A PRACTICE FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES AT THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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Date : November 2021

Declaration

This is to certify that the work is entirely my own and not of any other person, unless explicitly acknowledged (including citation of published and unpublished sources). The work has not previously been submitted in any form to the Durban University of Technology or to any other institution for assessment or for any other purpose.

10 November 2021

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Abstract

Background

The South African Department of Education promulgated the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a transformation strategy. However, a gap has been identified between the promise, the rhetoric of RPL and reality. An inconsistency in RPL assessments is also a problem as programmes are assessed differently.

Aim

The aim of this study was to explore and review the extent of RPL in the Faculty of Health Sciences and ultimately, develop a practice framework to enhance the RPL implementation.

Methodology

This study employed a multistage mixed method approach, using a case study framework. The first stage utilized the collection of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. The second stage utilized quantitative data collection through candidate's portfolios of evidence, checking availability of documents required as evidence of prior experiential learning and competencies. The third stage also utilized the collection of quantitative data through reviewing the selection criteria, learner profiling and approval process, using the flow chart for RPL application and approval process. At each stage, the researcher drew upon strengths in the data collected which provided innovative approaches for addressing contemporary issues and ultimately achieving the goal of developing a theoretical model to enhance RPL implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology.

Findings

The findings in this study revealed that RPL selection criteria in the Faculty of Health Sciences were in place. However, the findings further revealed that only one department had adequate profiling, support and mentor of candidates before

development of portfolios of evidence. In all other departments, there was no evidence of learner profiling.

Conclusion

The Faculty of Health Sciences needs to put strategies in place to enhance the implementation of RPL. Several factors that influenced the implementation of RPL were identified, thus highlighting the need to develop a tailored practice framework for the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT. The findings of the study, in relation to its objectives, highlight the focus areas for developing a tailored practice framework.

Key words: Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Durban University of Technology, Lifelong learning, Faculty of Health Sciences, Recognition of Prior Learning and Profiling.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all academics and nurse educators in recognition of their tireless sacrifice and commitment towards quality teaching and learning.

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- My late father, Sikhosiphi and my late mother, Ntombi for instilling in me the principles of hard work and determination.
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Glossary of terms

Adult learner

Kapur (2019: 5) describes adult learners as adults participating in adult learning opportunities. Adult learners are more mature and understanding compared to youth. Adult learners have various characteristics: they take control over their learning, draw upon their experiences as resources, pragmatic in learning and more diverse but resistant to change. Adults are categorised into three age groups namely early adulthood, 18-30 years, middle age, 30-55 and later maturity, 55 and above (Kapur 2019: 5).

Assessor

According to SAQA (2012: 4), an assessor is one who conducts high-quality internal and external assessment for specific qualifications, part-qualifications or professional designations. Appropriately qualified lectures, teachers, educators, trainers, examiners, moderators, chief makers, makers, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) specialists, and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) officials are all examples of assessors.

Recognition of Prior Learning

The South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, Act No. 67 of 2008 describes RPL as a process by which individuals who had gained skills and knowledge through informal, non-formal or experiential learning can be assessed, recognized and awarded credits for such learning if it meets the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework Act (South Africa. National Qualifications Framework Act No. 67 of 2008: 46).

Quality assurance

Vroeijenstijn (1995: 56) describes quality assurance as systemic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and quality improvement. One of the tools of quality care is quality assessment.

Outcomes

According to SAQA (2013: 23), outcomes means the contextually demonstrated end-product of specific learning processes which include knowledge, skills and values. Outcomes can also be generic in that they could apply across many fields of learning. Generic outcomes include aspects such as ability to solve problems or understand the world as a set of inter-related systems.

Programme

A programme is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification (SAQA 2014: 56).

Profiling

The term profiling is used differently from portfolio construction to mean the initial interviewing of candidates by the designated personnel (HOD or Programme Coordinator) for that specific programme /qualification the RPL candidate is being assessed for. The key aspect during this stage is to establish the candidate's goals, knowledge of RPL and general expectations (SAQA 2014: 59).

Recognition of Prior Learning assessor

In this study, the RPL assessor is a person delegated by the head of department to handle RPL applications in an academic department.

List of acronyms

Acronym	Full word/sentence
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
BNCQF	Botswana National Credit and Qualification Framework
CAEL	Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
CELT	Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DUT	Durban University of Technology
FOHS	Faculty of Health Sciences
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualification Sub-Framework
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework
ICN	International Council of Nurses
ILO	International Labour Organization
KQF	Kenyan Qualification Framework
LLL	Life-Long Learning
MoHEST	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology
NLRD	National Learners Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NAMCOL	Namibian College of Open Learning
ODL	Open Distance Learning
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SANC	South African Nursing Council
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SQA	Seychelles Qualifications Authority
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The South African Higher Education White Paper for Post School Education explicitly states that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) remains a key approach to redress the past injustices and to recognise competencies gained through practical workplace learning, community activities and experience (South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET] 2013: 7). Khanyile (2005: 79) points out that RPL remains one of the central and critical pillars of the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for the development of an equitable education and the transformation of the education and training system of the country.

The RPL was promulgated as a transformation strategy and is governed by the following national policy guidelines: (a) National Standards Board No. 18787 (March 1998): (b) The RPL in the context of the South African National Qualifications Framework (12 June 2002) and (c) Criteria and Guidelines for the Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (SAQA 2014: 25). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organizations (UNESCO) Guidelines states that qualification systems in many societies still focus on formal learning in education institutions, resulting in a large part of the individual's learning not recognized, and many individual's motivation and confidence to continue learning not well promoted (UNESCO 2012: 62). Consequently, the UNESCO argues that there is underutilization of human talents and resource in societies (UNESCO Guidelines 2012: 63).

1.1.1 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in Netherlands

Brink (2012: 32) assert that recognition of prior learning in Netherlands is an umbrella term for any kind of learning outcomes gained in various learning settings. Recognition of prior learning refers to the process of identifying, assessing and recognising any learning results that were acquired by individuals in different learning contexts outside formal education and training systems. Its core idea is to promote, to make visible and to make full use of the entire scope of learning results and (work) experience gained by an individual over the lifespan and irrespective of where, when and how the learning took place. Various methods can be adopted in the assessment of learning outcomes, including summative testing and examinations and evidence-based

methods such as portfolios, observations, simulations or work practices (Brink 2012: 32).

According to Brink (2012: 35) the APL Knowledge Centre, established by the government, supports this process. The RPL procedures are used to formally recognize and accredit competences developed through formal, informal and non-formal learning. The government also started a national campaign (TV, radio, internet) promoting RPL. The RPL-procedures in the Netherlands are not nationally established, but are developed 'bottom up', by providers of RPL-procedures. These providers are educational institutions (both governments funded and private) and specialized RPL-companies. In the Netherlands there is an open market for RPL. In November 2006 a national quality code for RPL was established and agreed on by all stakeholders. The providers of RPL-procedures are assessed according to the national quality code for RPL, in order to receive accreditation for their RPL-procedures. Accreditation (by the national Knowledge Centre on RPL) is required to be registered in the national RPL-register. Registration is needed in order to allow the clients to benefit from the tax measures the government provides for RPL. Only RPL-procedures based on national learning outcomes (secondary vocational education and higher education) can receive accreditation and registration (Brink 2012: 33).

In Netherlands, the key issue, as in any assessment, is that RPL assessment is authentic, valid, transparent and reliable to ensure the quality and validity of the system. Furthermore, upgrade qualification level of labour force, develop sustainable infrastructure for LLL, stimulate and support concrete activities with specific targets for RPL training and education. These are seen as mechanisms to promote quality assurance in Netherlands. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an essential element of the lifelong learning policy of the Netherlands. The Dutch government is stimulating and subsidizing the development of a national infrastructure for RPL according to the national quality code for RPL, in order to receive accreditation for their RPL-procedures. Accreditation (by the national Knowledge Centre on RPL) is required to be registered in the national RPL register. Registration is needed in order to allow the clients to benefit from the tax measures the government provides for RPL. Only RPL procedures based on national learning outcomes (secondary vocational education and higher education) can receive accreditation and registration (Brink 2012: 35).

1.1.2 The International Council of Nurses (ICN)

The International Council of Nurses Policy Brief (ICN) (2021: 5) recognized the fact that nursing workforce is the backbone of all health systems, therefore investing in the nursing workforce and ensuring firm foundations for nursing education are essential steps. ICN (2021: 5) policy brief suggested that Governments should support and invest in nursing education. Investing in nursing education is no longer an option, but a necessary step to match national health needs with the health systems that needed policies supporting nursing practice to further bolstering the nursing workforce. The ICN (2021: 5) policy brief also highlighted that innovative strategies and alternative routes to access higher education including recognition of prior learning (RPL) and ongoing CPD is essential for nurses to meet the demands of population health needs (ICN 2021: 5).

The ICN (2021: 6) put forward the notion that Governments, institutions of higher learning and employers must increase the availability of RPL and CPD opportunities through sufficient funding and policies that support accessibility to this essential learning. To expand and strengthen the quality of nursing education including RPL, countries should apply financing levers to increase the diversity of the student pool and the scholarship support for students, improve the faculty pool and their competencies, increase the number of seats in nursing programmes, implementing RPL and address limitations in clinical training/learning. Investing in the nursing workforce and ensuring firm foundations for nursing education and jobs are essential steps for post COVID-19 recovery, and to prepare for any future pandemics (ICN 2021: 6).

