL would devalue their qualifications.

E1: *“We do not have a policy in relation to RPL. I have never seen it since I joined the staff seven years ago”.*

E4: *“We do not have a national policy on RPL or a national guideline to help colleges in the development of institutional RPL policies”.*

E2: *“The RPL policy is available, but it is not a living policy document and as such cannot be implemented”.*

Another respondent said:

E3: *“The RPL policy at the college is available. The college had the intentions to implement RPL and sent us for RPL workshops with regard to implementation so that when we come back we should implement RPL. I don’t know what the delay is all about. I have been trained”.*

The respondents’ knowledge of policy had implications and reflected a different understanding. Some respondents only spoke of policy, referring to the RPL policy document. Other respondents’ spoke of the national RPL policy and the other set spoke of institutional RPL policy. The RPL policy constituted under the NQF by SAQA has not been constituted in FET colleges of Limpopo Province. Indication by the respondents means that the national or institutional RPL policy document is not available. The RPL policy that is available, according to the respondents, “is not a living document” meaning it cannot be applied.

Another respondent who indicated that the RPL policy is available also indicated that it is not implemented. The general understanding is that even though policies might be available in colleges, whether national or institutional, implementation of RPL is not taking place.

- *Management commitment*

Almost eighty per cent of the respondents indicated that the management does not take their responsibility seriously and are not committed to implementation of policies. The statement is supported by the findings of Mbuyane (2007) who indicated that there are no visible commitments from the management in relation to the implementation of RPL. SAQA (2010) indicated there should be an institutional will to open up access to learners coming from diverse backgrounds.

The educators' responses:

E1: *"I think the challenge lies with the management. I do not understand why it is not taking place. I thought it will start immediately when we come from the workshops on RPL; however there is nothing happening here"*.

E3: *"People in management and leadership do not take their responsibilities very seriously and many policies of the department are not implemented"*.

The statement was supported by other educators who felt that it should be the responsibility of the management and leadership of the college.

E2: *"I think the problem lies with the management of our college. It is long that we have been trained for RPL but they do not say anything now"*.

Educators indicated a lack of management commitment to implementation of RPL. A very crucial note was when one respondent said *"many of the policies of the department are not implemented"*, meaning it is not only RPL policy that is not

implemented. This becomes a very serious concern for the colleges that they are not obligated by any other means and they seem to do as they want to.

The FET report (2010) argues about the weaknesses in institutional governance with regard to management and leadership: that the capacity in the FET College sector is very uneven. The inadequacies were highlighted by the transfer of college staff (with the exception of principals) from the employ of the provinces to the colleges. This change caused an exodus of college educators who did not have confidence in the councils as an employer and preferred to stay in the employment of the State. The Unions have suggested that the exodus may have been as high as 36% of staff employed at colleges, which represent a massive loss of experienced staff at a time of curriculum and government transition.

- *Leadership commitment*

About fifty per cent of the respondents indicated that implementation of a national policy is the responsibility of the leadership of the college. This is supported by Motaung (2007) whose findings revealed that professors are extremely rigid in preserving the academic culture and rigor that they have to endure in the believe that RPL challenges the foundations of higher learning and could devalue the qualification, while findings by Deller (2003) indicates that even businesses are afraid to implement RPL because they are concerned about paying their employees higher salaries or fear that the employees could get promotions and be employed somewhere. These are the responses from the educators:

E2: "Our leaders are responsible for policy change because success is seen in the leadership of the institution".

E5: "The sort of leadership you have is essential for policy implementation. They are the ones best placed to provide clarity and direction".

The general feeling of the educators was that the responsibility of implementation is on the college leadership as according to them, they are the ones best suited to give direction and clarity on planning and processes. The respondents feel that the

success of an institution is solely the responsibility of the leaders and that they are essential in an organisation. Another respondent said the “sort of leadership” which could mean a number of attributes like a visionary, committed, focus etc. Leadership problems in an organisation can cripple organisation progress. This means direct participation in a specific and important programme of an organisation including communicating to the organisation the importance of meeting the customer requirements, commitment to formulation of policies, ensuring quality objectives, providing resources, training and overseeing implementation, evaluating and revising policies to achieve the goals set. Leadership commitment is critical to the success of every programme and can take a number of forms, including supporting training and education, participation in college activities and support and implementation of programmes. The role in the change process may include the following: sharing the ownership of change, facilitating change at every level in the organisational planning, planning change as part of the wider communication strategy, communicating change and a focus on achieving tangible outcomes so that at every level of the organisation people see outcomes that meet their need.

Most of the learners also have not heard of RPL. In some colleges the RPL policy is available while others do not have a RPL policy. However the prospectus on admission requirements showed that RPL is a requirement for learners to be admitted to the college. Lack of implementation is in itself a barrier to the most socially excluded people and for lifelong learning. Lack of implementation suggests that there is a lack of advocacy by government and other stakeholders such that RPL as a promise for social justice and economic development is failing to respond to the skills shortages and economic needs of the country. A college where RPL policy is available and not implemented denotes a lack of responsibility by management and leadership as was indicated by educators. As one respondent indicated, that maybe they do not have the platform to implement. Their willingness to implement has to show in taking action. The respondents who went for the workshops on the implementation of RPL have to find out from those who sent them, if indeed implementation of RPL was important according to their knowledge. The report by Kapueja (2010) supports this as it alluded that there is a disconnection

between the intention of RPL and the implementation of RPL. The challenge is that if commitment is not evident to the employees, then the system will not be implemented throughout the organisation. The educators may not be committed to a programme that is not driven, supported and believed in by the management.

- *Understanding and knowledge of RPL*

The definition of RPL by learners showed that they do not have knowledge and understanding of what RPL is. From the interviews, thirty per cent have heard about the RPL while the other seventy per cent have not heard of it. These are the responses of learners who have not heard about RPL:

L1: *"I've never heard about RPL. It is a new term to me".*

L9: *"I have never heard about RPL and do not know what it is about".*

It is interesting to note that learners who have not heard about RPL came with a vast amount of knowledge to colleges. They are however enrolled in different programmes which do not match or support their experiential learning. One respondent said

L7: *"I wanted to do fashion designing but it is not offered here. I have registered for Economics, Finance and Accounting." "It does not matter because the knowledge I get here will assist me to audit my own business".*

However, the tone indicated displeasure, dissatisfaction and despondency. Other respondents said that they were experienced as managers before they came to the college. One respondent said *"I am happy because I have been able to be placed in the management programme".*

The concern here is that there is no continuation of learners' experience when they enrol in colleges while others are able to continue with what they were doing before; they still have to complete the whole programme as RPL is not implemented.

These are the responses from learners who heard about it:

L4: "I have heard about RPL in my work place but don't know what it's all about". There is nobody who will explain these things to you".

L11: "I do not know about RPL but I have heard about it in my workplace and do not know how it is done".

The learners who have heard about RPL are those who are working and have heard about it at the workplace. There are two visible findings here, that there is no RPL in FET colleges and at the workplace. The learner in question has enrolled for Human Resources Management Diploma, and is permanently employed within the Department of Education in the human resource department. What has been found is that the learner has enrolled for all the courses in the programme. Although most of them already have experience they do not understand how that experience could be evaluated for their gaining credits into the learning programmes of their choice.

Another respondent said:

L12: "I am happy to do the whole programme. It is long that I have been at school. There are things I did not know, or maybe it was lack of knowledge and I could not interpret them".

Some of the learners have experience from various types of employments and if RPL was implemented, they could have benefited. This respondent said:

L18: "I was an assistant manager in a tyre shop. I was trained in a number of programmes and duties. The only problem was that I did not have a certificate. That is why I came to the college so that I can go back to my job".

Seventy per cent of the learners do not know what RPL is and have never heard about. There are however those of them, especially learners who are in the Nated programme and are currently working, who have minimal knowledge of what RPL entails. Lack of awareness of RPL as a barrier to learners has been supported by Cameron and Miller (2007) and Sims (2010) who indicated that it is associated with illiteracy and lower socio-economic status and that it could be attributed to a lack of very strong marketing efforts by the colleges. Generally there is a gap in the level of

information of learners who are not aware of RPL in colleges and consequently there are no demands for RPL even in those of them who come from employment.

However, this finding is significant to the researcher in terms of the social inclusion of RPL. At least thirty per cent of learners have heard of RPL at the workplace, and this is important. The indication also is that at least forty per cent of educators are aware of the RPL policy even if it is not implemented.

The preliminary study indicated that there are different types of learners in the FET: those that are working and those who were working before they were admitted in the college and those that are from secondary schools. The research has indicated the benefits of RPL to the individual, especially as RPL saves time as individuals do not have to repeat the learning of skills or knowledge they already have or duplicate learning. This is therefore a concern that working learners do exactly the same courses they have skills and knowledge on because there is no constituted policy on RPL. The literature review highlighted Mezirow's theory on development as adults come and complete their diplomas in institutions of learning. However, their experiential learning is important and can be recognised because most of the adults interviewed wanted certificates only as they are on the job. Mezirow called this a disorienting dilemma which happens when there is a crisis in life. A learner indicated that it was necessary to attend all the courses because the position that was applied for needed a certificate. Although relevant experience was available, there were no certificates to submit to the authorities.

These are the responses from educators:

E7: "People who never had formal learning are recognised to acquire a qualification".

E3: "Learning is assessed and it becomes recognised and it is better used in engineering".

There has been a common understanding of RPL by the educators. The respondents used certain aspects of RPL to clarify the concept such as learning

recognised, learning assessed becomes recognised. Another significant finding is the common knowledge of what RPL entails to all educators. What is significant in this research is that educators know how RPL is assessed and what needs to be done so that it could be available in the colleges. What is also important is that forty per cent of learners have heard about it in their workplace which would make social inclusion easy.

- Awareness and perception

One of the findings by Prinsloo (2009) included a lack of awareness and perception among the staff as a barrier to RPL implementation. The academic staffs are fully aware and have a good perception of RPL.

E5: "I think if I am not wrong RPL is a valuable tool to people who had never had a formal learning and, those who do not have a qualification but are experienced. RPL can assist those people to acquire a qualification and that the learners will be able to gain entry into their learning programme without necessarily having to produce a certificate".

E4: "RPL is important as an access route to those people who have been disadvantaged in the past because of many reasons they were facing".

The academic staff seem to believe RPL is beneficial to the people they are serving in the community. They also seem to understand the value for having RPL in the colleges. Cameron and Miller (2007) identified perception as a barrier to a lack of implementation. The results showed that awareness and perception are not included as challenge in implementing RPL in the colleges. Although educators' attitudes and feelings displayed good awareness and perception about the implementation of RPL, this raises a concern as it does not receive the attention it deserves, as valuable, important, assisting and as a point of access to learners. The non-implementation denotes lack of awareness and perception. Once a person values a programme, it will be implemented and if it is not implemented, then it is not valuable.

- Access on admission of learners

The only criterion for admission of learners is grade 9 for the NCV programmes and grade 12 for the Nated programmes. According to the respondents, this is the criteria stipulated by the department of education and training. For the NCV programmes, learners also can be accommodated if they have passed grade 10 and/or grade 11.

This is the response from the educators:

E1: "The learners are admitted on the basis of having passed grade 9 if they are enrolling for NCV, and grade 12 for those in the Nated programme"

E3: "We don't consider experience here and if they don't have matric we turn them away. Those who study engineering, it is dictated that they must have maths and/or physical science"

E5: "The only criterion we have got is the minimum requirement for that particular programme. So that is our baseline. If for example the requirement is matric we say then the requirement is matric"

The admission requirement laid out in the FET college policy on admission and indicates that RPL is a requirement for admission for the NCV programmes. Failure to admit learners into the learning programmes have been cited as a barrier by Gunning, Van Kleef and Werquin (2008) as a statutory regulation within institutions that the admission of learners should be based on matriculation exemption. In this case it is both grades 9 for the NCV and grade 12 for the Nated programmes. This however becomes a concern that the policy on admission is used partly by the institutions.

5.6.1.2. Physical Environment for RPL

Policy priorities for RPL denote the direct and indirect physical, infrastructural, human and financial capacity to build and sustain RPL programme and services within the national learning systems (SAQA 2013). Educators indicated that there is

lack of quality management systems for RPL which is a challenge for implementation of RPL in the colleges.

- *Quality management systems*

Quality Management System (QMS) means the combination of processes used to ensure that the degree of excellence specified is achieved. SAQA (2001) defines QMS as the sum of the activities an organisation uses to enable it to better and more consistently deliver products and services that meet and exceed the needs and expectations of its customers and beneficiaries, more cost effectively and cost efficiently today and in the future. Motaung (2007) indicates that it is a way of ensuring that an organisation is consistently in control of the quality and product service which it provides to its customers.

This was a response from one educator:

E4: "The quality management systems have not been put in place for implementation of RPL".

According to SAQA (2001) the providers of RPL policies and procedures should be an integral part of QMS. Assessment should be built into the provider's assessment policies and procedures. Mechanisms for the monitoring and auditing of RPL assessment should be clearly defined within the providers of QMS.

Another educator said:

E1: "We do not have organisational structures such as policy guidelines, procedures and resources in place for implementation".

The structure for RPL implementation and guidelines has been provided in the RPL policy guideline. The core criteria for education and training providers includes the following by SAQA (2001).

- *Infrastructure*

Infrastructure is the basic physical and capital equipment needed for the operation of an enterprise, or the services and facilities necessary for an economy to function. Infrastructure for a successful system has several features including: a clear national legislation policy, stakeholder's awareness with policies, quality assurance with the outcome of procedures and guidelines for RPL and qualified assessors, guidance and support for practitioners and learners. The educators indicated there is no infrastructure and this will make implementation of RPL difficult.

The buildings of the colleges varied in condition and are in a poor state of repair. All educators indicated that the colleges have problems with physical infrastructure which included student academic centre, campus centre, halls, information technology infrastructure and RPL centre which will make it difficult to implement RPL. The academic centre is designed to offer flexible study spaces, easy collaboration, and computer access and also to support the academic and learning activities of the students.

E2: "offices are dilapidated and need improvement".

Poor quality buildings can have an impact on learners' learning. Learning space size should be sufficient to support flexible usage. Poor school buildings can cause health problems. Schools need good ventilating classrooms removes or dilute the contaminants from peoples breathing which are harmful. School facilities directly or indirectly affect the quality of educators work. An unhealthy building also affects the quality of life and reduces the morale of learners. The educators indicated that classes and offices are not appealing for college learners as the colleges were earlier used by high school learners.

Some of the colleges do not have well established or modernised computer centres. Some colleges are still using classrooms as computer laboratories. All the educators and learners indicated there is not enough space and ventilation in the classes and therefore the colleges need to establish well-resourced modernised computer

laboratories. Seventy per cent of educators indicated that they have many learners in the classroom while there is a shortage of educators.

L5: *“We do not have a proper support centre; we do not have a library. A college life is different from a school therefore we need internet to be able to do our assignments”*

E3: *“We have many learners and the classrooms are not adequate for teaching a large number of learners”.*

The statement could mean that if the classrooms are small with a large number of learners, implementation of RPL could not be possible taking into account the large number of learners and inadequate number of staff members. The challenge of infrastructure is supported by the FET Report (2010) which indicated that the NCV programme approach demand simulated work or practical learning. The FET College is therefore not specialised in simulation and therefore cannot be practical. The FET report (2010) suggested collaboration of colleges, where one campus can be used, to avoid duplication of very costly simulated learning laboratories.