The ICN (2021: 6) innovative approaches to nursing education included the use of new technologies like e-learning, e-assessments and digital/e-portfolios of evidence to allow distance learning, due to restrictions resulting from the pandemics such as COVID-19.

1.1.3 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in Scotland

Whitaker and Whitaker (2006: 301-302) put forward the notion that Scotland introduced RPL in 1987 which was characterized by networking and collaborative development, links with further education, emphasising work-based learning, partnership with employers and professional bodies. A key element of Higher Education was to meet the needs of the community's Life Long Learning (LLL) paths.

1.1.4 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in France

According to Feutrie (2000: 155-158), in France, great emphasis is placed on the candidate's professional experience. The approach is deductive, based on evidence submitted by the candidate. The emphasis is placed on the complexity of the candidate's knowledge and the verification of the candidate's potential. University modules are officially awarded without the candidate having passed the required examinations. Furthermore, Feutrie (2000: 157) states that it is not the formal knowledge of the candidate which is assessed, but rather the ability to prove the achievement of a level of intellectual development corresponding to that required. This situation calls for diverse approaches to assessment, and the involvement of the candidate in the rules of the game result in the possible intrusion on teachers' prerogatives and a contractual process of identification. It has led to uneasiness on the part of teachers as a result of trying to match up traditional curriculum with experiential knowledge (Feutrie 2000: 110 cited in Smith 2003: 33).

1.1.5 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in South Korea

Lee (2010: 32) points out that the Republic of Korea's defines recognition of prior learning (RPL) as the phenomenon that is all about the skills and knowledge individuals collect through work and life experiences and then transferring them to current training course requirements. Lee (2010: 32) explains that the Republic of Korea demand for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) through its Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS) and Lifelong Learning Account System (LLAS), this derives from socio-economic developments such as demographic changes and the emerging knowledge-based economy (Lee 2010: 35). In this respect, the Republic of Korea is attempting to move away from an overly examination and instructor-based pedagogy to one which considers experiential learning.

Lee (2010: 36) assert that the Republic of Korea has one of the highest rates of progression from secondary school to tertiary and higher education. It also has a high ranking of student performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results. Nevertheless, despite such a highly educated young population, the country is facing several challenges: (a) it has one of the highest youth unemployment rates among the OECD Member States the schism between the labour market and higher education creates societal instability, (b) the link between industry and the higher education sector is weak in terms of the level of workforce training, (c) the skills mismatch forces young people to seek more education, while employers have to invest in more on-the-job training for new recruits, (d) academic degrees are currently not linked to

the national qualifications standards and (e) the academic learning culture of higher education does not promote the full appreciation and value of recognizing non-formal and informal outcomes through the assessment of prior learning (Lee 2010: 39).

1.1.6 Adult Learner

Adult learners, the major group of participants in the RPL process, have been further disadvantaged despite the opportunity to present their prior learning for assessment and potential recognition. According to Wihak and Bourassa (2013: 120), many South African adult learners, due to discrimination and associated limited formal education, tend to experience difficulties with academic literacy because they were denied full access to formal education. They also have difficulty in communicating their prior experiential learning because of cultural inhibitions which prevents them from making explicit statements of personal accomplishments.

Berglund (2012: 76) points out that within the repertoire of assessment processes, there are challenges of examinations and portfolio assessments. Both require instructors to clearly set out knowledge and skills required and learning objectives of each course or programme and identify some reliable way of evaluating whether learners have met these objectives. Berglund (2012: 76) further states that, at universities, faculty resistance to this requirement of RPL assessment process has been a persistent barrier.

The UNESCO Guidelines emphasize that there should be an integration of living and learning in a life-wide context across family and community settings, work and leisure throughout an individual's life (UNESCO 2012: 58-61). These guidelines further suggest that it is necessary for individuals to acquire and adapt knowledge, competencies, abilities, attitudes and skills, through all forms of learning to cope with various challenges.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Harris and Wihak (2017: 698-700) state that access to higher education through RPL is limited in South Africa. Therefore, RPL has failed to deliver on its promise. In this demise, there is paucity of information regarding its implementation to access higher education for the applicants. This current study seeks to explore and audit the extent of RPL implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FOHS) and ultimately, develop a practice framework to enhance the RPL implementation in the FOHS at DUT.

RPL candidates are viewed as adults who bring accumulated life experiences with them to their learning encounters (SAQA: 2014). Adults enter educational world with an abundance of experience that varies from individual to individual. RPL has been a contested discourse and practice for more than a decade, with numerous opportunities and challenges. The pedagogic nature of RPL has been questioned. Ralphs' (2012: 90) review of the literature showed that the model of RPL practice that had been used over time viewed RPL primarily as an assessment practice. Although assessment is an essential feature of all forms of RPL practice, Cooper *et al*. (2017: 205) assert that RPL should rather be seen as a specialised form of pedagogy which provides tools to navigate knowledge boundaries in and across different learning contexts, within a system characterised by differentiation rather than sameness.

A gap has been identified between the premise, the rhetoric of RPL and reality. An inconsistency in RPL assessments is also a problem as programmes are assessed differently (Harris and Wihak 2017: 699-704). In some programmes, assessment of experiential knowledge is valuable in enabling candidates to contextualise, while in other programmes, experiential knowledge is not critical for assessments as long as the candidate can think and have the intellectual ability to do so.

The study by Janakk (2011: 138) revealed that RPL lacks support from the academic staff and that RPL practitioners are not clear about the functions and roles of RPL and not keen to promote RPL among their students. Furthermore, Bergan (2008: 38) states that the main challenge throughout the world is the lack of awareness of RPL processes and procedures. The results of this study by Bergan (2008: 38) also indicate that RPL practitioners contend the lack of interaction between the RPL practitioners in departments and the management. As RPL is seen as a tool to promote social transformation and emancipation of marginalized students, especially those who were unable to get access to higher education qualifications, there is a great need for implementation enhancement. The process that needs to be done is to explore competences of RPL practitioners, perceptions of RPL assessors and RPL moderators with regard to RPL implementation, training programmes available for RPL practitioners, review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile in the FOHS. Furthermore, develop a practice framework to guide and enhance access to higher education through pragmatic and holistic implementation of RPL policy.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to explore and audit the extent of RPL implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FOHS) and ultimately, develop a practice framework to enhance the RPL implementation in the FOHS at a selected university of technology.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study objectives were to:

- Review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile in the FOHS.
- Explore the competences of RPL practitioners in the FOHS.
- Explore the perceptions of RPL assessors and RPL moderators with regard to RPL implementation.
- Explore training programmes available for RPL practitioners in the FOHS.
- Develop a practice framework to guide and enhance access to higher education through pragmatic and holistic implementation of RPL policy.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for this study, according to the outlined objectives were:

- How does the RPL election criteria correlate with the learner profile in the FOHS?
- What are the competences of RPL practitioners in the FOHS?
- What are the perceptions of RPL assessors and RPL moderators with regard to RPL implementation?
- What are the training programmes available for RPL practitioners in the FOHS?
- How can the RPL policy be implemented efficiently and effectively to enhance access to higher education in the FOHS?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

RPL candidates are viewed as adults who bring accumulated life experiences with them to their learning encounters. Adults enter education events with an abundance of experience that varies from individual to individual. Wynne (2013: 63) argues that, if learning is made accessible to all, it is necessary to recognise formal and informal learning, through RPL, to facilitate access to higher education for those who did not have the opportunity to attain higher qualifications. The White Paper for Post School Education and Training (South Africa. Department of Higher Education & Training 2013: 35) states that RPL

remains the key approach to redressing past injustices and recognizing competencies gained through practical workplace learning and experience. The literature reviewed indicates that RPL enhances students' perceptions and understanding of learning as a lifelong process. The development of the RPL practice framework, based on the findings of this study, will enhance awareness of and implementation of RPL assessment and also improve the efficiency and integrity of RPL implementation in the FOHS at DUT. It is hoped that this theoretical framework will facilitate access to higher education, particularly in the FOHS and enhance the lives of those educationally marginalised. The results of this study might have an impact in the following areas:

1.6.1 Significance in Nursing Education

The results of this study might have a positively impact to Nursing Education by enhancing students' perceptions and understanding of learning as a lifelong process. Contribute as a tool to promote social transformation and emancipation of marginalized students denied access to nursing education. Furthermore, provide access opportunities to the nursing profession.

1.6.2 Significance in Nursing Practice

The results of this study might unlock progression opportunities to those within the nursing profession. Increase formal recognition of expertise and skills nurses have acquired from their experiences within the healthcare system. Furthermore, develop competencies by facilitating access to specialised nursing education and training programmes**.**

1.6.3 Significance in the Curriculum Development

The results of this study might contribute positively to the curriculum development as it provides guidance on RPL training standards, use of appropriate training materials that includes experiential knowledge and quality assessments, standards for RPL professionals to ensure effective and quality training.

1.6.4 Significance for Policy Development

The results of this study might contribute to useful insights into the RPL policy developers. Benchmarking of guidelines and the procedures including a clear understanding of the RPL application and approval process so that applicants gain access to nursing education through a credible RPL system. Policy developers should emphasis on adequate support, guidance, ongoing

monitoring and evaluation, audits and review of the RPL implementation. Promote standardization of RPL processes and updating of policies.

This study, is one of the few case studies to be conducted in the FOHS, will provide baseline data for further research in RPL.

1.7 THESIS STRUCTURE

An outline of the structure of the dissertation is presented below:

CHAPTER 1: In this chapter, an overview of the study, the background to the study in terms of its context, the problem statement, the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions and the significance of the study are presented.

CHAPTER 2: The literature related to the phenomenon in the study is reviewed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3: The theoretical framework, which uses a mixed methods design to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, is presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: In this chapter the research methodology, research paradigm, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations are presented.

CHAPTER 5: In this chapter, the findings based on the interviews are presented.

CHAPTER 6: The findings of the review of portfolios of evidence are presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7: In this chapter, the RPL application and approval process audit is presented.

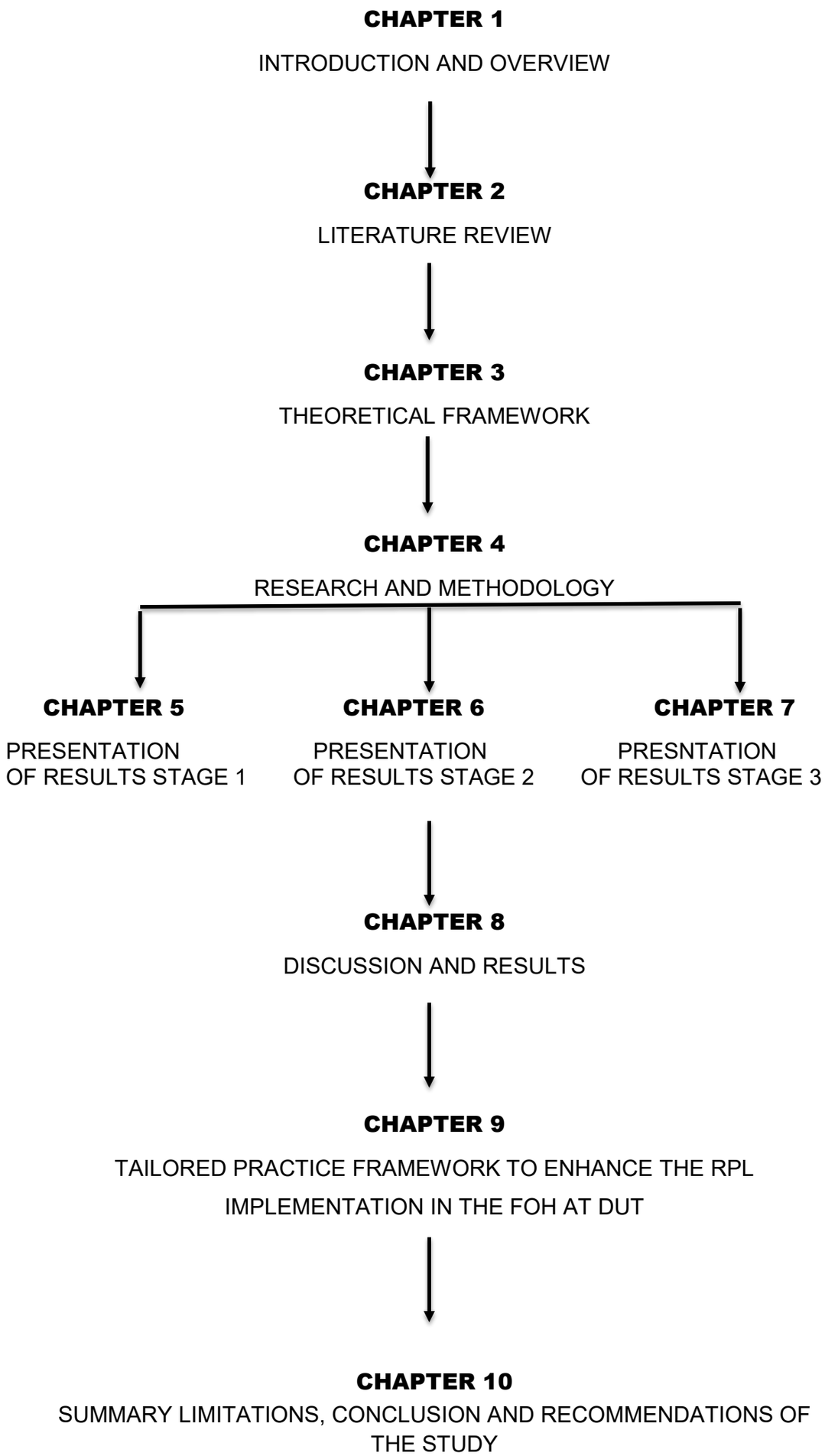
CHAPTER 8: The discussion of findings of the study is presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 9: The practice framework of the implementation of RPL is presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 10: This is the concluding chapter, where the limitations, conclusions and recommendations of the study are presented.

The Table below presents the overview of this Thesis:

Table1.1: The Overview of the Thesis



1.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, the introduction and background to the study the problem statement, the aim, objectives, and research questions of the study, the significance of the study and the structure of the thesis were presented. The next chapter discusses reviewed literature pertaining to the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Burns and Grove (2007: 67), a literature review provides an analytical framework that serves as the foundation for the research study. Literature review helps to determine whether the topic is worth studying, and it provides insight into ways in which the researcher can limit the scope to a needed area of inquiry. The review of literature in research directs the development and implementation of a study and identifies gaps. Relevant literature comprises only those sources that are relevant to, or highly important in providing the in-depth knowledge required to study a selected problem (Burns and Grove 2010: 98-100). The literature review also guides the researcher in identifying not only the methodological techniques used to study similar phenomena, but also to identify contradictory findings and identify the gaps. The literature on RPL, integration of policies and quality assurance processes and its implementation globally, is reviewed for the purpose of informing the development of the practice framework that will promote integrity in the implementation of RPL in the FOHS at DUT. A variety of literature sources, relevant to the field of this study were reviewed to develop an understanding of the topic of the current study.

2.2 PROCESS OF REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

Strauss and Corbin (1990: 50) argue that a selected literature review is conducted so that the researcher approaches the research situation with some technical background on the topic. This statement is supported by Collins (2011: 47) who also states that the researcher is equipped with some background knowledge of the subject. Burns and Grove (2007: 76) contend that a literature review is only a means of making the researcher aware of what studies have been conducted and that the information from these studies should not be used for direct data collection or theory development.

The literature search was conducted manually as well as on computer. Catalogue indexes, abstracts and bibliographies were used to identify appropriate sources. Sub-headings and synonyms were used to guide the search for relevant sources in catalogue listings, abstracts and bibliographies. Citations on various databases were skimmed to identify sources relevant to the research problem. Both primary and secondary literature sources were referred to, but the researcher relied mostly on primary sources. Primary sources are descriptions of studies written by the researcher who conducted them. Secondary research documents are descriptions of studies prepared by someone other than the

original researcher (Polit and Beck 2014: 117). Sources like UNESCO Guidelines (2012: 46), together with the World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines (2013) were used since UNESCO and WHO support quality assurance in the implementation of RPL and have developed RPL guidelines. Various journals, books, research articles, national government policies and DUT policy and guidelines were also used. The DUT library resources were optimally utilized to source local and international literature. Various electronic library databases were consulted.

2.2.1 Literature review map

Figure 2.1 is a map or diagram of the literature relating to RPL. At the top is the tittle of the main research topic, followed by the sub-sections or subject headings (Creswell and Creswell 2017: 56). Literature maps are used when planning research. It acts as guide posts giving directions of where the information will be obtained thereby assisting in refining the research topic. Maps are also excellent tools for developing the composition outline of the literature review document. Furthermore, mapping strategies can be used at various points of candidature, recursively, as doctoral researchers progress and revise their understanding.

A student's literature map gives tangible evidence of how he or she understands and interprets the research area, and makes it easy to share this understanding with both peers and supervisors. Creswell and Creswell (2017: 57) points out that mapping illustrates the research field in different ways. For example, it is called a graphic blueprint, a diagrammatic representation and a geographical metaphor (Creswell and Creswell 2017: 56).

Machi and McEvoy (2008: 45) present two mapping approaches. The first one uses core ideas or descriptors that have been developed from keywords in research topics. The second approach is mapping by author. This approach identifies key experts in the field and may include quotations and references to the work of others. Figure 2.1 uses the subject tree map format, and shows how RPL implementation literature was reviewed.