- *Equipment and tools*

Eighty per cent of the educators who work in the workshops indicated that the workshops do not have adequate tools and equipment to carry out their daily activities.

E3: *“The College has made requests to the Department of Education in Limpopo for tools in the workshops and up to now the tools have not been submitted. If the department cannot supply tools in the workshops, would they be able to give us resources for implementing RPL”?*

E5: *“Our workshops do not have equipment to carry on with the practical”.*

The inadequate or absence of tools and equipment in colleges could affect the assessment of learners as they form part of their internal and external assessment. To the researcher it could mean that the learners results are compromised or do not reflect exactly what it should be.

- *Funding*

All the educators indicated that there is insufficient funding for running the activities of the colleges. This is supported by the findings of Gunning *et al* (2008) that funding may be a barrier to the widespread application of RPL programmes and services in public institutions because there is no funding system in place in South Africa. The studies by Hargreaves (2006), Bateman (2006) and Smith (2004) argue about the cost of implementation and most of the available research suggests that funding is the most certainly an issue affecting the uptake of RPL. However, Bowman (2003) argues that there is no strong evidence to suggest that the uptake is lower when RPL is funded at a lower rate. While college educators indicated that Limpopo Department of Education do not have money to finance activities of the college, the researcher has not collected evidence in this regard. However a lack of finance could make implementation of RPL difficult. The respondent said:

E3: "The college has made requests to the Department of Education in Limpopo for tools in the workshops and up to now the tools have not been submitted. If the department cannot supply tools in the workshops, would they be able to give us resources for implementing RPL? Implementation of RPL cannot be easy without funds".

E2: "For the RPL policy to be implemented money and other resources such as human resource should be made available".

E1: "Don't you know that Limpopo Department of Education is under administration"?

Generally the respondents indicated that funds should be made available to colleges for implementation of programmes. The tools needed by the colleges for practical work need funding. The respondents think that if the colleges cannot be funded, then it would be difficult also to implement RPL. According to the FET summit report on funding and planning (2010), the current status of planning and funding in the FET college system is governed by the national norms and standards for funding of FET Colleges. It has to be noted that it is the Minister of Education who determines norms

and standards for funding of public FET Colleges. There was a general feeling from the educators that for programmes to be successful funding must be adequate. The MTT RPL (SAQA 2013) has however proposed resourcing and a funding model for RPL which includes wholly state funding, state and employee funding, and the state employer funding with student fee.

Although funding seemed to be a challenge in running the activities of the college, all learners indicated that they have received money in the form of bursaries through the NSFAS to finance their studies. The department has borne upon itself to assist learners through funding which has a bursary and the transport costs for learners who meet the requirement of the Department of Education. There are basically two requirements, that the learner is required to pass the mean test which means that the learner really needs financial assistance and that the learner has a good academic performance record. The learners get approximately R6000 per year for tuition, accommodation and transport although it may vary from one learner to another depending on the distance travelled by the learner. However, the bursary scheme caters only for the learners who have enrolled for NCV and not for adults, employed and unemployed and the majority of them are in the Nated programmes.

Although the learners are supported financially, the educators on the other hand felt that they do not get adequate support from the department. Even though implementation of RPL in question is not implemented, the available programmes are not supported financially by the department. There was dissatisfaction however, from the educators with regard to money allocated to learners in the NCV and in the Nated programmes the allocation they indicated does not come on time hence some learners' results were pending.

For successful implementation of RPL, there should be adequate resources. Physical resources in colleges are available, although inadequate. The colleges have excellent workshops, although tools for practical work have not been

adequately supplied by the government. The challenge with physical resources may be that the colleges did not have new classes suitable for the FET Colleges when they were merged, but used the classes which were built for high schools and colleges of education. For this research, those available resources, both physical and human are very significant for implementation of RPL as a mechanism for social inclusion.

- *Staff needed*

All educators and sixty per cent of learners indicated that there is a shortage of educators in colleges and the shortage could impact on the general running of the colleges. Besides the shortages of educators, there are shortages of those who are experienced and accredited.

L2: *"We need more educators with experience in the learning programmes".*

E1: *"Implementation will be difficult because there is shortage of educators who are accredited".*

The report to the FET summit on funding and planning (2010) indicated the challenges of educators; that the lecturing staffs are not suitably equipped to teach the NCV because the educators lack the necessary qualification and/or content knowledge. A concern as per this report is that staff that have been trained tend to leave the college soon after having received the training, resulting in substantial wastage of investment in staff development. SAQA (2013) made resourcing of RPL a policy priority. This includes opportunities to create equitable access to RPL, government and other subsidisation to be identified by SAQA, RPL services to be priced and sharing of RPL facilities, staff and expertise across institutions was strongly encouraged.

- *Training and development of personnel*

Another aspect was related to the training of educators for RPL programmes. Training forms part of development in an organisation. Educators were asked to rate the training they received. Just below half of the educators in the study considered

the training of staff adequate and that they want to implement. The remainder suggested intensive training so that they would be able to make fair judgements when assessing learners. The response was as follows:

E3: "Much has been done with regard to educator development since the implementation of the NCV".

E1: "The staff development has been done to other educators especially those at higher positions and in other sectors. It was not effective as such as the department uses the cascading method to develop educators".

The educators indicated they received training as assessors, facilitators and as moderators. Others indicated that there has never been any training with regard to the implementation of RPL.

This is a response from an educator:

E2: "We have received training as assessors and as moderators in our college. I know exactly what RPL is all about. It will help people who are mostly disadvantaged. I was thinking when we were trained that we will start immediately with RPL implementation".

Another educator said:

E4: "The how part of implementing needs knowledge. One needs to be equipped with the how part and learning a new thing is always a problem. The training of staff as a whole is needed so that we can know how to develop assessment instruments as well as a viable support centre".

There has been controversy with regard to training. Some of the educators said they had been trained as assessors and moderators while others said they need training so that they could be equipped because learning anything new requires knowledge on implementation. One respondent said that the training that has been received is in other fields not related to RPL. However, the management indicated that there has never been any training for educators.

The implication here is that there has never been large scale training by the colleges but what did occur was individual training through the facilitation modules for self-enriching. So the type of training received, as the respondent indicated, cannot be said to be adequate; if after the training there has not been implementation of the policy. The respondent indicated that training was done individually not as staff training but as group training for assessors, facilitators and moderators. The indication was that most of the educators available have been trained and can implement RPL if given the opportunity by management of the colleges.

Educator's response:

E5: "Many of the educators do not have trade test so they cannot judge in the engineering fields, they can't be able to judge. So if we can be capacitated, we know only the theoretical part".

Another respondent said:

E1: "RPL need experts in the area of implementation so that there could be fairness when validating the RPL assessment. Many of the college educators should be trained as artisans".

There have been some indications by the educators that training is necessary for implementation of RPL. Although there are some of the educators that have been trained as assessors, facilitators and moderators, the general feeling is that training should be made available. There are those who were not trained for RPL but others were trained in other fields though it was not large scale training. There are others who felt they needed training and retraining for successful implementation of RPL. They indicated the training was adequate but they would like to be retrained should RPL be implemented because; since they underwent training there was no implementation while others also believed that the colleges needed qualified artisans.

It is true that RPL requires expert educators to help candidates to make sense of the RPL process. This is another significant finding with regard to training of RPL personnel. For successful implementation, there should be trained assessors and coordinators who have been trained to implement RPL. The percentage of those trained in colleges is below forty per cent which is quite small. The MTT RPL (SAQA 2013) report on RPL indicated that the low quality of training provided by FET institutions does not support RPL processes. This report does not indicate that there was no training, but that the training provided was of low quality. A number of RPL researchers indicated that there are few assessors and RPL practitioners who have been registered. This finding is significant in the sense that those who have been trained will be able to equip those who are not trained while at the same time implementing RPL with the people who most need it. Another aspect mentioned was that many educators do not have trade tests. What is important here is that there are those who have a trade test even if they are few. The other aspect mentioned was that educators should be trained as artisans. This means that there are those who have been trained as artisans; even if the number is not significant they are available for RPL.

5.6.1.3. Interpersonal Relations

Interpersonal relationship is an association between two or more people who exchange information, emotions, feelings and meanings through verbal and non-verbal messages. Both managers and educators have a role to play.

- Lack of communication

The educators' concern was that there is lack of interpersonal relationship and poor communication at the college. The respondent said:

E4: "There is poor interpersonal relationship or maybe it is because they are reluctant to inform us".

E 3: "Most of the things we are not told and we don't have a platform. There is no one who will tell you what is to be done or how to do it".

E1: "If we are told to implement we will, but if not there is nothing we can do about it"

Over half of the respondents indicated that there are poor interpersonal relationships at the colleges with lack of communication which gives rise to limited capacity for improvement and innovation. The other half indicated that there is no consultation when decisions on policies are taken and lack of information becomes a challenge as the educators are the ones to implement the policies. This was supported by Makinde (2005) that problems of policy implementation may result from four critical factors which are communication, resources, attitude and bureaucratic structure.

5.6.1.4. Government and industry problems

- Lack of substantial support

About seventy per cent of the educators said there are the absence of support from the Department of Education in Limpopo and the National Department and a lack of national drive by larger stakeholders. The educators indicated there is also lack of support from the national department for coordination of the education activities across the government departments and clear advocacy and clear guidelines on how RPL should be implemented. An educator respondent said:

"there is no guideline on how to implement, nothing, and they just plan these things alone without us being involved".

"There is no support from the department of any kind, theirs is just to talk and talk".

The concern is that the educators lack support from the Department of Education while implementation of RPL needs support from the beginning of the learner registration until the learner has been assessed.

- *Collaboration for placements, internships and learnerships*

The educators indicated there is poor collaboration with industries. They noted with concern the challenges they encounter when learners have to be placed or when applying for internships. Some respondents indicated there are fees from industries which are demanded from learners and some learners cannot afford them. The same sentiments were put forward by learners who noted that there are challenges with learnerships and placements. The learners were concerned that even after completion of their programmes there are still challenges in securing employment. Learnerships area work-based learning programme that leads to a nationally recognised qualification which is registered with SAQA and directly related to an occupation. Learnerships combine a structured learning component with practical work experience that is acquired while being employed in a company, government department or small business.

- *Government under administration*

The educators raised a very serious concern about the Limpopo Department of Education's way of handling finances. Therefore, the support they need from the government may not be realised. They argue that even implementation of RPL, as a special programme, cannot be afforded because it is unable to buy tools and equipment requested over a long time. The educators indicated that the Department of Education is under administration and do not know when things will go back to normal.

- *New ministers*

The educators indicated a concern with regard to the National Department of Education which changes ministers after every five years. The concern was with projects as they arise in the department that "*every new minister would like to be felt*" and hence they has been a lot of changes since democracy. They also felt that the Department of Education is slow when it comes to the implementation of programmes and they attribute this to changing of ministers without reasons. The

literature review highlighted a number of factors as indicated by Makinde (2005) that the ego of leaders restricts implementation of programmes and that there is also a lack of continuity in government programmes.

5.6.1.5. Learners' Problems

- *Poor performance*

Half of the educators indicated that the learners who come to colleges perform poorly because most of them cannot read or write. The educators indicated it may be because the colleges are the last resort for many learners and people also feel that the FET colleges are for dull people and the underachievers.

E1: "Learners who register are of poor quality and those who have dropped out of school are encouraged to register in FET College. The other learners are those who have failed matric and this causes poor performance".

The other half of educators indicated that the poor performance of learners could be that the learners experience difficulties in the demand of the programmes which can be attributed to language problems. Another challenge mentioned with regard to learner's problems is that the educators are faced with learners who passed grade 9, 10 and 11 in the same programme whilst their intellectual ability is not the same.

- *Registration problems*

The learners were concerned about the registration period as they stand in long queues for a week without assistance. This was also confirmed by the educators. The educators and learners believe something could be done about registrations like issuing of forms to the neighbouring schools during the last quarter of the year. A learner said "*I did not know what the colleges offered until I came to the colleges*". Another learner said "*I did not apply and I was brought in by one of my friends*". The long queues may be as a result of learners not applying on time because they did not know the types of programmes the colleges offer. However, the educators indicate that the programmes are genuinely marketed. This is a response from one educator:

"Our programmes are marketed at community level and sometimes we go from one school to the other to guide learners in secondary schools about the programmes available in our college".

Another respondent said:

"Most of our cars have college magnetic stickers to make them aware of the college programme. We also have marketing officers of the college who distribute prospectus in various secondary schools and by participating in shows.

This was contrary to what the learners indicated. Most of the learners said they heard about the college courses from their relatives and friends.

Another learner said *"I heard from my father who has a friend in the college".*

The educators said the courses have been marketed in various high schools. So there is a controversy with regard to reaching out to the more socially excluded members of the communities for the various programmes. Educators indicated they are able to market the courses at community level and sometimes they would go from one school to the other to guide learners in secondary schools about the programmes available in the college. One respondent indicated that they had promised the community that they would include RPL in their programmes but that has never materialised. This was contrary to what the learners indicated. The learners said they heard about the college courses from their relatives and friends.

If learners are aware of programmes offered in colleges, the decisions made will be easy. In the first instance, learners are the ones to apply or make a claim as RPL candidates of the intended programme and also by submitting their portfolios. If the learners are not aware and do not understand how the programme will run, then there would be problems. Despite all the arguments, learners have to be supported and there should be strategic planning ahead of registration periods so that learners could not register for another course without prior professional guidance and

counselling. There is also a need for greater public awareness because the colleges are there to serve the greater part of the community and also to respond to the economic needs of the country as a whole.

- *Pending results*

At the time of the research there was a strike going on in the campus because of the pending results that the learners did not receive. The DoE had released the results to Umalusi, the quality assurer. The argument was that the question papers had leaked at the national department. The educators said that the results are usually available in May and at that time they did not know when they will become available, hence the unrest on the campus. The learners also raised a concern about the results which were not released and they were dissatisfied at how the college was handling the matter.

- *Support of learners*

Inadequate support was cited as a barrier to implementation of RPL. A concern was also noted by FET college, technikons and universities in a workshop to facilitate collaborative planning that the FET college gives inadequate career guidance before enrolling for its programmes. The report also noted that learners enrol randomly depending on the availability of places in programmes or based on social, financial or geographical factors.

Another note of concern was that the indication by the SETAs was that the MTT RPL (2013) indicated that there is not enough experienced staff to perform RPL successfully. The report however does not indicate that there are not experienced staffs, but that the staffs are not adequate. The report also argues that the assessors and moderators do not have the required confidence to guide and support candidates throughout the RPL processes. The fact that the assessors and moderators have confidence, even if is not at the required level according to the SETA, it is significant for this report because as one implements, the confidence will

grow. There has been an indication in this study that there is ample support given to learners in FET Colleges. This type of support should be given from the beginning of the candidate's application and until the candidate finishes. Research has shown that "failure to support the applicant may result in discouragement or discontinuance of the programme".

Sixty per cent of learners indicated that they are fully supported in the colleges by their educators throughout their studies, from registration, during the terms and through professional counselling. RPL also needs professional guidance during registration and throughout the assessment of learning programmes until the candidate finishes. Most of educators indicated that learners come to colleges unprepared; others cannot read and write. The FET college is viewed as a last resort by the learners as most of them do not even apply for admissions. This is an important finding. Although learners come with all kinds of learning challenges, educators have been found to be helpful with regard to support.

Twenty per cent of the learners come to college to register for their second certificate instead of proceeding to a university of technology or university. Ten per cent of the respondents said they did not secure jobs while fifty per cent are registering for programmes they do not want to register for. One learner respondent said:

L8: "I have completed a hospitality diploma but had to come back to the college and I have registered for a tourism diploma".

This statement is similar to what another learner said:

L5: "I came back to the college to study something else besides what I have done previously. I have completed my diploma but there are no available jobs for us and the educators are not doing anything about it".

The learners indicated that they get support from their own educators, peers and also from the support centres. These are responses from the learners:

L11: "I came with financial challenges but the support centre has helped me to get a bursary, and the bursary paid my fees as well as the transport and that I can be able to claim back the monies that I did not use".

The learners see their educators' support as valuable as they are motivated and guided through the programmes because they spend time with the educators on a daily basis.

Another respondent said:

L4: "It is long that I have been at school, I couldn't have made it without the educators support. Some of the things that I knew from work I couldn't apply them but now I am knowledgeable".

One respondent said:

L5: "I am doing Labour Relations at the college in the HR department. Presently I am working as a personnel assistant in the Department of Education. I have been working for 22 years. I already have some modules at UNISA. I personally get support from my employers with regard to leave of absence from work, guidance and normal work schedule".

Other learners held different views with regard to support. These are the responses:

L12: "This is the third month without an educator and we don't know what we are going to write".

L8: "We did not get our results and we are not told exactly what the problem is".

Generally there is enough evidence from the learners that support is given in many areas at the college in relation to monetary challenges, guidance and motivation in the classes and in choosing programmes. The learners are strongly supported during registration, in curriculum matters and in special cases such as in counselling.

Only in few cases where the learners indicated that there is minimal support, they cited shortage of educators in departments where they were not being taught. As such the learners were afraid that they will not pass. The other area of concern is with regard to job placement. The learners indicated that there is seemingly little or no effective support structure to help the learners who are looking for internships, learnerships and placements. This contradicts what the educators said. The educators indicated that they help learners with internships, learnerships and job placement.

Despite all the challenges indicated by the educators for placement, learnerships and work placements, they still continue helping learners. The RPL candidates need thorough career advice, counselling and extensive support to help them identify the relevant knowledge and skills they acquired through life and work experience. This study has found that supportive educators are available in colleges who support learners from the beginning until the learners finish their programmes.

There are support centres in the colleges; therefore learners are supported through the centre available in the colleges. The educators indicated that there is a lot of support that the learners are being offered in the colleges in the form of guidance and bursaries by the Department of Education especially learners from disadvantaged families; although, according to them, the bursary is sometimes late in paying the funds. The support centre available is for financing, careers, choice of available programmes, advising and counselling, which is a prerequisite for successful implementation of RPL. The MTT RPL (SAQA 2013) however, argues that the process requires a deeper understanding of career pathing.

The colleges have partners with the aim of assisting learners gain entry into learnerships, work placements and internships. However, some learners already mentioned the difficulties they experience in obtaining learnerships and job placements. What is important is that there are placements, although there are challenges, they can always be attended to. However the note of concern is for those learners who register the second certificate or diploma because of unemployment. The learner still

receives the second bursary while there are other learners who have not been admitted because of lack of space in colleges.

5.6.2. Assessment

5.6.2.1. Accreditation

Thirty per cent of the educators indicated that RPL is not implemented because their FET College is not certificated to implement RPL. The respondent said:

E1: "We are not certified to implement RPL".

The other respondents indicated that they have not been given permission to implement RPL by the higher authorities, the National Department of Education and Training.

5.6.2.2. Assessment

The question asked was: Which assessment criteria are used for awarding credits or for a qualification.

E6: "The assessment in the college is internal and external. There are papers that are set by the educators and those others that are set outside the college. Internal papers are moderated internally by the heads of the department".

One important finding in connection with assessment is moderation which is either done internally or externally. The finding is important in the sense that research has shown that there is a need for quality assurers for RPL who will evaluate the candidates with honesty and integrity.

E2: *“The assessment of learners is the responsibility of the educators in the college and there are moderators in the college for quality assurance. They have an external body that monitors and reviews the work that has been done such as Alpha and UMALUSI”.*

E9: *“The assessment is only the same for subjects that are written provincially. Other subjects are examined by the educators themselves and the criteria as well as the complexity of the questions will not be the same”.*

The respondents indicated that the college uses the policy guideline on assessment as provided by the Department of Education. Therefore, the learners are assessed following the prescription of the Department of Education. One of the respondents said the policy for assessment is available and mostly guided by the policy related to those particular programmes, for example, the NCV programme has its own assessment policy or criterion available and also the Nated programmes. What happens is that they ensure that they adhere to the assessment guidelines that are provided therein. These tasks are administered to learners with a focus on the learners' ability to demonstrate applied knowledge and competence. According to the NQF, the evidence is shown when the learner is able to integrate concepts, ideas and action in real life situations.

The assessment of learners is the responsibility of the educators in the college and the papers are moderated internally and externally by Umalusi. However, one educator was concerned about the NCV programme and said:

“But honestly I’m confused, since the inception of this NCV programme, I think the assessment is not fair when we compare the vocational and the fundamentals. Some learners pass with 30%, 50% so we can’t compete because some educators relax”.

There seems to be confusion and a sense of dissatisfaction on the part of the educators since NCV programmes were introduced. The particular reference that was made was with the vocational subjects where learners have to obtain a pass of thirty per cent. The indication was that the educators who offer the vocationals do not put more effort on their work and there is a form of relaxation as compared to the educators whose learners have to obtain fifty per cent.

However, the report on the Further Education and Training for further learning summit (2010) indicates that the content of the NCV curriculum is pitched at an appropriate level for the learners due to their poor schooling background, educators struggle with learners who may have a grade 12 and those who have grade 9 or 10 in the same class. Colleges have reported a high level of absenteeism and poor discipline amongst learners which impacts on their assessment and examinations.

While the educators have concerns with the content and the assessment, the FET report (2010) has noted the following concerns with regard to the phasing in of the NCV:

- The NCV is not flexible and does not accommodate part time or modularised learning for part time students.
- Its current content is an inadequate base for trade testing and workplace requirements in some occupational areas, particularly engineering.

Strong views exist that the curricula of the NCV is not aligned to the needs of the industry in particular the curriculum needs to be reviewed to bring it into alignment with the trades. This may result in learners requiring shorter, high quality programmes that constitute an integral part of apprenticeship and incorporate current business initiatives. This would respond to a concern of business that an initiative is needed to produce high quality programmes that reduce the time of apprenticeship.

Educators mentioned how assessment of learning programmes take place in colleges. They mentioned the use of tests, projects, assignments and the preparation of the portfolio of evidence for internal and external moderation. What was significant for this research was the knowledge of external assessment and moderation by quality assurers. RPL assessment take various forms as indicated, therefore there is no difference in using the same methods for assessing RPL candidates. Educators are also conversant with the unit standards as they said their programmes are aligned to adults so they could just retrieve the unit standard. This statement is particularly relevant for this study.

Educators are also familiar with the assessment policy, guidelines and criteria for assessment of learning programmes. They also know the differences between vocational and fundamentals. They already have full-time learners, part time and distance learners. This is significant as RPL will enhance lifelong learning as stipulated in SAQA (2013).

The assessment tests in the college vary according to its purpose. A placement test is significant in this research as it is administered to help learners make choices and to identify whether they are better suited for the programme or not. The test helps learners to be able to identify the skills and knowledge that they possess. What is important in this study is that learner or the RPL candidate needs to be advised and helped on the relevant programme until he finishes the appropriate programme.

5.6.3. Quality Assurance

The educators interviewed on quality assurance pointed out that the assessment given to learners are quality assured internally by the heads of the department to make sure that the quality of question papers is adhered to. There are external examination papers that are quality assured by Umalusi, the quality assurer. The concern was that learners did not receive their results on time because of leakage of papers. It was mentioned in the literature study that quality assurance in the

Department of Education is compromised. The concern is that when quality assurance is compromised it will be difficult with quality assuring RPL and the results obtained would not be accepted even by the employers, while at the same time RPL should acknowledge the experience learners have had formally, informally and non-formally. The status of their RPL would be questioned if there is poor quality in the assessment process, especially in the Department of Education.

5.6.4. Improvement

The researcher acknowledged the difficulties that were pointed out by the educators and learners, but further probed what could be done to implement RPL. The responses varied but showed insight into the role that RPL could play in skills development and the communities.

5.6.4.1. Suitably Equipped Educators

The learners indicated that improvement that is needed is with regard to employment of educators. They felt that some of the educators available are not competent enough to work in the colleges. One respondent said, "*We need educators with experience into the learning programmes*", a statement fully supported by the MTT RPL (2013) report. The argument is supported by an FET report (2010) which indicates that there are challenges in colleges as there are lecturing staffs that are not suitably equipped to teach the NCV programme as they lack the necessary qualifications and/or content knowledge. The report acknowledges that colleges have not necessarily undertaken appropriate educator development to meet the demands the new curriculum either because of limited budgets or weak human resource development planning.

5.6.4.2. Resources

Another concern was with regard to internet access especially in the libraries. Some felt the libraries available are not equipped with necessary resources to help them with their projects as required by the various departments. Another concern was with

regard to computer literacy as a subject that it does not reflect in the statement of results. The learner said, *“When you go out to look for employment which needs computer skills, the companies want to see computer literacy on paper”*.

5.6.4.3. Admission Process

The educators indicated that there is a lot of improvement needed in colleges. The educators are concerned about the process of admission in colleges. Most are concerned about the long queues at the beginning of every year and the learners who are admitted in colleges. One respondent said *“learners who come to the FET colleges seem to be the underachievers and those who have passed matric are the ones who did not get admissions elsewhere or who did not know what they wanted to do”*. The educators are concerned that most of those learners are not motivated and are not serious in their studies. The educators feel something should be done on admission as they felt the FET College is the last resort for learners who do not know what to do. Another respondent held the same view that the admission of learners at the FET College in the NCV programme with a grade 9 learner is not adequate as they argued, they cannot read and write. One respondent felt that learners admitted are only the poor performing learners and have been admitted in programmes that are very challenging and as such the learners’ experience difficulty within the demands of the subject. The same respondent said *“there should be a viable career and guidance service centre in place run by experienced people”*. While the general consensus is that admission of learners in grade 9 is a problem, another respondent believed that the language of teaching and learning is a problem. The same respondent said while the learners cannot read and write, they are expected to do their best while the tasks are very challenging.

5.6.4.4. Marketing and Recruitment

The concern from both educators and learners is with regard to marketing and recruiting learners into the learning programmes. This they believe will alleviate problems with learners who come to colleges without knowledge of what is expected

of them. Some educators felt the situation can be resolved by marketing the college programmes so that learners know what to expect.

5.6.4.5. Leadership and Management

Some respondents said another area that needs improvement is the leadership and management of the college. The respondent believes that enabling institutional policy is needed and that the level of commitment should be visible in management. The respondent further indicated that the colleges can be committed if the national department is committed. Sometimes the lack of commitment may assume lack of information, knowledge, resources and support. In one college respondents indicated that there was a lecturer who retired who offered RPL. This is an indication that leadership and management of the college have a role to play. The FET summit report (2010) indicated that many managers are in acting positions as a result of provincial delays in filling vacant posts. Many managers are employed in educators positions and acting in management positions without always having the necessary qualifications and/or experience.

5.6.4.6. Assessment

The concern was also on assessment of the fundamentals and vocational subjects. The educators said some subjects are not written externally therefore this seems to give the educators an opportunity to relax and not do much as required by external examinations. They compared Mathematics and Life Orientation and felt that the assessment is not fair if exams in some subjects are only to be written internally.

5.6.4.7. The National Department of Education

The educator respondents felt there are a lot of improvements which could be made by the National Department of Education. One of the respondents said they feel very frustrated when a new minister has to be appointed. *“You already know that a new curriculum is coming. You can count all education ministers from Bengu in 1994, Asmal in 1999, Pandor 2004 and the now Nzimande from 2009”*. The respondents

said though the policy on RPL is available as a draft, it is the responsibility of the Limpopo Department to see to it that it is workable in all the colleges. They further argued that if RPL can be implemented there will be retention of learners and people who never had a formal education will be interested in coming to school. One educator argued about the quality management systems and overall leadership in the Department of Education. The concern was more on the learners who had to register but did not have their results because of papers that had leaked at the national department. The teacher said *“we are doing our best and others are not doing their work and we have to suffer the same fate”*. Another felt that improvement is needed in areas of marketing and awareness campaigns. They also indicated consultation as important in drawing up policies because they are the ones who have to implement the policies.

5.6.4.8. Quality Assurance

The indication was that quality assurance should be improved by having the best model that could be used in FET colleges of education for standardisation and verification. The educators also felt quality assurers could be placed in the campus centres as it will help them to get information and be trained in what is needed from them, unlike when the Department of Education hires external moderators. They indicated this will also reduce the money charged for external moderation because the monies are needed in their institutions.

5.7. PRESENTATIONS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaires were sent to twelve academic staff that could not be reached because of their busy schedules. Some of the members were recommended by other staff members. Nine of the twelve questionnaires were returned. The data was analysed accordingly. The results obtained from this data may not be statistically reliable because of the small number of respondents. Due to the small number of the

respondents, the researcher did not use any computer software programme for analysing this data.