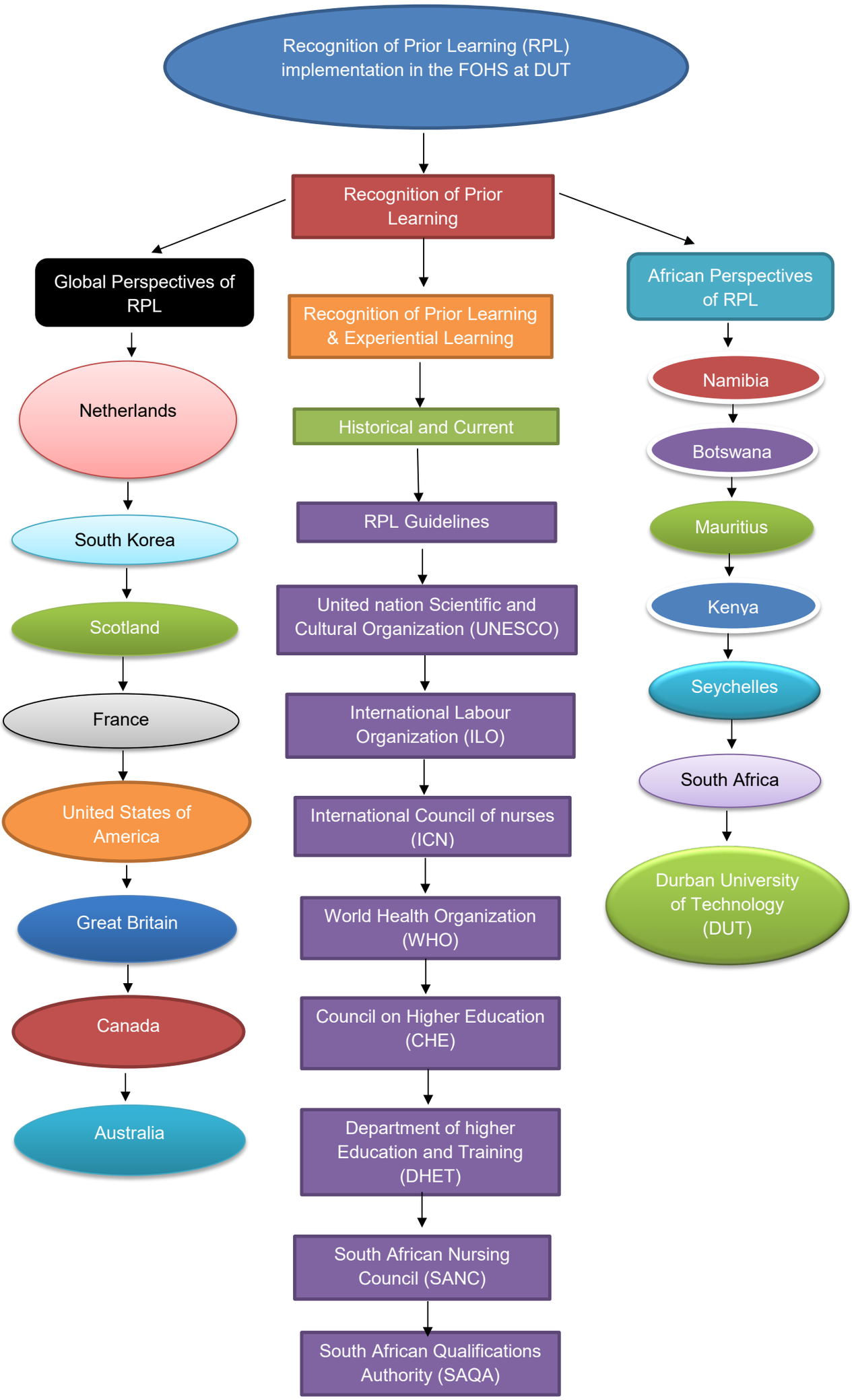

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) implementation in the FOHS at DUT
Recognition of Prior Learning
Global Perspectives of RPL
Netherlands
South Korea
Scotland
France
United States of America
Great Britain
Canada
Australia
Recognition of Prior Learning & Experiential Learning
Historical and Current
RPL Guidelines
United nation Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
International Labour Organization (ILO)
International Council of nurses (ICN)
World Health Organization (WHO)
Council on Higher Education (CHE)
Department of higher Education and Training (DHET)
South African Nursing Council (SANC)
South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)
African Perspectives of RPL
Namibia
Botswana
Mauritius
Kenya
Seychelles
South Africa
Durban University of Technology (DUT)

Figure 2.1: Literature review map

2.3 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

In South Africa. Recognition of Prior Learning is defined in accordance with the National Standard Bodies Regulation (No 18787 of 28 March 1998) issued in terms in terms of the SAQA Act 58 of 1995. Recognition of Prior Learning is the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner obtained against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification and the acceptance for the purpose of qualification of that which meets the requirements. This definition makes a number of principles clear: Learning occurs in all kinds of situations that is formally, informally, and non-formally. Measurement (assessment) of the learning takes place against specific learning outcomes required for a specific qualification where credits awarded for such learning should meet the requirements of the qualification.

Therefore, the process of recognising prior learning is about: identifying what the candidate knows and can do: matching the candidate's skills, knowledge and experience to specific standards and the associated assessment criteria of a qualification and crediting the candidate for skills, knowledge and experience build up through formal, informal and non-formal learning that occurred in the past. To ensure quality provisioning of RPL in the education and training sector, there is a nation RPL policy, and criteria and guidelines for implementation released by the state.

2.3.1 The Purpose of RPL

Recognition of Prior Learning is regarded as a tool for development which brings value to the learners and institutions. Many adult youths and out of school youth may have been part of non-formal and informal training programmes and acquire a great deal of knowledge and experience in the process. Such expertise and capabilities. Such expertise if not recognized or certified often lead to exclusion from certain jobs, promotions or for further education and training opportunities, for all of which some kind of certification is usually needed. These skills need to be certified in order to provide access into the education system through RPL. The education system could assist in eliminating unnecessary duplication of learning, encourage self-assessment, enabling RPL learners to make judgments concerning their own knowledge and skills, reducing the time learners need to spend in training and help to build learners confidence.

Recognition of Prior Learning also has benefits for the employer in that existing worker competence can be easily measured against required standards (employable skills standards). There could be a reduction in costs involved in the identification of further training needs. A better qualified workforce increases competitiveness and this strategy could aid effective recruitment of workers.

Recognition of Prior Learning has a capacity to contribute to redress and equity by opening up more ways for people to attain qualified status (qualification), enable more people to reach higher levels of qualifications and expertise by beginning with an acknowledgment of existing skills and knowledge, contribute to enhancing international economic competitiveness by building on often invisible and unacknowledged workplace skills and offer the first step in attaining the goal of developing a multi-skilled and flexible workforce by acting as an audit tool to qualify existing competence. According to SAQA (2012: 34) RPL system has to consider various groups of people who have to benefit from it. RPL system cannot be used as one-size fit-fit all approach for example, access only. RPL has to meet the needs of the individual clients.

According to SAQA (2012: 34) RPL in South Africa is used as a tool for access into a qualification, RPL for advanced standing credited for part of a qualification, RPL for credit results in the formal award of full or partial qualification, RPL for employment or development, RPL for professional standing and RPL for the awarding of a credits. The following terms are frequently used in the RPL world:

2.3.1.1 Profiling: The term profiling is used differently from portfolio construction to mean the initial interviewing of candidates by the designated personnel (HOD or Programme Coordinator) for that specific programme /qualification the RPL candidate is being assessed for. The key aspect during this stage is to establish the candidate’s goals, knowledge of RPL and general expectations (SAQA 2014: 59).

2.3.1.2 Access: Access provides easy entry to appropriate level of education and training for all prospective learners in a manner which facilitates progression.

2.3.1.3 Placement: Determine the appropriate level for learners wanting to enter into higher education and training through a diagnostic assessment.

2.3.1.4 Advanced status: Granting access to a level of a qualification for which a candidate has registered.

2.3.1.5 Advanced standing: Awarding credits towards a qualification for which a candidate is registered.

2.3.1.6 Credit: Total number of notional hours required for achieving the learning outcomes. Notional hours include study time, assignments and examination. The credit rating rates 10 notional hours as equivalent to one credit.

2.3.1.7 Certification: Certification of credits attained for the purpose of a qualification

Key Words: Recognition of Prior Learning, National Qualifications Framework (NQF), South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), Life Long Learning (LLL), Council on Higher Education (CHE), Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Durban University of Technology (DUT) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO.

2.3 2 Recognition of Prior Learning and Experiential Learning

David Kolb insist that all learning is experiential. Experiential learning is about: acting and observing, understanding the effects of the action in a specific instance and understanding the general principle and applying it in new circumstances. The value of learning by experience, experiential learning, is an activity in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied. It is not about observing only the phenomenon only, but also doing something with it such as testing the action and interaction to learn more about it, or applying the theory to achieve some desired results.

The four elements of learning Kolb presents are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. He uses them to describe how this reflective learning takes place which in principle is what is needed from potential RPL candidates. To demonstrate what they have learnt during the assessment process. In the learning process Kolb describes four types of learners: accommodators (action-orientated and intuitive problem- solvers), diverges (people-orientated and ideas driven), assimilators (observers, ideas driven, inductive thinkers and models) and converges (uses logical analysis and deductive reasoning). Kolb's concept of learning styles has cab support for experiential learning. Learners who often prefer to begin the learning process. RPL learners can more effectively describe their learning around the cycle by targeting each quadrant:

2.3.2.1 Concrete experience involves a description of one's experience, such as what did you do what action you took. The candidate's life learning narrative should reflect common verbs such as worked, created, prepared, implemented, conducted and produced.

2.3.2.2 Reflective observation involves what one noticed and observed about the experience. The candidate s life learning narrative should exhibit common verbs such as observed, watched, noticed, saw, thought and discovered. Abstract conceptualization is about rules, theories and concepts applicable in a particular situation. The candidate s life learning narrative should display common verbs such as concluded, theorized, found, realized, deducted and learned.