5.7.1 The Number of Questionnaires Distributed

	No. distributed	No. returned
A	100%	75%
B	100%	75%
C	100%	75%
Total	100%	75%

Table 5.3: Distribution of Questionnaires

The above figures can be represented in the following pie graph

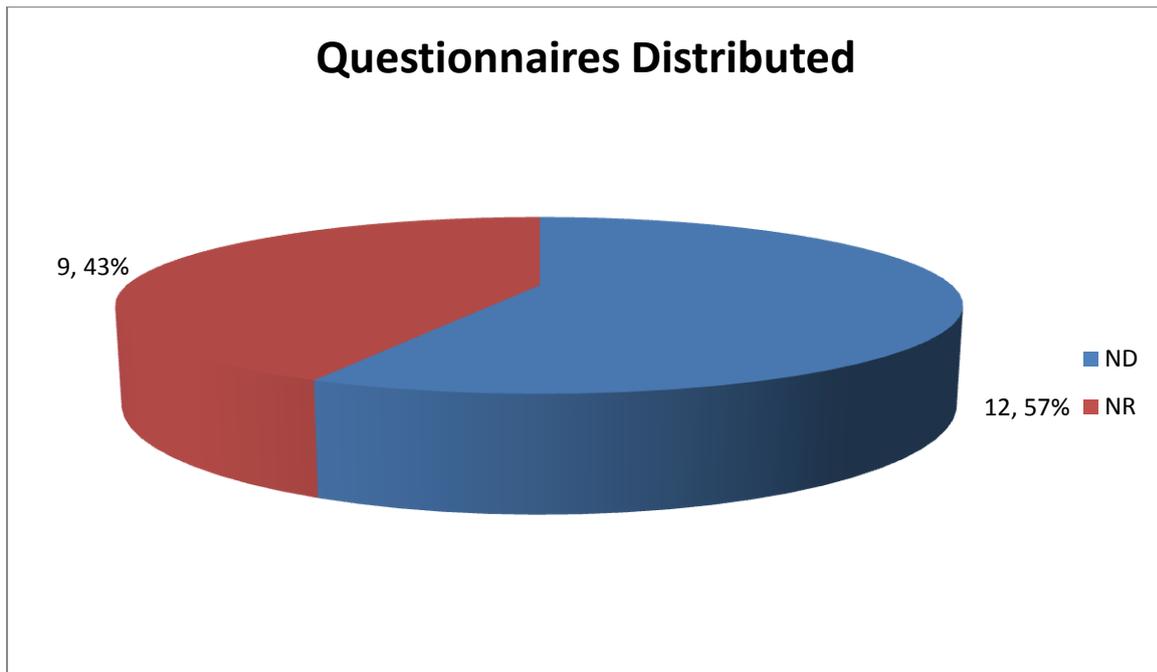


Figure 5.1: Questionnaires Distributed

5.7.2. Profile of Respondents

The following table provide an analysis of the number of responses received from the questionnaire.

		Total Number	Percentages
Questionnaires received		9	100%
Male		6	66.7%
Female		3	33.3%
Race	White	4	44.4%
	Black	5	55.6%
A		3	100%
B		3	100%

C	3	100%
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Table 5.4: Number of Responses Received

Questionnaires were distributed via personal means to individuals at all the three FET Colleges. The researcher collected the questionnaires personally from College A while the other questionnaires from College B and C were posted to the researcher.

	A	B	C
Post		3	3
Personal	3		

Table 5.5: Distribution of Questionnaires to Individuals

Profile of respondents per college by gender:

	Female	Male	Total
A	33.3%	66.7%	100%
B	66.7%	33.3%	100%
C	33.3%	66.7%	100%
TOTAL	44.4%	55.6%	100%

Table 5.6: Profile of Respondents by Gender

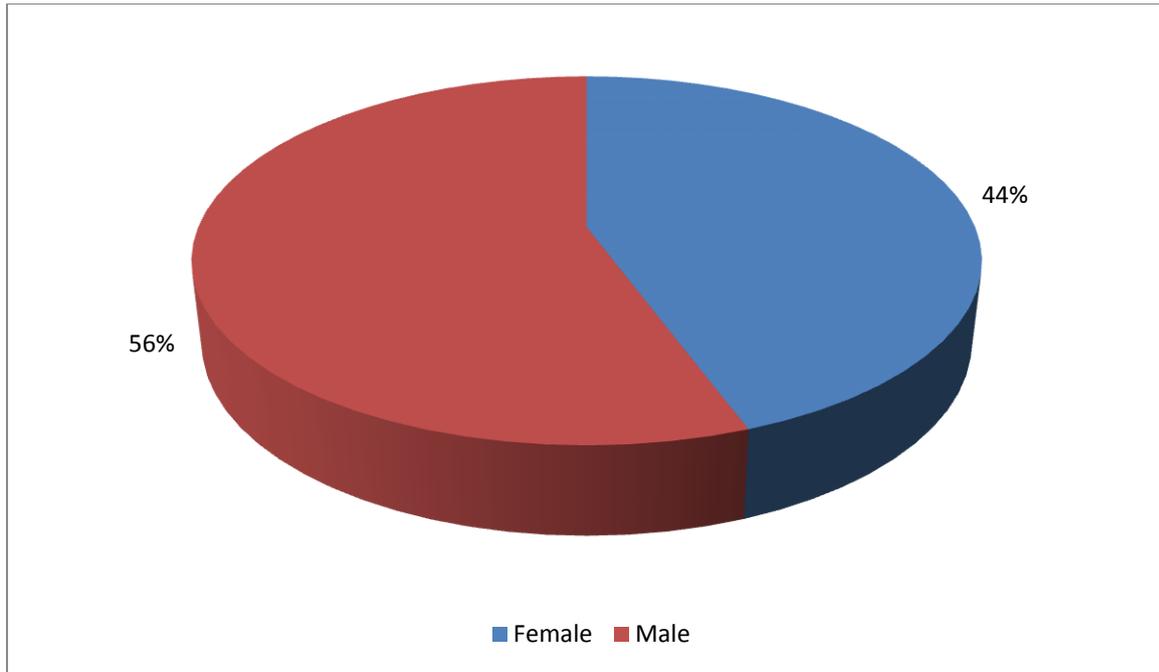


Figure 5.2: Respondents by Gender

Profile of respondents by race

	White	Black	Coloured	Indian	Other	Total
A	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
B	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
C	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Total	33.33%	66.7%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Table 5.7: Profile of Respondents by Race

The majority of the respondents were black (66.7%) and followed by whites at 33.33%. Coloured, Indians and others were not represented in this research.

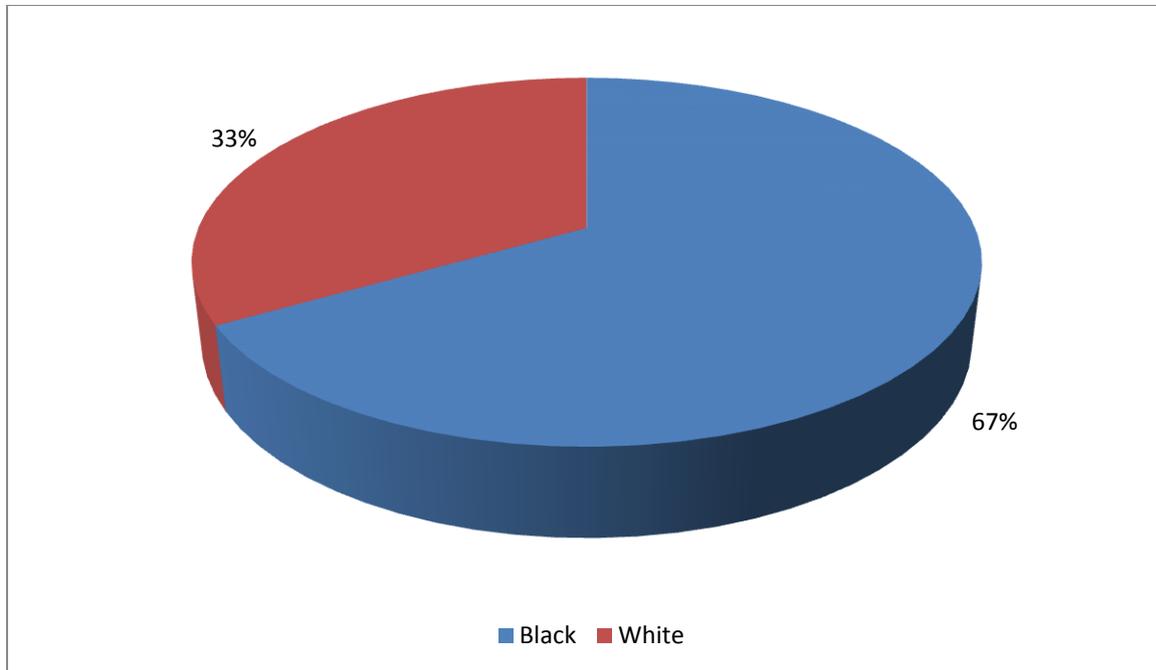


Figure 5.3: Profile of Respondents by Race

Profile of respondents by work experience

	1-5yrs	6-10 yrs.	11-15 yrs.	+15yrs	Total N=9
A	0%	0%	33.3%	66.7%	100%
B	0%	33.3%	66.7%	0%	100%
C	0%	66.7%	33.3%	0%	100%
TOTAL	0%	33.3%	44.4%	22.2%	100%

Table 5.8: Profile of Respondents by Work Experience

The majority of the respondents are with experience of 15 years, which is 44.4%, followed by educators with more than five to ten years. It is only in college A where there is the respondent with more than fifteen years' experience. The following pie chart represents the experience of the respondents.

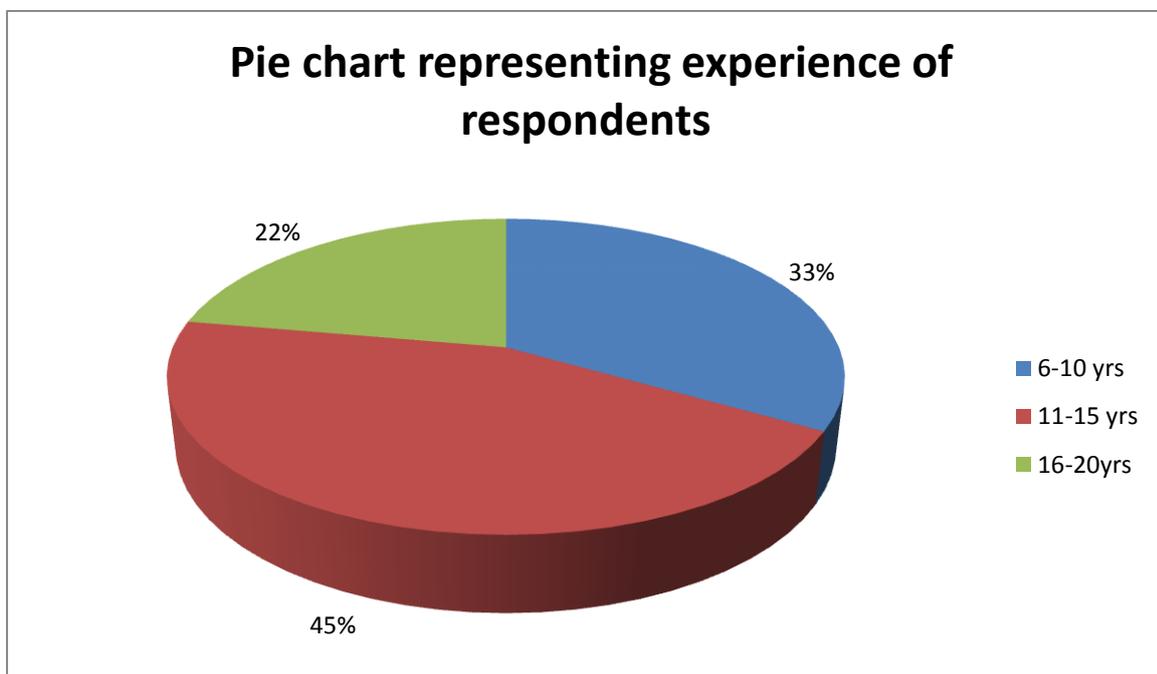


Figure 5.4: Profile of Respondents by Experience

Profile of position by college

	Campus Manager	Head of Department	Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	TOTAL N=9
A	33.33%	33.33%	0%	33.33%	100%
B	0%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	100%
C	0%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	100%

TOTAL	11.11%	33.3%	22.2%	33.3%	100%
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Table 5.9: Profile of Respondents by Position in College

The largest group represented were the HOD's and the lecturing staff with 33.33%, followed by the educators who constituted 22.22% while the smallest number was represented by the campus manager with 11.11%. The following pie chart represents the profile of respondents by position in the college.

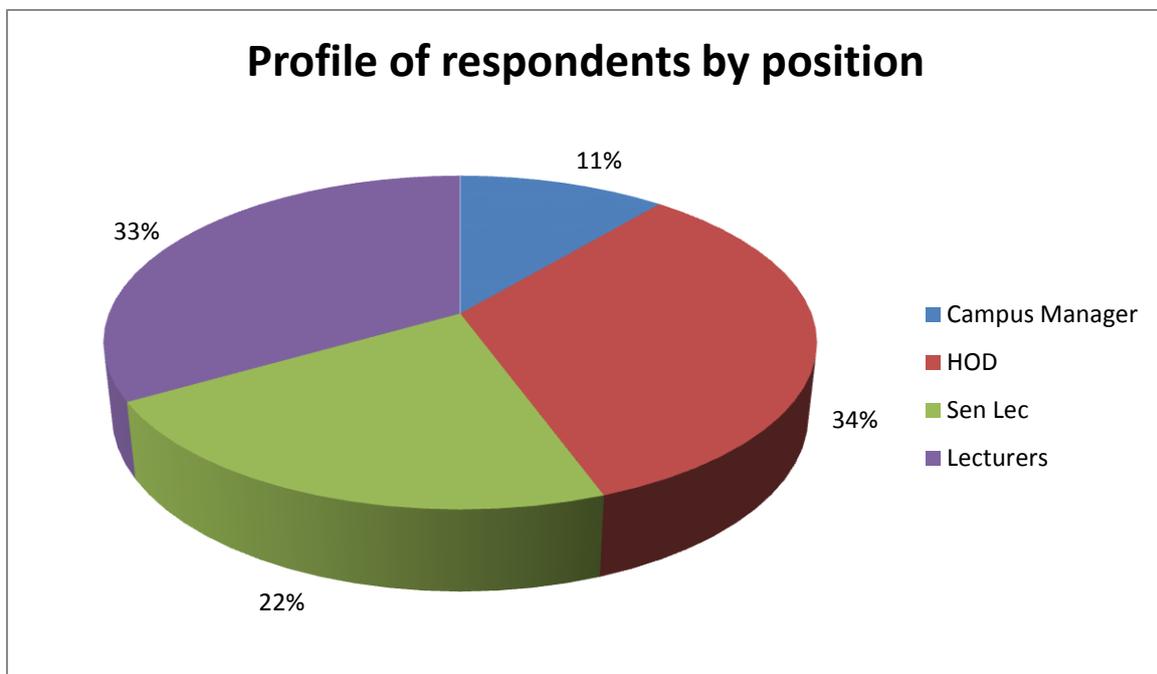


Figure 5.5: Profile of Respondents by Position

Profile of the respondents by highest qualification

	Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Post graduate	Other	Total
A	0%	0%	66.7%	33.33%	0%	100%
B	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
C	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
TOTAL	0%	66.7%	22.22%	11.11%	0%	100%

Table 5.10: Profile of Respondents by Highest Qualification

The table can be represented in the following pie chart.

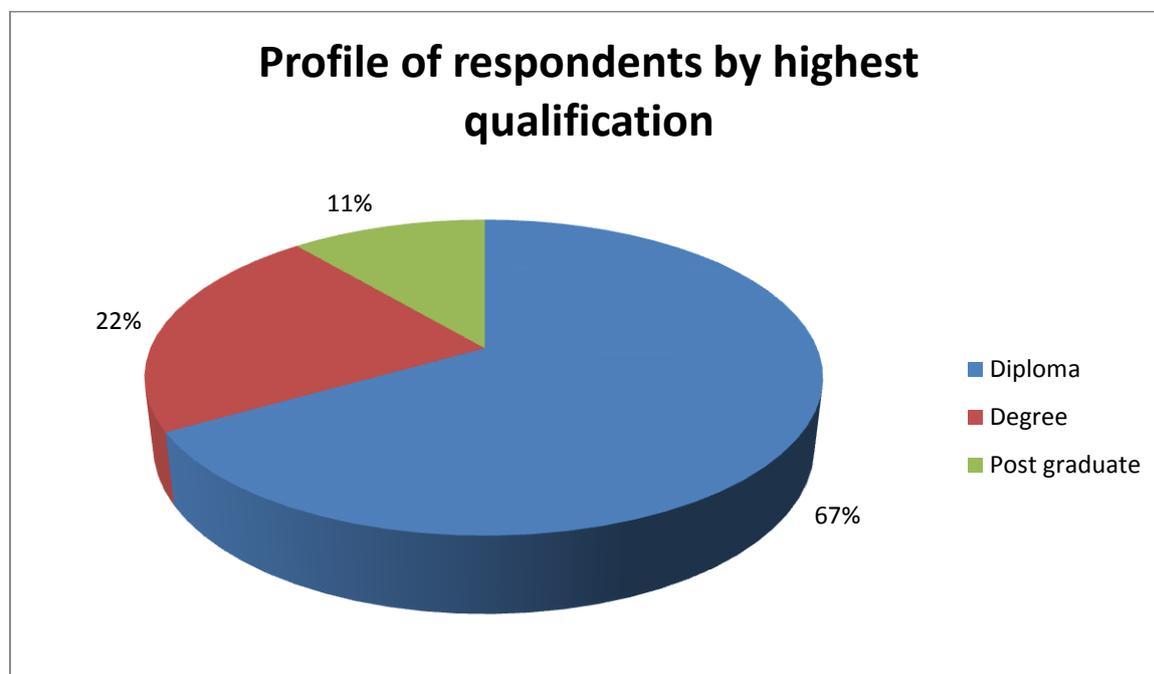


Figure 5.6: Respondents by Highest Qualification

This research has found out that most of the lecturing staff have diplomas as their highest pedagogical qualification, (66.7%), (22%) have a degree at (11%) and a post graduate degree at (11.11%) with more than ten years teaching experience. The FET Report (2010) showed that there are potentially serious shortfalls in both the pedagogical and technical qualifications of college educators.

1. Summary of the responses to RPL policy guideline for implementation

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Total N=9
A	0%	0%	33.33%	0%	66.7%	100%
B	0%	33.33%	0%	33.33%	33.33%	100%
C	33.33%	33.33%	0%	0%	33.33%	100%

Total	11.11%	22.22%	11.11%	11.11%	44.44%	100%
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Table 5.11: Responses to RPL Policy

This is how it reflects on the pie graph:

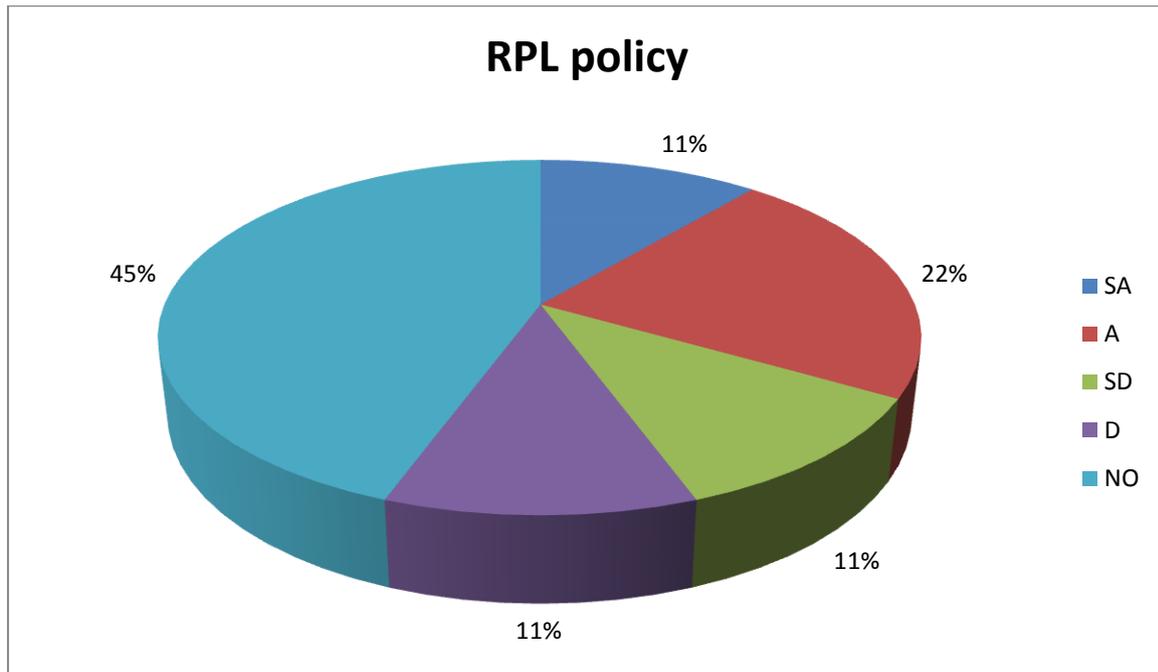


Figure 5.7: RPL Policy

The majority of the respondents do not have an opinion on the availability of RPL policy at 44.44%. Only 11.11% strongly agree and 22.22% agree while equal amount of percentage disagree and strongly disagree (11.11%) about the RPL policy. The general consensus from this data may mean that the policy is not available. However those who strongly agree and agree are respondents with the highest qualification and who have more than ten years in service while they also hold senior positions at colleges.

2. Understanding and Knowledge of RPL

The following table represent the understanding and knowledge of RPL

	SA	A	SD	D	NO	Total
A	33.33%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
B	33.33%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
C	0.0%	66.7%%	0.0%	0.0%	33.33%	100%
Total	22.22%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	11.11%	100%

Table 5.12: Understanding and Knowledge of RPL

The table can be represented in a pie graph that follows:

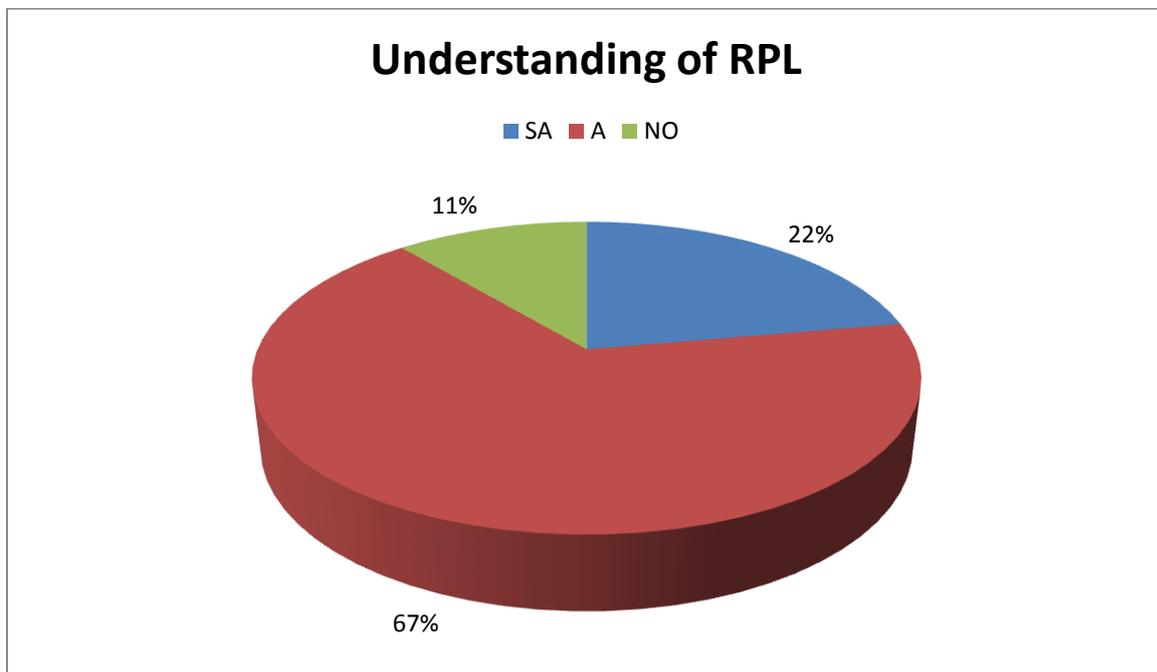


Figure 5.8: Understanding and Knowledge of RPL

Generally the educators have an understanding of the concept of RPL. 66.7% agreed that they understand what RPL is about while 22.22% strongly agreed what RPL entails. Only a small percentage at 11.11% does not have an idea on RPL. More importantly on this finding is that the majority of the respondents who know and understand RPL in the college are those who have been in the college for more than ten years and are in senior positions.

RPL has a potential of recognising life and work experience, is used to obtain access into a learning programme, addresses unequal opportunities and poor access to tertiary education, addresses the injustices of the past by gaining entry into the learning programme or obtain an advance standing for a course.

5.7.3. Perception as to the Importance and Value of RPL

The following table represents the perception of educators about RPL

	SA	A	SD	D	NO	TOTAL N=9
CM	11.11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
HOD	22.22%	11.11%	0%	0%	0%	100%
SL	22.22%	11.11%	0%	0%	0%	100%
L	11.11%	11.11%	0%	0%	0%	100%
TOTAL	66.7%	33.33%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Table 5.13: Perception of Educators

The following pie chart represents the perception of educators with regard to RPL:

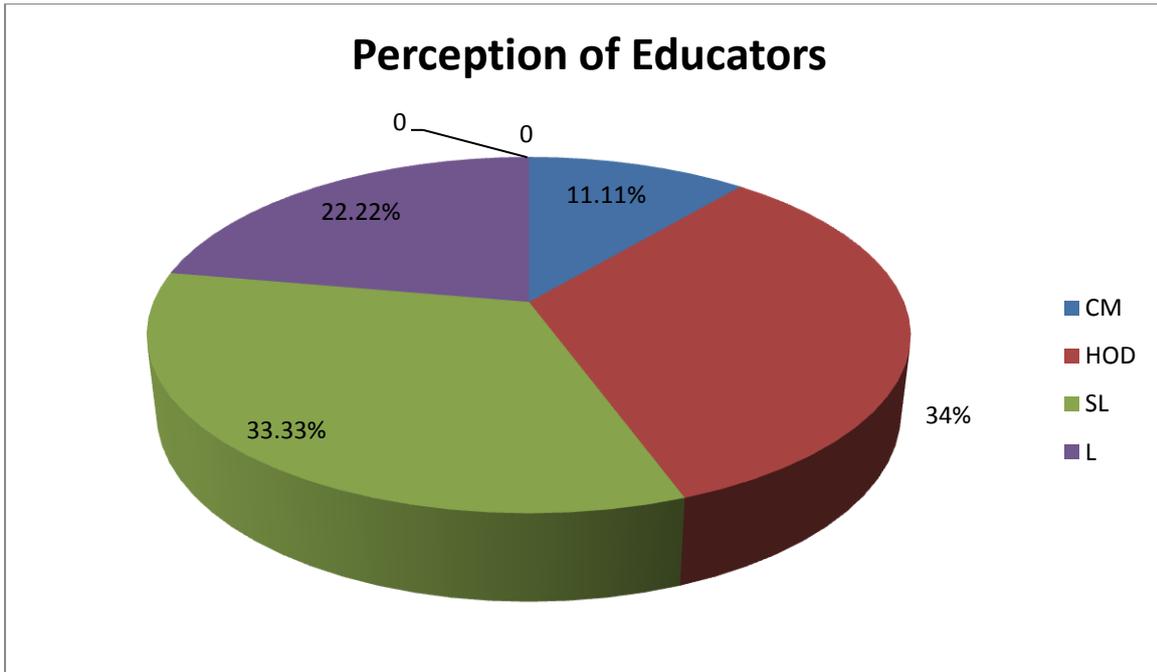


Figure 5.9: Educators' Perception of RPL

The above information can further be clarified in the following pie chart:

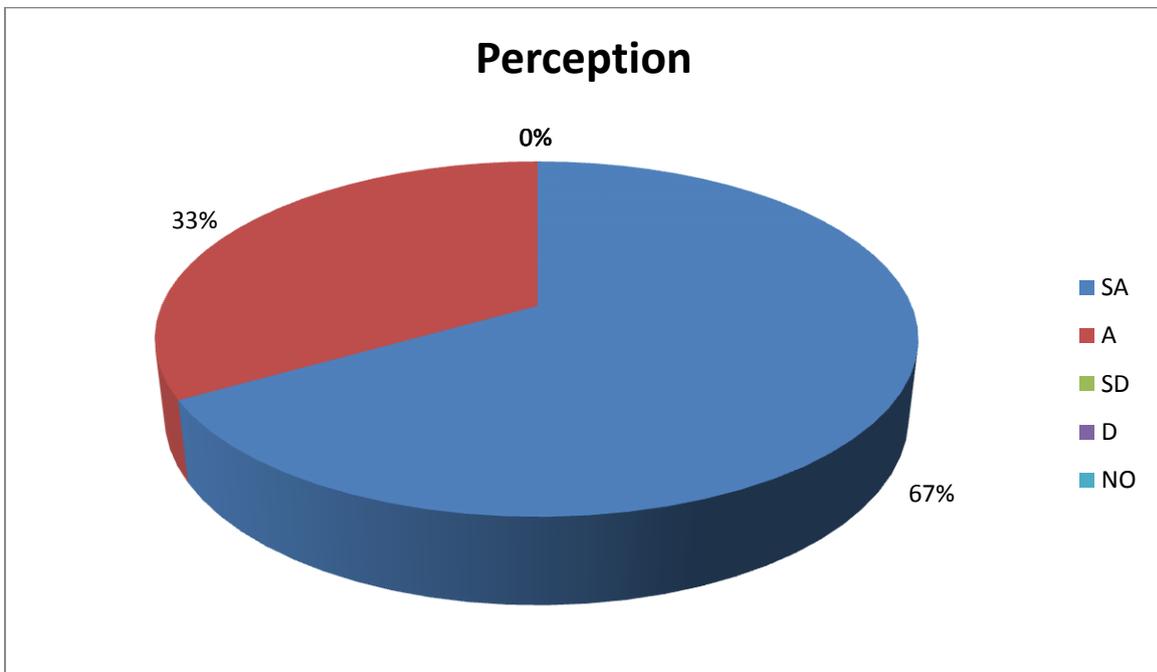


Figure 5.10: Perception of RPL

The respondents that strongly agree consist of 66.7% while those who agree form only 33.33%. There is a very strong perception of RPL, that RPL can add value to skills development and can help people achieve a qualification.

Response:

RPL will contribute positively to the skills development of the country, it will respond to the needs of the society and industry and those who need to be promoted, it will give an opportunity to those who never went to school an opportunity to learn.

Challenges for implementation

- Shortage of qualified staff accredited

During interviews most of the respondents indicated that there are shortages of educators in the colleges. The response from the questionnaire has clearly indicated that the challenge is with “*shortage of qualified staff that is accredited*”. Added to this is the absence of registered assessors which is a barrier for RPL implementation.