2.3.2.3 Active experimentation is about how one applied his/her learning in new situations. The candidate's life learning narrative should show the use of common verbs such as used, updated, implemented and charged.

Kolb posits that the concrete experience coupled with active experimentation especially when they occur in the workplace, in community involvement or in life experience, can be classified as informal or non-formal learning. It is generally accepted that the RPL candidate must employ some form of reflective observation in order to be able to identify, formulate and document his/her prior learning (abstract conceptualization) in ways that are acceptable in higher education academic standards. The challenge that remains after determining this form of learning is to access and accredit the candidate's prior learning against learning outcomes and express it in terms of formal education credits. Kolb argue that there is a link between experience and assessment for college or university credit, people do learn from their experience, and the results of that learning can be reliability assessed and certified for college or university credit. However, he puts forward the notion that the area is not free of problems (challenges).

The final step in the RPL candidate s integration into higher education is making the transition between informal and non-formal learning on the one hand and formal learning on the other hand. In other words, it is important that the RPL candidate be able to arrive at obstruct conceptualization, which is requirement of formal higher education-level learning. RPL situation calls for the appointment of the RPL coach (trainer or mentor) to facilitate the correct articulation of the needed learning acquired from other learning situations.

2.4 HISTORICAL AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS OF RPL

Recognition of Prior Learning is an international practice recommended, endorsed and recognized by organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Hamer 2010: 119). According to Tabarak-ul-Islam (2016: 86), RPL is a process commonly used internationally to determine what credits may be granted to individuals to recognize their prior learning or skills, acquired through various training programs. The RPL system allows both female and male incumbents to upgrade and achieve minimum competencies within a stipulated time. Moore and

Van Rooyen (2002: 295) assert that RPL attempts to add value to all types of learning, what a person knows and can do, irrespective of how they achieve it, either through formal education or life experiences which have not been formally recognized through transfer of credit mechanisms.

2.4.1 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

According to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (LLL), UNESCO has played an important role in developing a vision of LLL for all in the knowledge-based global economy (UNESCO 2012: 1). Future prosperity and security, as well as peace, social harmony and environmental sustainability will depend on people's capacity to make informed choices, to adapt to rapid change and to find sustainable solutions to pressing challenges (UNESCO 2012: 4-5).

Higher education institutions must strive to offer learning opportunities for all throughout life, to improve the quality of life, to promote a more just society and to equip people to anticipate and tackle the challenges they face. LLL covers a full range of provision of learning opportunities that extend beyond formal education, non-formal and informal learning for out of school youth and adults. In recent years, in addition to traditional qualifications systems which mostly acknowledge learning in formal education, experiential learning is now recognised (Werquin 2010: 29-35).

The underpinning principles of NQF and RPL were to ensure equity and inclusiveness in access to learning opportunities (DHET 2016: 3). Every individual should have the right to access and engage in any form of learning suited to his/her needs and have their learning outcomes made visible and valued. This includes promoting equal value of learning outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning, and assigning equal value to competencies that every individual has accumulated, through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Another principle is that the individual's needs should be respected and reflected and their participation should be on a voluntary basis. In addition, quality assurance should be promoted in the entire process to ensure that procedures for assessing are relevant, reliable, fair and transparent (UNESCO 2012: 4-5). The guidelines also suggest that the RPL system is available to all and integrated into education and training systems to create a co-ordinated national structure involving all stake-holders, building the capacities of RPL practitioners and designing sustainable funding mechanisms (UNESCO 2012: 2-3).

2.4.2 The International Labour Organization (ILO)

The International Labour Organization ILO (2018: 21) states that since the beginning of the millennium, RPL has been receiving renewed attention in both developed and developing countries. Globalization and migration have increased the need for mechanisms for recognition of qualifications across borders. They have also increased the emphasis on lifelong learning, as people need to upgrade their skills set to keep it relevant. Attention to the informal economy has given rise to renewed interest in RPL and its potential to help in the move towards formalization. Many workers acquire workplace skills via informal means. As a consequence, they face significant challenges in gaining decent employment and furthering their education.

According to ILO (2018: 22) RPL systems address competencies acquired through non-formal and informal mean the potential benefits of RPL are not limited to the applicants. Employers, for instance, may benefit from RPL for cost-efficiency reasons. RPL allows employers to advance workers in which they have invested over the years and who possess the relevant skills and experience for a particular job. Governments, on the other hand, can use RPL to improve the educational profile of their workforce and help applicants expand their employment prospects. If RPL is integrated into the overall education and training systems, it will positive impact the labour market, as well as countries' economies, and society as a whole.

2.4.3 The World Health Organization

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2013: 6) puts forward the notion that the health workforce imbalances in terms of deficits, shortages or inequitable distribution of workers in all countries needs urgent attention. The imperative to deliver more and more effective health services, these imbalances create an urgent need to scale up the number of human resources for health, to adapt innovative education and training of health providers to the new epidemiological and demographic challenges, and ensure a proper skill mix, and to adopt measures and incentives to make the geographical and organizational distribution of health professionals more equitable (WHO 2013: 6).

The WHO (2013: 6) states that in many countries, this need has to be met in a context of difficult economic circumstances. The link between education and health systems is close, as the former provides an essential resource to the latter: health professionals. There is consensus that, in most countries, there are insufficient health care providers, and many are deficient in terms of the quality and relevance of their training. New generations of health professionals equipped with appropriate competencies and capable of leading change must be educated and

integrated into health systems in a continuous process of adaptation to a new reality in health. The Lancet Commission has identified a series of reforms of education processes necessary for health systems to effectively answer population needs. These reforms aim at the acquisition of competencies responsive to local needs but connected globally, which include a culture of critical enquiry and the effective use of information technologies. The ultimate goal is a transformative and interdependent professional educational system for health professionals to provide equity in health. To achieve that goal, it is essential to engage in innovative lifelong learning strategies including career pathing, continuous professional development (CPD) and recognition of prior learning RPL.

The WHO (2013: 8) regards RPL as a system of processes that are conducted by an accredited learning body assesses an individual's previous learning experiences with a set metric of standards. The previous learning and experiences acquired are then evaluated and this gives you an opportunity of understanding your level of expertise within your specific field of experience and prior learning. This helps examining bodies, employers, workshops and agencies to adequately place individuals in the learning environmental level with regards to his/her prior experiences and achievements, whether they be chartered or informal experiences.

This RPL process makes it possible for people with informal experiences to gain formal recognition of their skills and competencies in order to advance their academic careers. However, the process calls for investing more, to develop robust quality control mechanisms and to strengthen global learning. In the process of building stronger education institutions, policy-makers face key questions such as: How to recruit the right type of students, which competencies should they equip their graduates with, what profile of educators and trainers and which learning strategies are more appropriate (WHO 2013: 8).

2.5 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES OF RPL

In this study, the researcher focussed on selected countries where RPL is practiced and researched.

2.5.1 Exploring Recognition of Prior Learning practices in United States of America

Prinsloo and Buchler (2006: 75-81) assert that a firmly institutionalized RPL was established in the United States of America (USA) around the 1970s, and it was committed to LLL and increasing access to learning opportunities. However, there is a great deal of diversity in the application of RPL system in USA. RPL is applied

for the purpose of advanced standing or certain levels of credits in courses and degrees programmes. Barros (2012: 34) asserts that the integrity and credibility of assessments is inherent in the use of well-developed and well-crafted standards, models, principles and procedures, reviewed on a continual basis to meet the changing needs in quality assurance and assessment practices generally.

Prinsloo and Buchler (2006: 73) also point out that a noteworthy feature of the American model is a range of standardized assessments that have been developed at the national level which reduced the need for individualized assessments. According to the DUT RPL Policy (2009: 2-4), RPL assessments are evidence-based against programme learning outcomes as outlined in the curriculum of the relevant programme of the Department or Faculty concerned. The researcher is of the view that, for assessments to be relevant, each Department or Faculty should develop individualized assessments guided by the policy of the institution.

2.5.2 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in the United Kingdom

Barros (2013: 431) states that RPL was introduced in Great Britain in the 1980s, based mainly on the work done by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) in the USA. It is further stated that there is very little United Kingdom (UK) - based longitudinal research on the effectiveness of RPL in higher education and there is no reporting of research on the long-term value of RPL. As stated in Evans (2000: 65), RPL is the generic term used for the award of credit, based on demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past. This learning may have come about as the result of a course, or self-directed study or as a result of experience, either at work or leisure pursuits.

According to Evans (2000: 66), experiential learning is uncertified learning, what is in someone's head for which there is no formal evidence that it does exist. It is further stated that, while both forms of prior learning focus on learning rather than experience, and outcome rather than process, they can differ in the way candidates may gather and submit evidence to support the claim (Evans 2000: 66). The Scottish Vocational Education Council developed an RPL system within the further education system. According to Evans (2000: 67), in Scotland, RPL is characterized by collaborative development and networking, links with further education, emphasis on work-based learning, partnerships with employers and professional bodies. This process is the key element of Higher Education Institutions meeting the needs of the communities which they serve and in candidate's LLL paths (Evans 2006: 64-67).