Support structures according to SAQA (2004) are required at different levels. The education and training providers also need support structures where they can critically engage with their proposed methodologies and tools and ensure that there is consistency in the interpretation and assessment of learning. SAQA (2004) argues that specific infrastructure is needed for the support and assessment of RPL learners, and this will depend on the context within which it will be implemented.

- Equipment prescribed for RPL

The respondents indicated that the lack of availability of prescribed equipment for RPL is deemed to be the stumbling block for RPL implementation. Added to this is the lack of RPL providers.

- Accreditation of workshops by SETA

There are delays in the accreditation of education and training providers. Private providers are finding the delays associated with their accreditation limiting when they are planning implementation of RPL. RPL processes currently offered by such providers have no value, unless they have been accredited.

- Training of staff

There was an indication from the educators that training of educators for the implementation of RPL was not done. Training for RPL implementation is necessary because RPL is a special programme and the processes should be clearly understood so that individuals applying for recognition could not be disadvantaged. SAQA (2004) policy highlights the following aspects in relation to training of staff which is a prerequisite for RPL implementation:

- quality of assessment and the integrity of assessment systems are ensured.
- training enables the assessors and moderators to provide a holistic learner centred service that is in line with the objectives of the NQF and related policies.
- monitoring policies ensure that professional competencies in assessment are reviewed and updated.
- development of assessor and moderator guidelines, including assessment process and procedure.
- appropriate infrastructure for assessment, including reporting mechanisms.
- the quality assurance of processes and results, including internal and external moderation processes.
- importance of strong collaboration with industries.

The importance of partnerships with colleges emerged as an important concern for the respondents. The respondents indicated a lack of well-established partnerships with industries and indicated that *“there should be a strong collaboration with industries that will be able to supports development of the college curriculum and to*

champion the skills shortages in the country and help solve problems of unemployment”

The FET report (2010) has highlighted the importance of partnerships and indicated that the success of the college will depend on the collaborative relationship on a number of axes, including:

- Collaboration between colleges and industry, following the example set by Technical Skills Business Partnerships, including:
 - support for curriculum development to ensure that curriculum content is accurate and up to date
 - support for learner recruitment and learner guidance
 - participation in college governance
 - Stronger relationships among SETAs and between SETAs and colleges,
 - Close cooperation among the Quality Councils, given the complex nature of current and future qualifications offered at the colleges,
 - Stronger links between colleges and higher education institutions,
 - Closer relationships among all stakeholders to support effective policy formulation and planning so that the structure and composition of the National Board for Further Education and Training (NBFET) may be adequate and that a more comprehensive model for stakeholder collaboration and cooperation and cooperative governance is needed.
-
- Artisan training.

The respondents indicated that artisan training has not been done and the response was *“the problem with implementation of RPL is that there are shortages of artisans in our colleges although there have been some indications that that educators will be trained. It is a national priority at the moment.”*

The challenge concerning artisan training is supported by the FET report (2010) as well as the responses during the interviews that there are not many artisans to be able to deal with the implementation of RPL and that many educators do not have trade tests. The report indicated that training is a concern for both government and industry. The report further indicated that:

Minister Nzimade (2010) has indicated in his budget speech that he will

..... be taking a special interest in driving artisan training in this financial year. I will work intensively with the initiatives that are underway to strengthen artisan training. We will increase the numbers and quality of skills artisans, particularly in priority trades, through a synergy of strengthening FET colleges, SETAs work and business initiatives.

While Minister Nzimande has a special interest in FET colleges, the finding was that training is not done and that colleges have very few artisans. The indication was that most educators in the FET colleges do not have practical knowledge.

The Skills Development Act of 2008 provides four alternatives paths to the trade test required to qualify as an artisan. A person may apply to undergo a trade test in respect of a trade if:

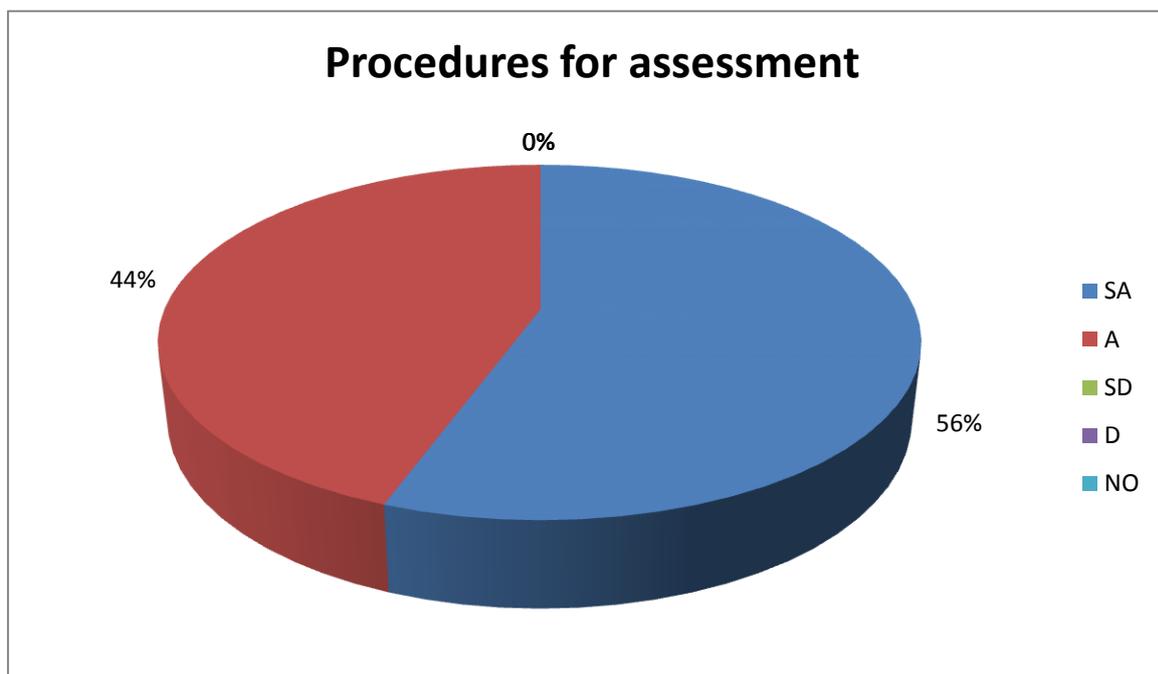
- that person has completed a learnerships relevant to that trade; or
- that person has satisfied the relevant requirement of an apprenticeship in respect to that trade, or
- an accredited trade test centre has certified that the person has acquired sufficient prior learning related that test, or
- that the person has completed any learning programme resulting in an occupational or vocational qualification inclusive of prescribed work experience that entitles such person to undergo the relevant trade test.

Assessment procedures

Generally the educators have a clear understanding on the assessment procedures. The following table shows the figures represented:

	SA	A	SD	D	NO	TOTAL N=9
A	66.7%	33.33%	0%	0%	0%	100%
B	33.33%	66.7%	0%	0%	0%	100%
C	66.7%	33.33%	0%	0%	0%	100%
TOTAL	55.6%	44.44%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Table 5.14: Assessment Procedures



The above results can be shown in the following pie chart.

Figure 5.11: Procedures for Assessment

There seems to be a clear understanding of the procedures used in assessment. Although the researcher expected the responses will be 100% for those who strongly

agreed. However, 55.6% strongly agreed while 44.44% agreed which is a significant finding. This finding was important for this research in that if educators are aware of procedures used in assessments, it will be easier for them to apply the procedures used in RPL. As in the interviews, the respondents indicated they use the portfolio of evidence, tests, assignments and projects which are also used in the assessment of RPL.

The results for principles used in the assessments were as follows:

	SA	A	SD	D	NO	TOTAL N=9
A	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
B	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
C	66.7%	33.33%	0%	0%	0%	100%
TOTAL	88.9%%	11.11%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Table 5.15: Principles Used in Assessment

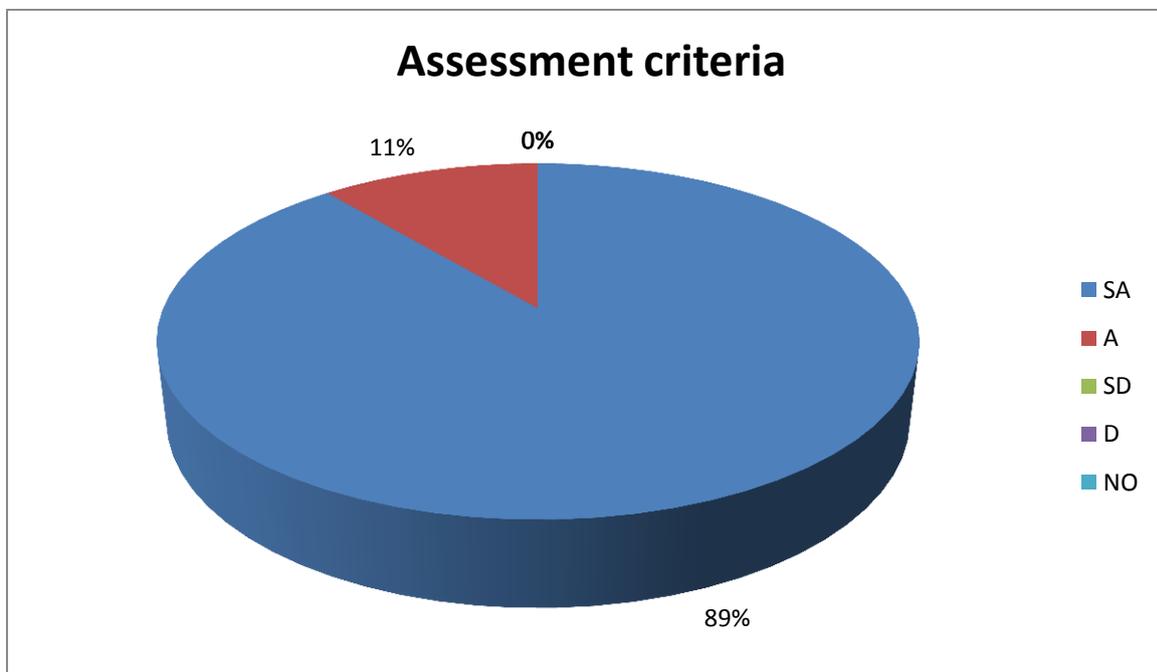


Figure 5.12: Assessment Criteria

89% of the respondents strongly agree that they are aware of the criteria used in assessments and 11% agree. This was a significant finding for implementation of RPL. The results show that all the respondents have more than ten years' experience in the colleges and this finding is also important for implementation of RPL in FET Colleges.

The following emerged as areas that need to be improved before implementation of RPL in FET colleges.

- Qualified service providers to give support to implementation of RPL
- Capacity building
- Registered practitioners
- Availability of resources

According to SAQA 2004, the planning of RPL within institutions and workplace will not be complete if resources are not clearly defined and allocated. The resources include person hours which include the time spent on planning and the time spent on supporting learners. These strategies involves: screening process which can be conducted in groups through self-assessment questionnaires, general orientation and information session which could take place in groups and challenge examinations which can be conducted during normal examination periods.

SAQA RPL criteria and guideline for the implementation of RPL argue that planning for staff development is critical for the success of RPL in institutions and workplace. There is therefore a need for training of facilitators, assessors and moderators. SAQA (2004) indicated that with regard to infrastructure, as far as possible the existing infrastructure should be used.

5.8. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The study investigated the challenges of implementation of RPL in FET colleges. The findings of this study showed that there are indeed various challenges for

implementing RPL. The majority of the challenges are extrinsic while there are also intrinsic challenges which deny learners opportunities to be reskills and upskills. The manner in which RPL was defined showed a lack of understanding and clear knowledge of how it is supposed to be implemented. The information is scattered and lacks cohesion. The findings showed that there are still a small number of educators were not informed about RPL implementation.

Although the research wanted to establish the various challenges that hinder implementation, the research revealed a number of challenges including perception of the lack of zeal from the management and leadership of the colleges which is of paramount importance to the implementation of RPL. The lack of RPL policy and guidelines is an indication that the colleges need support from all the stakeholders. There was also substantial evidence that there is limited communication and proper channels for communication.

Lack of resources was also cited as another hindrance to implementation. A lack of resources hinders the achievement of the intended outcomes of the programmes and hence people and the community tend to undermine learners from the FET colleges.

The success of RPL implementation depends on the educators who have to implement it. This study revealed that the training of educators was only for the NCV programmes and not for RPL per se. Within the same institutions, there were differing views on training. Even if some educators indicated that they were trained, the view is that it was not specifically for RPL. For learners to benefit there should be relevantly trained educators with passion and who specialists in their various subjects are.

RPL depends on quality assurance for assessment and verification. This study revealed that the quality assurance processes in colleges should be taken into consideration. The study revealed that leaking of papers during examinations delay the receipt of learners' results. This challenge indicates that for RPL there should be very strict measures which will help not to undermine the credibility of RPL as an assessment process. The next chapter discusses the research conclusions and recommendations derived from the findings that help promote effective and efficient implementation of RPL, irrespective of the challenges identified by the research.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reported on the findings and interpretation of data gathered from observations, documents, interviews and questionnaires. This chapter presents some conclusions based on the analysis from the previous chapter. The researcher also presents the final recommendations which will address some of the issues presented in chapter 2, 3 and chapter 4, on the challenges for implementation of RPL in public FET colleges. The results of this research could add exemplary value for other FET colleges. However it must be noted that the purpose of the study was not to generalise the findings for all FET colleges in Limpopo with regard to the challenges and assessments offered. However, the findings of this study could be useful if there are concrete solutions that can be derived from them.

6.2. LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

The literature review of this study was crucial, as it provided an extensive theoretical framework into RPL policy. The main drivers of RPL were explored from the NQF, whose objectives according to OECD (2011) report are to create an integrated national framework for learner achievements, facilitate access and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths; enhance the quality of education and training, accelerate the redress of the past unfair discrimination in education, training and development opportunities; and thereby contribute to the full

personal development of the nation at large. The study also looked into the principles, processes and procedures for the implementation of RPL in South Africa and international trends. The possible barriers to implementation of RPL included personal, institutional and service providers. It looked also into the benefits for implementing RPL which could benefit the FET colleges and the society as a whole. The literature review established the following findings:

- that RPL is practiced globally as a transformation tool to redress the imbalances of the past.
- RPL is geared towards skills development, higher education productivity and improved performance and sustainable livelihoods.
- RPL has been designed to encourage lifelong learning and supporting the building of a development state. It has also been found that there are a number of opportunities in the FET colleges for learners and for the communities to encourage workplace-based skills development. There are also a number of benefits for the implementation of RPL crucial to development of an inclusive and responsive vocational education, economic role of a country by accelerating labour mobility and social role by promoting lifelong learning, by providing an alternative entry point to the formal education and training system for adults with life and work experience but little formal education.
- the FET Colleges are seen as delivery sectors for the South African economy as they play a role in skills development by providing learning programmes that are aligned to economic growth and combating unemployment. The FET colleges are also positioned for lifelong learning, skills development and training.
- the FET sector can play a major role in skills revolution to especially respond to the needs and aspirations of the South African community which could be supported by implementation of RPL.
- the FET sector can also play a role in alleviating poverty and reducing the high rate of unemployment.