The DUT RPL Policy (2009: 2-4) states that DUT recognises prior learning by assessing the applicants' professional experience as well as non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which the applicant has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes or standards for entry or access into a specified level of study in an academic programme or qualification. The researcher supports DUT RPL policy.

2.5.3 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in Great Britain

Whitaker and Whitaker (2006: 301-320) stated that Great Britain introduced RPL in the 1980s which was mainly based on the work that was done in America. Whitaker and Whitaker (2006: 301-320) further assert that there is very little UK-based longitudinal research on the effectiveness of RPL in higher education and there is no reporting of research into the long- term value of RPL. The DUT RPL Policy (2009: 2-5) asserts that RPL promotes and facilitates LLL as well as access and admission to learning programmes within education and training. RPL also promotes up-skilling and career pathways. The researcher supports this notion of RPL, as stipulated in the DUT RPL Policy.

2.5.4 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in Canada

According to Kistan (2002: 169-172), in Canada, RPL is seen as a journey in the sense of being part of lifelong learning through educational opportunities that meet individual needs, as is also the case in the USA. Prinsloo and Buchler (2006: 75) state that Canada's education system is completely provincial in terms of jurisdiction and thus the challenges facing Canada relate to transferability and portability of qualifications between provinces. Prinsloo and Buchler (2006: 76) report that RPL in Canada is mainly practiced in non-degree credit programmes.

The DUT RPL Policy (2009: 2-5) states that RPL in South Africa is critical for the development of an equitable education and the support of transformation of the education and training system of the whole country. Supporting this notion, the researcher is of the view that all institutions of higher learning in South Africa should have uniform RPL guidelines, in all faculties, to facilitate transferability and portability of qualifications between institutions of higher learning in South Africa which is not pragmatic.

2.5.5 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in Australia

According to Du Pre and Pretorius (2001: 136), in Australia there is a distinction between the learning achieved through formal education (credit transfer) and learning achieved outside the formal education and training system. Thus, RPL is an assessment process that assesses the individual's non-formal and informal

learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competencies, outcomes, or standards for entry to and /or partial or total completion of a qualification.

Wheelahan *et al*. (2003: 40) asserts that the key distinguishing characteristic is that it is the student who is assessed in the case of RPL, and the course, the subject or programme in the case of credit transfer. In credit transfer, the judgement is of the learning programme, outcomes and assessment in the initial course or subject, which must be considered for RPL purposes. Wheelahan *et al*. (2003: 40) believe that many students will use both the RPL and credit transfer simultaneously, as the learning pathways, combined with their life and work experience is becoming increasingly complex.

Van Rooy (2002: 36*)* points out that one of the key drivers for the RPL was its perceived capacity to act as a mechanism for social inclusion for those who have not had the opportunity to participate in, or who have had negative experiences of post-compulsory education and training, but who nonetheless have much learning that is relevant to the qualification outcomes. RPL is seen as one of the main objectives of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). In addition, it is used as a key strategy in facilitating access to higher education qualifications and programmes, and the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications for Australians. RPL is deemed to have benefits for individuals, education and training institutions, enterprises, unions and governments that are regarded by many as self-evident and obvious (Van Rooy 2002: 37).

Van Rooy (2002: 39) further posits that the extent of RPL practice in Australia is somewhat limited. Van Rooy (2002: 38) claims that RPL, in the Australian context, is in its infancy, although it has some ten or more years of standing in the educational environment. RPL is currently used in Australia for admission to a course and for advanced standing or credit in a course. The Australian model acknowledged the need for close collaboration between the providers of technical and further training industry.

Du Pre and Pretorius (2001: 305-309) point to three important areas in which problems have occurred in the implementation of RPL in Australia: (a) there is little evidence to suggest that RPL has significantly increased access to individuals (b) RPL has not led to any more synergy between traditional notions of academic knowledge and those who support the view that more experiential learning should be recognised by institutions and (c) RPL has shown evidence of gate-keeping to maintain traditional academic forms of knowledge. The findings of the study, conducted by Wheelahan *et al.* (2003: 40), also show that RPL has not acted as a mechanism for social inclusion in Australia, though it was intended for this purpose.

According to the DUT RPL Policy (2009: 3-4), when DUT is screens applicants for admission through RPL, it must consider a variety of backgrounds and learning experiences of the applicants. DUT recognises the applicant's professional experience as well as non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which the applicant has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry or access into a specified level of study in an academic programme or qualification. The DUT RPL Policy (2009: 2-4) further states that a variety of assessment methods are used to determine the relevance, depth and extent of the applicants' prior learning. The researcher agrees that RPL assessments undertaken should be evidence-based against programme learning outcomes as outlined in the curriculum of the relevant programme. Furthermore, that a variety of assessment methods should be used to determine the relevance, depth and extent of the applicant's prior learning.

2.6 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING PRACTICES IN AFRICA

Very few countries in Africa have extensive experience in RPL and as such attention has been focused on how RPL can be used (Sims: 2010: 169). In a report by Sims (2010: 59) on benefits and pitfalls of RPL in African countries, it was indicated that countries such as South Africa, Mauritius and Namibia have just begun to introduce RPL policies. He believes that extensive evaluation has yet to take place.

2.6.1 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in Namibia

When Namibia gained independence in 1990, there were major challenges in their education and training system which needed to be addressed (Afunde 2010: 34). 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- cantered education system. The Ministry of Education and Culture adopted a policy directive entitled, "*Towards Education for All"* with four goals namely, access, quality, democracy and LLL.

According to Afunde (2010: 34-38), the Namibians were denied opportunities in formal education because of their involvement in the struggle for their independence. Their participation in education is still exclusive as the skills and knowledge acquired over the years are not formally recognised. The key challenge facing 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, namely the RPL Policy for the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and for the Namibian College of Open Learning (Afunde 2010: 34-38).

2.6.2 Recognition of Prior Learning Practices in Mauritius

Mauritius Qualification Framework MQF (2009: 102) and Auckbur (2008: 105) define RPL "as a process to assess and certify the competence and knowledge of a person. Regardless of how, when and where learning occurred an assessment is done against prescribed standards for a partial or full qualification".

According to Allgoo, Ramdass and Santokhee (2012: 110), RPL was introduced as a process of maintaining and enhancing a competitive and skilled work force in Mauritius so that they could make informed choices and adapt to changing economic conditions and labour markets. This is in line with the government policy on LLL in Mauritius which aims to recognise and validate competencies for the purpose of certification obtained outside the formal education and training system. According to UNESCO (2012: 26), Mauritius lacks natural resources, and its only resource is its human capital. Therefore, its main challenge is a demand for new skills and the opportunity to reskill those that are less employable (Allgoo, Ramdass and Santokhee 2012: 110). 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 recognize and formally certify competencies obtained outside the formal education and training system (Allgoo, Ramdass and Santokhee 2012: 110).

2.6.3 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in Botswana

According to UNESCO (2015: 98), an impact study which was conducted in 2015 concluded that Botswana lacked credibility because there were no clear learning pathways in their education system. Consequently, there was a recommendation to establish the 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, namely RPL, and Recognition of Current Competencies, which was intended to assess and recognize learners with informal and indigenous skills (Wihak and Bourassa 2013: 116).

Training institutions had started to design new curricula, targeting adult basic education. Programmes combining core skills training with work experience, and the structured work-based learning programmes are aligned to suit college-based technical qualifications with the aim of making training more consistent with employers' demand for skills.

2.6.4 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in Kenya

According to the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MoHEST) (Kenya. MoHEST 2012: 125), 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 people with 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 TVET, unify the fragmented TVET sector, which was scattered across fifteen different sectors, create curricular which encourage entrepreneurial and imaginative attitude to work, put in place mechanisms for RPL, revitalize the Youth Polytechnic programmes and facilitate the horizontal and vertical mobility of vocational trainees and increase progression from TVET to university (UNESCO 2015: 144).

The Kenyan Qualification Framework (KQF) established the following objectives: improve access to qualifications for all individuals, thus promoting skills development and LLL, align the KQF with international qualification frameworks in order to enhance the national and international mobility of graduates and workers and strengthen the national regulatory and quality assurance system (UNESCO: 2015: 145).

Dewey's (1912: 41) underpinning theory of experience and education points out that experience arises from the interaction of two principles of continuity and interaction and that each experience one has will influence one's future for the better. One's present experience is a function of the interaction between one's past experience and present situation. Dewey's (2012: 45) theory emphasizes that one's past experiences must be considered to help open up, rather than shut down one's access to future growth experiences, thereby expanding one's likely contribution to society. Throughout this theory, there is a strong emphasis on the subjective quality of individual's past experiences in order to effectively design a sequence of liberating educational experiences to allow the individual to fulfil his/her potential as a member of society (Whittaker and Whittaker 2006: 28). Perennialists are of the view that humans are rational beings and that their minds

need to be developed and cultivated. A student's growth and intellect is the highest priority in a worthwhile education system (Wihak and Bourassa 2013: 116).

Yisengaw (2008: 102) points out that university scholars are the legitimate exclusive producers of knowledge. He argues that it is very difficult for academics to change their mind set from being gatekeepers of discipline-based knowledge to becoming mentors of learners whose knowledge has been gained from life and work experience. Likewise, candidates can experience the articulation and communication of their non-formal and informal learning as a culturally intimidating experience (Wihak and Bourassa 2013: 116).

2.6.5 Recognition of Prior Learning practices in Seychelles

Although RPL is a relatively new concept in the higher education and training system of the Seychelles, there have been several RPL projects in the vocational and occupational trades, such as Environmental Health and Health Information to upgrade qualifications in the health sector. After several decades and many successful RPL projects, the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) was officially established in 2006 to revise all qualifications within the Seychelles education and training system. This was part of the government's strategy to create a knowledge-based society and promote LLL (SQA 2008: 67).

The draft policy guidelines on the recognition of prior learning were released by SQA in 2008. Some of the key objectives of SQA were: developing and implementing an NQF, promoting the quality and standard of education and training through a system of accreditation, validation and quality assurance, establishing criteria for the process of recognition of competencies acquired outside of formal education and training, and for monitoring this process, maintaining a database on all providers within education and training and promoting international recognition of local qualifications (SQA 2008: 69-71).

The entire RPL process is overseen by SQA. In this process, the initiator pre-screens the potential RPL candidate and the specialist coordinator in the field of the relevant qualification pre-assesses the candidate's application. The assessment methods include interviews, workplace visits and portfolio development. According to the RPL policy, relevant sources of evidence of the candidate's knowledge and skills or competence includes certificates attained, results of assessments written, transcripts, course outline or content, duration of the course, licenses acquired, records from clients for service rendered, evidence of years of service, samples of work done, signed records from the workplace showing different activities performed, references and testimonials (SQA 2008:

72). RPL in the Seychelles focuses on making education accessible to individuals who were previously disadvantaged to improve their socio-economic status.

2.7 HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

According to the SQA (2008: 72), many of Africa's education institutions are in a state of crisis with poor physical infrastructure, lack of human resource capacity, poor management systems and problematic funding resources. SQA (2008: 72) summarized the state of higher education in developing countries by saying that the bad legacy of colonialism was compounded by the legacy of anti-colonialism. The legacy of colonialism was that universities concentrated on producing a tiny group of elite administrators and the anti-colonialism that followed allowed governments too much control over universities.

According to Werquin (2014: 102), problems of higher education in Africa are: (a) faculty shortage and development (b) governance, leadership and management (c) problems with quality and relevance of qualifications (d) weak research and innovation capacity (e) financial austerity and lack of capacity for diversification (f) poor physical facilities and infrastructure and (g) inability to meet increasing demands for access and equity.

As stated by Cloete (2006: 102-105), a university is no longer an autonomous entity that functions based on the communism, universalism, disinterestedness, and organized scepticism norms. In a world of growing demands for accountability and access and diminishing economic support, universities have experienced a shift in values to meet the challenges driven by the knowledge economy. Neglect of higher education led to the disestablishment of research centres, skills schools and technological development which are critical to the development of African societies and their health and economies (Cloete 2006: 102-105).

Cloete (2006:101) posits that the value of higher education is seen as extremely important and critical as an engine of development. Cloete (2006: 104) further argues that a more centralist approach is that a university's main role is to produce appropriately skilled professionals. Evidence to support this view is found in successful countries like East and South America which were able to rapidly expand the supply of skilled workers and dramatically change the educational profile of their population. The role of universities in all countries in Africa should be accepted as being the driver of economic and social development. If the higher education sector does not achieve its goal it is failing the nation it serves (Cloete 2006: 101-105).

2.8 LACK OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Bergan (2008: 32) points out that two linked changes are driving the increased demands for higher education namely, basification of higher education and the rise of knowledge economy. These changes have created a social, employer and governmental demand for more students to graduate and for them to graduate in the appropriate disciplines. Bergan (2008: 39) also states that the African population sees education as an important pathway to success in life and it is generally correct. Bergan (2008: 31) stresses that Africa needs many more graduates, especially in the health sciences field. Bergan (2008: 32) points out those African universities which do not yet possess the research capabilities needed to combine global knowledge with national experience in support of innovation and problem solving. Teaching has been favoured over research. Bergan (2008: 39) also revealed that the main challenge at a global level is lack of awareness of RPL process and procedures. It is further noted from the results of this study that RPL academic advisors contended that there is lack of communication between top management and the RPL department staff.

In another study conducted by Sutherland (2006: 245), it was highlighted that expertise qualification, structures, methods of teaching and assessments are a barrier to the implementation of RPL. Werquin (2010: 138) states that the increase of attention to RPL over the past decade has resulted in higher demands for services and a corresponding need for highly qualified, professionally competent advisers and assessors involved in pursuing continuing professional development. According to Van Kleef *et al*. (2007: 46), the notion of quality and its assurance has come to occupy a central place in the RPL process, which is completely dependent upon the abilities of those who carry out the procedures. Van Kleef *et al*. (2007: 49) stresses the need for solid knowledge of the RPL field including best practices.

Van Kleef (2011: 54) conducted another study to identify research objectives and research methods used in RPL in Canada. She revealed that none of the research studies were experimental. Sixteen (16) were non-experimental qualitative, fifty-two (52) were qualitative, ten (10) were mixed methods, fifty-six (56) studies were descriptive, nineteen (19) were exploratory, three (3) were predictive and none were explanatory. Fifty-eight (58) studies were cross-sectional, ten (10) were retrospective and ten (10) were prospective. Supporting the notion of RPL research, Breier (2011: 200), commenting on South African RPL research studies, pointed out the need for large scale studies to audit the nature and extent of RPL implementation not only in higher education, but also in further education. The current study employed an explanatory sequential mixed method design. After auditing the extent of RPL implementation, its main objective was to develop a

practice framework to enhance quality practice, and standards of RPL of implementation in the FOHS at DUT.

2.9 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING PRACTICES IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to South African Qualifications Framework (SAQA) NQF Level Descriptors (2014: 5), the current NQF landscape allows and promotes for the learner the culture of moving up from a lower to a higher level in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GETQSF), Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) and Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF). Young (2013: 58-60) states that in Ireland, it has become increasingly important to recognize informal as well as formal learning to make learning accessible to all. Young (2013: 59) further highlights the benefits of RPL as enabling student's progression to other programmes of study. He also states that RPL eliminates unnecessary repetition and duplication of material already familiar to the student, and public funds are better utilized as people who already have skills and knowledge are not re-trained (Young 2013: 58-60).

Osman (2004: 140-143) posits that the international literature on RPL policy and implementation, being the forerunner to the process in South Africa, has to a large extent shaped the direction and theory of RPL in South Africa. Osman (2004: 144), however, points out a subtle difference in that international approaches to RPL are framed within a discourse of individual empowerment and individual growth, while in South Africa, RPL policy is philosophically framed within the discourse of access, equity and redress. RPL, internationally, is seen as minor activity at best, rather than a major social imperative, as in South Africa, where it is a vehicle for transformation and social redress (Osman 2004: 145).

The South African Model of NQF is based on the Australian and UK models. However, it is surprising to note that in countries where there is a national qualifications framework, RPL has not been as successful as in countries such as the USA and Canada, where there is no national qualifications framework (Prinsloo and Buchler 2006: 45). According to the DUT RPL Policy (2009: 3), RPL in South Africa is critical to the development of an equitable education and to support transformation of the education and training system of the country. The DUT is striving to provide a viable, sustainable and credible system to implement RPL to promote and facilitate career path and LLL.

2.9.1 Council on Higher Education

The CHE RPL Policy (2016: 1) states that RPL is rooted within the context of LLL and the need to redress inequalities of the past, as it provides alternative routes of access to higher education. It is the process through which non-formal or informal learning is measured, evaluated and translated into the perceived formal equivalents for recognition across different contexts. Its intended outcomes are the recognition of such prior learning for the purposes of alternative access and admission to higher education learning programmes, and for advancement within qualification programmes.

Khanyile (2005: 51) conducted a study to test an RPL model for nurses in South Africa. This study included a one-day consultative workshop to look at access to nursing qualifications for candidates without grade twelve. The sample comprised five (5) nurse educators, two (2) nurse representatives, one (1) representative from the Department of Health, one (1) representative from the Department of Education and two (2) representatives from the community. Participants resolved that candidates such as nurse assistants, ambulance assistants, first aiders or any health-related experience would have to be assessed and recognised as an equivalent to matriculation or Grade 12.

Furthermore, participants resolved that for nursing, equivalence to matriculation would include competencies in the four basic components namely, numeracy, literacy, social contextual knowledge and ethics as set out in the SAQA document (SAQA 2002: 86). The researcher concurs with this resolution.

Cooper and Harris (2011: 1-2) conducted an interview survey with academic leaders in five faculties, including Humanities and Health Sciences in a South African higher education institution to explore the knowledge question in RPL to establish the nature of disciplinary or knowledge domain into which RPL candidates seek access and determine the feasibility of RPL. Cooper and Harris's study explored the role of knowledge in RPL via a case study. Findings revealed that the disciplinary context or knowledge domain into which an RPL candidate is seeking access does play a role in determining the feasibility of RPL. However, Cooper and Harris (2011: 1-2) point out that distinct organizational environments offer affordances and barriers to the implementation of RPL and there is also significant room for the exercise of pedagogic agency. The researcher concurs with Cooper and Harris (2011: 1-2). This supports a position that RPL should be seen as specialised pedagogical practice that provides tools for navigating access to new learning opportunities across diverse contexts (Cooper and Harris 2011: 1-2). Bergan (2008: 39) also revealed that the main challenge at a global level is lack of awareness of RPL process and procedures.