- there are a number of challenges that delay the implementation of RPL process and in particular the Department of Education leadership, failure to appoint educators, provision of resources, failure to set quality management systems in place and training of educators for implementation.

6.3. FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

6.3.1. Findings from the Challenges of Implementation of RPL

The analysis in chapter 5 established that RPL policy has not been made in FET colleges. It has been noted that the colleges have not yet gone beyond the initial stage of establishing institutional policies. OECD (2009) argue that South Africa have a network of excellent specialists and exhibit scattered signs of very good practice such as delivery models, effective tools and resourcing models. It is over 15 years since the RPL policy has been drafted and the practitioners trained and yet very few institutions have RPL policies in place. This raises a concern that RPL as a tool for transformation is not accorded the place it deserves in societies. This means that the people who this policy was designed for, will not benefit and those who deemed it fit to design, will be discouraged. The purpose for which it was designed becomes futile, especially for the socially excluded members of our society (youth, women and the disabled).

This research found that there are perceptions that the leadership and management of colleges have challenges in committing themselves fully to the RPL programme. There have been some indications by the educators that the challenge for non-implementation is as a result of the management of the colleges. The problem of management is attributed to a lack of communication which indicates that there is lack of dissemination of information and consultation. The research also found that the level of commitment and accountability provided by the management of the

college is not adequate. In one college there was an indication that RPL was implemented but was stopped as the lecturer who was implementing it had retired. Senior managers are responsible for policy change and their responsibility is to ensure that the law is followed as implementation needs direction.

Political commitment by leadership is crucial for policy success and for effective implementation of programmes. Successful implementation critically depends on the consistent support of top political and bureaucratic leadership. Educators indicated that the government discontinues most programmes of its predecessors soon after assuming power and such changes becomes a frustration to educators who have to implement new policy. There are inconsistencies in the deployment of members of parliament. A lack of political will denotes a lack of interest from political leadership.

Although the RPL policy and guidelines are not in place, the research found out that there is a good understanding and knowledge of RPL by the educators. It raises a concern as the educators in FET colleges have a clear knowledge and understanding of RPL as well as the benefits for implementing it. Educators with RPL knowledge are those who have been in the college for more than ten years and are in senior positions. The concern is that they are not influential concerning the decisions taken in the colleges and seem not to be taking part in decision making process of the colleges. This may have a negative impact on RPL as the learners may not have the desire to apply for recognition.

The perception towards RPL implementation is positive, but if awareness and perception do not comply with the national agenda on RPL, it is futile. The knowledge acquired has not made it possible to allow the policy on admission to change. The vision and mission statements and the colleges' prospectus do not give a clear directive on the implementation of RPL as a prerequisite. In some of the prospectus RPL as an option for access to admission is available but is in theory only. The other finding is that there are no initiatives to make people aware of RPL.

However the perception of educators about RPL is positive. This raises a concern that if educators are aware of the policy, it should have been implemented. If not implemented, then their ignorance may affect the society at large.

The current practice in terms of access and admission to learning programmes is grade 9, 10 and 11 for NCV programmes and grade 12 for Nated programmes. This means that learners without minimum requirements are not eligible for admission into the learning programmes. This is a disadvantage for those learners who are unemployed and who do not have any certificates.

There are claims that the colleges do not have resources to implement RPL. The researcher does not fully agree with this claim. There is no implementation taking place. The challenge is not the resources but implementation. However, the success of any policy depends on the expertise of the educators who have been trained to implement. However, training also does not imply implementation.

Funding and technical resources are key factors that contribute to proper implementation of any policy which requires new structures or improvement of the old ones. The three FET Colleges are still using campuses which were used previously, either as high schools or educators' training colleges. These colleges are severely under resourced with poor infrastructure, under qualified and unqualified educators and lack of well-equipped libraries.

Another finding was that there is no RPL unit in FET institutions to facilitate RPL. The RPL unit is important in institutions to give clear directives, guidelines and information on RPL. The unit is seen as a marketing tool for the institutions and without which, implementation of RPL can rarely take place.

There have been controversies about the training of educators; the general consensus is that training has not been done in colleges regarding RPL. The challenge, according to reports, was that those who were trained left the colleges. Although the finding indicates that the educators have not been trained, what was also found was the low level of qualification of educators. This raises a concern that educators in FET colleges only have diplomas as their highest qualification.

Another finding was with regards to the weak partnerships between colleges and industries as a way to support education initiatives. The research found that there are challenges when learners have to get learnerships and placements within industries. Some of the industries require a certain amount of money from the learners which the learners are unable to pay and therefore they forfeit training.

6.3.2. Findings from Assessment Procedures

Assessment can be defined as the process of gathering and weighing evidence in order to determine whether a learner has been able to demonstrate the specified outcome in a unit standard or a qualification registered in the NQF (ETDP SETA 2012). The educators have indicated a number of assessments taking place in colleges such as placement tests which was significant in this study. As much as educators are able to conduct such tests, it is an indication that RPL assessment could also be done, should it be a priority for the colleges. Another significant finding was with regard to the moderation of tests and examinations. The colleges are well established institutions and as such moderators are available to quality assure examinations but the Department of Education has to hire moderators and translators while they can have full time moderators.

This study found that the assessment done in colleges do not affect the implementation of RPL. The placement tests which are administered at the beginning of the year could help in the planning of RPL assessments as placement

tests are done for the purposes of advising learners which programmes they are best suited for. There are also other assessments that are administered during the year in the form of tests, examinations and portfolio of evidence which could be used for RPL candidates. The researcher is aware that training has not taken place, but when it has been done, there is a high possibility that the implementation of RPL will be effective.

6.3.2. Findings from Quality Assurance

The quality assurance in FET colleges is compromised. The concern is the leaking of question papers which is compromising the integrity of the FET examinations and the delay of the learners' results. Another concern is with the part time moderators and translators who are paid by the department. The money could be used for other things needed in the colleges. They could be college based. The research has found that the colleges are not adequately resourced for the implementation of RPL, which include physical and human resources. The key function of the QMS is to provide information that will inform decisions and actions of the system in the future. The key challenge for non-implementation as noted from SAQA (2013) is sustainability of such an RPL system. These include quality assurance, moderation and reviewing. A very high demand is placed on quality of the RPL process, monitoring with regard to assessment of policies, procedures and practices. Quality management system is in three facets which include inter alia policy development, staff development and development of assessment instruments. The credibility of the RPL assessment outcome lies solely on its validity, reliability and fairness (SAQA 2013)

- Quality assurance of RPL is manifested by the establishment of and adherence to policies, standards, processes, and associated practices that ensure that the knowledge, skills and values of learners are recognised and validated so that they can successfully engage in further learning that contributes meaningfully to their educational and/or employment goals,
- In the quality assurance of RPL, standardisation can only take place between similar types of RPL. An effort must be made to allow standardised practices

to grow within sectors, as one approach does not necessarily work across different contexts,

- The concept of quality in RPL needs to include quality indicators such as acceptability to stakeholders, fitness for purpose, transparency, and fair outcomes,
- The measurement of comparability is complex but attempts to find ways of assessing it needs to continue, and
- The development and implementation of quality management process is in keeping with the worldwide trend of a more accountable and reliable education and training system. Therefore, quality assurance cannot be disputed and it is a priority for the well implemented RPL. The success of a policy is in the hands of trained personnel. RPL requires expert educators to help candidates to make sense of the process and navigate their way across these knowledge and language boundaries, all of which comes at a cost of time and resources. Educators can use RPL to support personal and career development of the learners. When learners submit portfolio of evidence, the learner can be able to demonstrate skills and knowledge orally or through writing and reflecting from previous experience.

6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

RPL is seen to be a major transformation tool for education and training and has been seen in South Africa as a key element of policy reforms relevant to the education and training system, and workforce development and policies. The focus was on meeting 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 (Makole 2010) for individuals who have been denied access to recognition or entry to education and training. The South African constitution (1996), section 29, enshrines the right to education, that everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education and to

further education which the state through reasonable measures must make progressively available.

The study recommended that:

The colleges should develop a system for RPL through which it can be responsive to the needs of the labour market and the society at large. The policy benefits all the beneficiaries of the NQF; learners, workers, employers, society and nation. It is therefore recommended that the initiatives to develop policy should be any institution's desire if RPL is to be taken seriously for social inclusion, transformation and redress.

Policy should be made available in colleges as a matter of urgency to close the gap between theory and practice and to meet the needs of the society. SAQA (2013) has made a revised draft policy guideline and principles, the South African education and training system should make an enabling environment for the proper implementation of RPL. FET colleges are centres of transformation and providing equitable access to RPL opportunities to redress imbalances that still exist in our societies and in the labour market. Availability of an RPL policy will be mostly valuable to specifically benefit young people who are currently not in education and training or employment. This is an opportunity for the youth to participate by studying in work oriented programmes (Nzimande 2010).

Lack of proper management hampers workforce planning initiatives. Policy implementation is highly top-down. The researcher therefore recommends that the level of commitment by managers of colleges be increased by providing support to educators and empowering them. Managers are responsible for policy change or implementation and their responsibility is to see that the law is followed as implementation needs direction. The researcher also recommends that the management of FET colleges develop communication strategies as communication is a central component of any change process. The management can also talk to key

individuals who have specific understandings of RPL and have the skills to pioneer implementation. They can support development opportunities around RPL and consider implementing a mentoring programme to give educators support necessary for implementation. The colleges can also use the examples used by other colleges and get experts or facilitators who can be used to raise awareness in colleges. The managers should foster culture of commitment by communicating with stakeholders to find out their interest in policy change and encourage them to accept it.

Government, both the national and provincial Department of Education have not been clear to colleges about implementation of RPL. There is lack of advocacy by government and other stakeholders, such that accessible RPL services are not reaching those most disadvantaged. There should be zeal and passion from the political arena and leadership to establish this. Agreements can be reached for similar practices across the region and learning other best practices globally. It is in the best interest of the country that RPL be implemented without delay, especially for skills shortages in the country and for redress. Negative attitudes towards RPL must be avoided and planning be done in advance.

This research has indicated that there have been delays in the appointment of managers in the colleges which should be done so that goals can be achieved. The appointment of managers in colleges should be the first priority of the department so that the goals of the department could be met without delays. According to SACE (2013) the FET colleges have already lost many experienced educators for various reasons. FET colleges are colleges of choice and salaries should be very attractive with decent conditions of service to be able to retain them. After twenty years of democracy the FET College educators still attend meetings concerning salary negotiations for decent pay and conditions of services. The time spent on salary meetings could be used to retrain and upgrade educators. The political leadership is responsible for such activities and could come up with effective strategies to avoid delays, especially if they know they are to provide decent salaries for educators if they want to retain them. This study also recommends that the appointment or

deployment of the MEC should not affect the implementation process. This study calls for accountability by the National Department of Education for implementation of RPL in FET colleges.

Awareness campaigns should be intensified in all colleges because there is little focus on RPL in FET colleges. FET colleges are institutions of choice for scarce skill development. NSDIII goal number four is to promote growth for public FET college system that is responsive to the needs of sector, local, regional and national skills needs and priorities. Therefore focus campaigns are necessary to promote growth and to minimise the number of students enrolling in colleges without knowing what is expected of them. Besides visiting the secondary schools in their vicinity, the colleges can also make use of all available channels in the area, from political lobbying and public campaigns to digital networks. The schools can install Wi-Fi so that learners can have access to the college's information around them. Colleges will also save time of testing at the beginning of the year when lessons need to be started. The researcher therefore recommends that there should be collaboration between secondary schools and FET colleges. Learners can be taken to colleges on open days to get more information on programmes and in order to be motivated and inspired by college life. Strong collaborative working with stakeholders such as education partners is encouraged and clear benefits be stated. Marketing strategies can also be intensified on Youth Day celebration rallies by youth organisers and politicians. Young people lack information on matters that concern the country.

Funding:

The financial environment can impact on the FET colleges in a negative way as the colleges may not be able to pay for the RPL programmes. However, the MTT RPL (2013) has proposed a three-option funding approach for RPL implementation:

- Wholly state-funded, in this case the state will fund all infrastructure and activities relating to RPL outcomes.

- State and employer funding where the state will fund infrastructure and subsidies to FET colleges for RPL assessment and training for the unemployed.
- State and employer funding with student fees: The employer through SETAs would provide RPL funding for those wishing to embark on RPL.

The funding model used by UNISA for under qualified educators who were working produced results. The colleges could also use the same model where learners could be selected on the basis of what are the needs of the society at that time.

RPL units could be established in colleges. The researcher recommends that there should be efficient and effective support centres in all the FET colleges of Limpopo Province that would be able to bring about changes in the FET colleges. The Department of Education has very attractive transformation and reform policies that are not adhered to. Implementation has always been a struggle in various educational policies of the department.

Knowledge and understanding of RPL is needed to be able to implement. Although research has shown that educators have knowledge and understanding of RPL, if it is not implemented, it is a barrier. The researcher recommends that the colleges should establish comparative tools to ensure that everybody knows about RPL and how to implement it. The researcher also recommends that colleges set up an in house RPL unit that will be able to function as consultants and avoid outsourcing. The college can run workshops to educate and highlight key issues to ensure that all members of staff know what is covered by RPL.

RPL has failed to fulfil its promised potential of encouraging traditionally underrepresented and disadvantaged groups to access formal education and training. The research found that most educators have a diploma as their highest qualifications. The globalisation and technological advances require constant up-skilling and multiskilling for economic growth in the country. This research therefore

recommends that educators be developed to acquire the relevant skills needed by RPL for skills development. Attractive salary packages will attract more experienced educators to stay in colleges. The colleges are centres of development and lifelong learning. This research also recommends that those with knowledge, pioneer implementation process. The college can recognise senior educators and those who are dedicated to support the implementation process.

One challenge indicated in FET colleges is the dire lack of infrastructure, to invest in new projects in order to maintain existing infrastructure. There is no RPL unit in FET institutions to facilitate RPL. The RPL unit is important in institutions to give clear directives, guidelines and information on RPL. The unit is seen as a marketing tool for the institutions and without which implementation of RPL can take place. It gives information, purpose and directions on the processes and procedures for RPL implementation in an institution. The researcher recommends that the government should plan to use public-private partnerships as this will help them to bear the whole cost of building the structures themselves. There should however be accountability on the side of the government as well as transparency.

There is poor collaboration between colleges and industries in such a way that those who have to benefit are not adequately benefiting. The researcher recommends that partnerships be used to increase resources in colleges and provide joint training opportunities for educators by developing skills required for assessing RPL candidates. Partnerships address the industries' research, training needs priorities and facilitates the productive use of knowledge through partnerships projects. Partnerships are essential as it is very innovative and could rapidly respond to the skills shortages of the country. Colleges are best suited to play a unique role in providing education and applied learning that seeks to satisfy the demands for skills employees and the need for knowledgeable members of any society. Effective partnerships with businesses are therefore a priority to sustain RPL programmes.

Best partnerships practices have been developed by League of Innovation in Community Colleges (2010) include the following:

- Curriculum and instructional transformation: Partnerships can cause meaningful changes to traditional curriculum and instructional practices.
- Academic and social support: Partnerships can create sustained academic and career navigation supports for students. These can include forming small learning communities or funding a career centre that provides financial aid and academic and career advising.
- Professional development: Partnerships can provide resources for college faculty and staff to develop skills needed to design new curricular, for remedial, occupational and better track students' progress and employer needs.
- Shared resources for sustainability: Sharing of facilities is seen as an opportunity for collaboration for mutual benefit and this could help those colleges which are in very remote areas where colleges have facilities that are not fully utilised.
- Systemic institutional alignment and improvement: Partnerships can generate institution wide changes in community work.

Admission of learners in colleges can be relaxed to accommodate those learners who did not have formal qualifications such as grade 9 and grade 12 but who have experiential learning. This would make access to colleges easier and this enables more learners to be accommodated in colleges.

6.4.2 Recommended Implementable FET Model

The policy for implementation is not in place nor is the policy workable, which means there is a suggestion to adopt a better policy. This research has established that South Africa has good RPL policy. Therefore, if the policy is classified as outstanding, then the challenge is not the policy but lies with implementation. The researcher therefore concur with Makinde's (2005) argument that there are always assumptions that training of educators has not been done, therefore the option is

capacity building and that resources are scarce to implement policies, including educators who are to implement the policies.

With these in mind, the researcher used Cantor's (1995) ideas on how effective implementation can be incorporated into EL and the following model could be of use. It is a step by step theory of transformation: Need analysis (training needs, needs of the community or industries), identification of programme planners, service implementers, clients, policy makers, check previous research and evaluation, identify the needs of the college, identify the educators who are ready and are enthusiastic.



Figure 6.1: Implementation of Recommended Model

Step 1: Determine what educators know

A research should be established what educators know in relation to the implementation of RPL

Step 2: Identify educators who have been trained

For effective implementation of RPL model, it should be known who attended training, for how long and what content was covered.

Step 3 Identify the training needs

It is crucial for FET colleges to identify the training needs which will reveal the areas and level of lack by educators in relation to RPL implementation of RPL.

Step 4 Identify the solution

The identification of areas and level of lack should bring into picture what is required to close the gap of knowledge and skills in the implantation of RPL.

Step 5 Establish the support system

Any intervention strategy requires support in the form of manpower and financial and physical resources. This recommended RPL implementation model requires expert support from circuit and national department as well as resources as resources for its successful implementation.

Step 6: In-service training

In-service training should serve as intervention strategy to close a gap which prevents a proper implementation of RPL in FET colleges. Training should focus on

transfer of knowledge and skills as well as inculcation of required attitudes and values for proper implementation of RPL in FET colleges.

6.5. FURTHER RESEARCH

Implementation of RPL is an on-going debate in the Department of Education and Training and has attracted members of society who are the beneficiaries of the education and training system. The scope of this study concentrated on the challenges for implementing RPL in public FET colleges. The study has, however, found that there are indeed various challenges that are hampering the process of RPL implementation. Therefore further research could investigate the quality assurance trends in TVET colleges so that policies could be reviewed so that there could be stability in assessment practices and lastly investigations of intervention strategies that are needed from industries to help college learners to get internship and learnerships as there are various challenges presently.

6.6. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter addressed conclusions from the study as well as recommendations emanating from the study. The study found out that there is no implementation of RPL in public further education and training institutions. Various challenges were mentioned such as a quality management system which is not in place to facilitate RPL. The study therefore recommended implementation as RPL is seen as a major transformation policy in the Department of Education and Training for FET colleges. Presently it is the only policy available to encourage life-long learning. With the

advancement of technology globally, up-skilling and reskilling are of utmost importance to everyone in South African society. People move from one job to another due to promotions and many other reasons. Implementation of RPL, therefore, cannot be ignored at this stage.

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LIST OF ANNEXURES

APPENDIX A: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTER

Email address: tdisego@yahoo.com

ditshego@magicmail.co.za

Cell Numbers: 078 446 9459

Persal Number: 80451390

1483 Zone 4

SESHEGO

0699

1 February 2012

The HOD

Department of Education Limpopo

The Research Department

Polokwane

0700

Dear Sir

RESEARCH IN FET COLLEGES

I am a PhD student at the University of Limpopo, in the department of Professional Studies. I am currently at the stage of data collection and request permission to conduct such studies in the province FET Colleges.

The title is: Recognition of Prior Learning in public Further Education and Training in Limpopo Province. The aim and objectives are to:

- Investigate the challenges affecting implementation
- Establishing whether the assessment used affect implementation
- Establish whether quality assurance principles and procedures affect the implementation
- Develop a model that will be used to implement RPL to positively contribute toward the effective and efficient implementation.

The significance of the research is to contribute positively towards the effective and efficient implementation of RPL in FET colleges. The study may assist educators, RPL coordinators, policy makers, service providers, government institutions and businesses to do urgently needed job oriented training for the clients without having to fulfil all the requirements for a qualification. The study may also be valuable to researchers to make innovations for further studies in Higher Education and FET institutions in areas of RPL and curriculum development. I think the job seekers and all excluded people in the society with valuable skills, their experience could be recognised and validated.

Thanking you in advance

Thobejane DV (Ms)

APPENDIX B: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Enquires: Mnisi V Telephone: 015 290 7680 Fax: 015 290 9416
1483 Zone 4
Seshego
0699
Tel: 084 702 2946

Dear Sir/Madam

Application for Permission to Conduct Research in FET Colleges

1. The above matter refers:
2. The Limpopo Department of education acknowledges receipt of your letter.
3. We therefore grant you a permission to conduct research on the Recognition of prior learning in public FET Colleges in Limpopo Province.
4. After the completion of the study, we will appreciate a copy of your research which will serve as a resource for the Department

Regards,

MJ Thamaga
Head of Department

2012/02/14
Date

1

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!

APPENDIX C: APPLICATION FOR LEAVE FOR DATA COLLECTION

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO Turfloop Campus

Research Development and Administration



Private Bag X1106
SOVENGA
0727
SOUTH AFRICA

Tel.: (015) 268 3564/2401
Fax: (015) 268 2306
E-mail: Jesika.Singh@ul.ac.za

Tuesday, September 27, 2011

TO: EMPLOYER OF MRS DV THOBEJANE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONFIRMATION OF STUDENT DV THOBEJANE'S (STU.NO. 5900072) APPLICATION FOR LEAVE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR PHD

Please be informed that the above student is registered for a PhD at the above university and is at the data collection stage of her research. This requires her to collect data from FET Colleges across the province of Limpopo. In order to do this, she would require leave from her present employment. It would be appreciated if she could be granted leave from her duties for the month of February 2012 to collect data.

She is required to make all the necessary arrangements with her employer in this regard before commencement of data collection. I trust this letter serves as confirmation that she will indeed be collecting data.

Please direct further queries to the contact numbers above.

Yours faithfully

Dr. RJ Singh

Research Developer: Research Support and Administration Department
Supervisor of Mrs DV Thobejane

Finding Solutions for Africa



APPENDIX D: CONDUCTING RESEARCH FORM

Title of Thesis: **INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHALLENGES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.**

Researcher's Name: Thobejane D.V.
Student Number: 5900072
Researcher's Position: Doctor of Philosophy
Department: Curriculum and Professional Studies
Address: University of Limpopo, P/Bag 1106, SOVENGA
Contact Details: 078 446 9459
Email: tdisego@yahoo.com

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This form serves to seek for your assistance in the above mentioned research task to be conducted in public FET Colleges in fulfilment of the requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy (Curriculum and Professional Studies).

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

This is to confirm that (organisation) ----- offer participants in the study. We understand that our name will only be published following our permission.

Signature of Representative

Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX E: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

My name is Disego Vincentia Thobejane. I am a PhD student in the faculty of School of Education working with my faculty advisor, Professor Jesika Singh in the Department of Languages. I would like you to take part in my research study which concerns RPL in FET Colleges.

If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct an interview with you at a time and location of your choice. The interview will involve questions about challenges for implementing RPL, assessment and quality assurance and should last about an hour. With your permission I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request.

It is hoped that the research will benefit the colleges, the society, policy makers and researchers and businesses in making meaningful decisions and providing insights that help the government in decisions in providing the most needed services to the clients.

Your data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If the results of this research are published, individual names and any other identifiable information will not be used. Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any question and are free to stop taking part at any time.

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at 078 446 9459 or tdisego@yahoo.com.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study please contact the University of Limpopo Research Committee at 015 268 2401

APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM

I ----- agree to participate in the research titled “Investigation into the challenges for implementation of Prior Learning in Further Education and Training, Limpopo Province”. I understand the purpose of the study, the risks, benefits and the inconveniences that this research project entails.

I understand that I am not obliged to participate in this research, that I am free not to answer certain questions and that I have the right to withdraw from this research at any time.

I understand that my confidentiality will be maintained during the research project and if I have further questions I could refer them to the research committee of Limpopo University.

I understand that with respect to publication, communication and dissemination my participation will remain anonymous.

I have carefully studied the above and understand that my participation is voluntary and freely consent to participate in this research.

Participant’s Name (Optional)

Participant’s Signature Date

APPENDIX G: QUESTIONNAIRE

CONFIDENTIAL: DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME

MAKE A **CROSS** OR A **TICK**

A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION					
1. Are you?	Male	Female			
2. Are you?	White	Black	Coloured	Indian	Other
3. What is your position in the college?	Lecturer	Advisor	Coordinator	Facilitator	Other
4. Highest Qualifications	Grade 12	Diploma	Degree	Senior degree	Other
5. In which college are you	Urban	Rural	Semi Urban		
6. Experience in FET	0-5	6-15	16-25	25-30	31+

FOR EACH QUESTION, UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED, PLEASE TICK OR CROSS IN THE NUMBER FOR THE ONE RESPONSE WHICH BEST REFLECTS YOUR OPINION.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Strongly disagree 4. Disagree. 5. No opinion

B.WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR IMPLEMENTING RPL	1	2	3	4	5
B1. MANAGEMENT ISSUES					
7. There is an RPL policy in the college.					

8. The leadership of the college has not communicated to the educators.					
9. The management of the college do not have a clear knowledge of RPL.					
10. The academic staffs do not have knowledge and understanding of RPL.					
11. You believe it is important to implement RPL in colleges.					
12. Admission of learners to college need to be attended to.					
B2. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT					
13. Quality Management systems are in place					
14. The equipment for practical work is sufficient					
15. The colleges receives adequate funding for all the programmes					
16. There are shortages of educators in the college					
B3. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP					
17. There are clear communication channels in the college					
18. People are able to raise their concerns without intimidation					
19. People are able to share ideas on curriculum development					
B4. PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDUSTRIES					
20. There is a good relationship between the colleges and the industries					
21. Learners are able to be placed for learnerships and internships					
B5. LEARNERS CHALLENGES					
22. Registrations of learners for programmes is done on time					
23. Do you feel comfortable working with newly					

admitted learners?					
24. Do you feel comfortable to discuss with learners their experiences					
25. There is adequate support from all stakeholders including industries surrounding the college.					
26. All educators in the college are supportive to the learners in the RPL programmes.					
B. ASSESSMENT					
27. There is a policy document on assessment that you are familiar with.					
28. Assessment takes place against the agreed unit standards and qualifications.					
29. The procedures and principles for RPL assessment are followed as indicated in the policy.					
30. The learners are assessed on their previous knowledge and skills for an access to a qualification.					
31. There are challenges with regard to assessment of learners for the learning programmes.					
32. The assessors are not competent in assessing the previous skills and knowledge of the learners.					
33. The learners are competent and eager to be supported.					
C. QUALITY ASSURANCE					
34. The assessments are moderated and evaluated by quality assurance bodies.					
35. The criteria used for assessing the learners are effective and efficient for quality purposes.					
36. The learners' results are released on time.					

37. What are the factors you think could contribute to the successful implementation of RPL?

38. Suggest any support mechanisms that can be put in place for implementation of RPL in FET colleges.

39. Give any comment or recommendation of any kind that will assist in RPL implementation in FET colleges.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

ALL YOUR ANSWERS ARE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

A. Implementation

1. Do you have the Recognition of Prior Learning policy document?
2. Are you familiar with the policy document?
3. What are the things that are very important to you in the policy?
4. Do you feel obliged to implement the policy in your campus?
5. What is your personal stand on RPL?
6. RPL is a government policy specifically for equity, redress and access into the learning programmes. What are the challenges for not implementing it?
7. FET Colleges were created as centres for skills development and as colleges of first choice with regard to transformation and access opportunities for the socially excluded members of the society. Please share your views?

B. RPL Knowledge and Understanding

1. How can you personally define RPL?
2. How did you know about RPL?
3. According to your knowledge, are there benefits of RPL?
4. Do you think it should be implemented?
5. Do you have knowledge of any barrier for lack of implementation in your campus?
6. Are there people you know of in the college who have been trained for RPL?

C. Awareness and Perception

1. Do you have a specific criterion that you use to admit learners into the learning?

Programme?

2. In your own view do you think the criterion is fair if you take into cognisance the issue of equity and access?

3. You have learners in who were working before enrolling into the programmes and those who are working. Can you share your experiences?

D. Assessment

1. What highest qualifications have you obtained?

2. How long have you been in this college?

3. What type of training have you received in preparation for this programme?

4. In your own view, was the training adequate and effective?

4. According to your knowledge what do you understand by assessment?

5. What role do you play in assessment of activities?

6. Do you have access to policies in the campus?

7. Which assessment methods are you using for crediting learners for qualification for their learning programmes?

8. Do you think they are fair in all the programmes?

9. Can you share your views on what could be improved in the assessment of learning programmes.

E. Quality Assurance

1. How do you ensure there is quality on assessment of programmes?

2. Who are your quality assurers?

3. According to your knowledge is quality assurance in the colleges maintained or compromised?

3. What could be the reasons for leaking of question papers and delay of the learner's results?

4. What are those things in quality assurance you would like to change?

F. Improvement

1. Could you suggest strategies and support mechanisms for implementation of RPL.

2. What positive contributions can you make with regard to effective and efficient implementation of RPL in colleges?

3. What would the college do to improve the quality of assessment of the learning programmes?

4. What are the factors you think could contribute to the successful implementation of

RPL?

5. Give any comment or recommendation of any kind that will assist in RPL implementation in FET colleges.

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEARNERS

1. In which grade are you?
2. How long have you been in this college?
3. Which highest educational qualifications have you obtained?
4. How have you been admitted in the college?
5. How have you learnt about the programmes in the college?
6. What is your previous activity?
7. In which faculty are you admitted?
8. Are you registered for the programme you wanted?
9. Except what you are studying, do you have any other skills or knowledge of any programme?
10. Have you ever heard of Recognition of Prior Learning?
11. Are you assessed in all the learning programmes?
12. Are you familiar with the assessment programmes?
13. What guidance and support do you get from the college?
14. Which types of assessment methods are you familiar with?
15. Can you share your views with types of improvement you feel could be made for implementation of RPL in the college?