2.10 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

According to the Department of Higher Education, RPL co-ordination policy seeks to provide a strong enabling policy environment for the further development and enhancement in the implementation of RPL across the Post School Education and Training system and across all levels of the NQF (DHET 2016: 4). It also seeks to provide a solid policy to ensure that the RPL objectives of the NQF are met. It has drawn on international trends in recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and work-based experiential learning (DHET 2016: 4).

2.10.1 Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)

According to the DHET (2016: 5), RPL seeks to achieve inclusion and to overcome a variety of barriers to access and success in higher education, such as barriers to admission or registration for higher education studies for those people who lack the formal prerequisites into this effect. In July 2018, the Minister of Higher Education appointed twenty three (23) member RPL Reference Group with the following terms of reference: advise the minister about funding for RPL implementation on an annual basis, collaborate, co-operate and communicate with the SAQA and the three Quality Councils regarding RPL implementation across the education and training system, recognise and collaborate with RPL Centres, provide guidance and support to implementation agencies such as education and training institutions and RPL Centres as well as advise the Minister about the professionalization of RPL practitioners (DHET 2016: 5-10).

2.10.2 South African Nursing Council (SANC)

The South African Nursing Council (SANC 2010: 20) views RPL as an assessment process to assess an individual's level of competence in the field of nursing, which is gained through participation in the formal, informal or non-formal context, or through work experience, formal or informal study, and other life experiences. The purpose of such an assessment process is to recognise the prior learning of an individual with the aim of attaining credits towards NQF registered unit standards or qualifications offered by a nursing education institution (NEI). Recognition of Prior Learning within this context contributes to and promotes both the transformational intention of the NQF and the objectives of the Skills Development Act (Act No. 97 of 1998).

SANC (2010: 21) states that SANC, as the professional regulatory body of nursing in South Africa, has to ensure that persons admitted to the nursing profession are skilled and knowledgeable practitioners, who are competent to provide quality and safe nursing care in South Africa. SAQA accredited SANC as the ETQA for institutions that provide nursing education and training, and as such SANC must

ensure that its accredited providers implement credible RPL systems that do not compromise the integrity of nursing education and training.

2.10.3 Durban University of Technology (DUT's) RPL Policy

According to DUT RPL Policy (2009: 2-3), DUT is striving to build a variable, sustainable and credible system to implement RPL in order to facilitate learner access and admission to higher education, thus promoting an equitable and transformed education that will facilitate LLL.

2.10.4 South African Qualifications Authority RPL Policy

The SAQA Policy (2012: 49) defines RPL as comparing the learner's previous learning and experience obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification and the acceptance for the purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements. The SAQA (2012: 7) Policy document extended this definition into a number of principles in the development and execution of RPL, namely that learning occurs in all kinds of situations which can be formal, informal and non-formal learning measured against the specific learning outcomes required for a specific qualification, and credits are awarded for such learning if it meets the requirements of the qualification.

The SAQA's Policy (2012: 8) advocates a holistic approach to RPL development and implementation in higher education and training institutions. This approach considers the different purposes of RPL, and candidates should be involved in deciding why they are undertaking RPL. Different candidates may need RPL for different reasons such as personal development, certification of current skills without progression into learning programme, or progression in a learning programme, fast-tracked by using RPL, or promotion in a career or job change.

Recognition of Prior Learning in South Africa, unlike similar initiatives in other countries, has a very specific agenda. SAQA RPL policy (2012:34-49) states that RPL intends to support education and training systems transformation of this country. This calls for an approach to the development of RPL policy and quality practices, which explicitly addresses the visible and invisible barriers to learning and assessment. Such an approach must generate all role players' commitment to removing these barriers and to building a visible system, usable and widely recognised as an effective and creative vehicle for LLL. Most importantly, it must generate consensus around the criteria and support systems within which all assessments' integrity and quality will be protected, while at the same time extend RPL opportunities and benefits to all learners and stakeholders.

It is also imperative to build a viable, sustainable and credible system. It is recognised that transforming education and training is not the responsibility of RPL alone. In the context of this policy transformation encapsulates a holistic approach to the process and execution of assessment, and a developmental and incremental approach to the implementation of RPL, particularly in terms of sustainability, acknowledgement of the differing contexts within which RPL will be implemented, opening up of access to education and training, redress of past injustices, an acknowledgement of the dynamic nature of the construction of knowledge, which will come into play as the system matures.

It can be said that the RPL principle was fundamental to the development of new education and training in South Africa. The principle has its origin in a number of projects and policy-making initiated by the trade union movement and the African National Congress in the late 1980s. The RPL principle, which is set out in the National Standards Bodies Regulations of 1998, is defined as *'the giving of credit to what learners already know and can do, regardless of whether this learning was achieved formally, informally or non-formally"* (SAQA, 2012: 40).

Recognition of Prior Learning in South Africa is a key strategy for reforming policy that is relevant to the education and training system and to workforce development strategies and policies. Scott (2010: 43) identified the following target groups which had a need for redress and access: people who are seeking access to continuing education courses and professional qualifications which may include under-qualified adult learners who want to up-skill and improve their qualifications; candidates without a matric certificate, which is the minimum requirement for entry into higher education; people who have worked for many years and have gained experience in specific areas, but do not have recognition for that experience and probably have very low levels of formal education.

Learners entering higher education through non-traditional routes can greatly increase student enrolments. RPL would also assist an overwhelming majority of under-qualified workers, such as library staff, who have extensive work experience, to up-skill and improve their qualifications, particularly in terms of time and energy costs. South Africa's new democracy has seen a number of new Acts promulgated concerning RPL practice. These Acts are intended to achieve new and transformed objectives for higher education and training. These objectives include: developing a system that is more responsive to the needs of the economy, individuals and society at large; and eradicating past unjust educational policies, particularly policies that prevented people from accessing education and training. RPL is an important tool for opening up access to people who were denied the privilege of quality education (Harris and Wihak 2014: 13). Several new Acts

relating to education, labour and related fields indicate the importance of RPL in South African higher education and training.

2.11 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

Personnel responsible for different aspects of RPL implementation at the university are: The Director of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT); RPL Administrator; Faculty Officers, Heads of Department and Executive Deans (DUT Policy 009: 8-9). As stated in the DUT Policy (2009: 3), DUT considers applicants for admission through RPL. A wide variety of backgrounds and learning experiences of participants is taken into consideration, including student's professional experience as well as formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which the applicant has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes or standards for entry or access into a specified level of study in an academic programme or qualification.

According to the DUT Policy (2009: 3-4), although a qualification cannot be awarded on the basis of total RPL assessment, applicants may be considered for advanced standing which could provide access to a higher qualification. The policy does not apply where, in respect of a particular application, a formal credit transfer or exemption from particular modules or a subject deemed appropriate by the department or faculty concerned.

2.12 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY ADMINISTRATION

According to the DUT RPL Policy (2009: 7-8), the DUT Director of the CELT will collaborate with various head of departments to: (a) conduct a meeting with candidates: (b) identify the candidates' goals: (c) evaluate candidates' reasons for wanting to achieve the specified academic goals and determine whether the reasons are relevant to the goals (d) discuss the applicants' prior learning and evaluate whether the candidates are ready for RPL or not; in some cases, the candidate may be provided with a self-evaluation test to assess whether he/she qualifies for RPL in the particular learning field. The policy states that if the applicant does not qualify for RPL, the decision must be explained to the candidate. Candidates must be advised that they can appeal against the decision.

Guidance on how to reflect on experience is available to learners. An advisor or mentor should be available to assist and support the candidate. Learners are then referred to relevant faculties or departments (DUT Policy 2009: 8). The policy further asserts that there should be maintenance and monitoring of the necessary academic and administrative systems to ensure that the tight timeframes in the

overlapping cycle are met and that staff responsible for different aspects of RPL are trained. Candidates should pay non-refundable administration and assessment fees, and they should understand the relevance of the evidence provided for the learning undertaken in the qualification or programme.

2.13 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE QUESTION

Harris and Wihak (2014: 14) argue that there is a body of conventional knowledge that resides in formal institutions of learning that has always been powerful and valued while experiential knowledge is often dismissed as being less important, unvalued and unrecognized. Cooper and Harris (2013: 447-463) state that RPL practitioners need to entertain the notion that experiential knowledge does not necessarily or automatically provide an adequate basis for academic study. They also state that RPL may be better persuaded by actively engaging with knowledge difference rather than glossing over them as if they do not exist (Cooper and Harris 2013: 447-463). It is further argued that RPL is increasingly practiced to run the risk of supporting the movement from education to credential where learning is tuned into abstract individualized credits. Against this notion, Michelson (1998: 153-154) used the postmodern lens to show how RPL practices subscribe uncritically to modernist theories and assumptions about experience and knowledge in education. It was argued that experience is changed to knowledge by application of reason. She contests the individual as the agent of change, and that prior learning must have some relationship to academic knowledge. Michelson (1998: 359) also postulates that RPL needs to become a site where different knowledge cultures meet.

Cooper and Ralphs (2016: 40-56) have noted that RPL is a specialised pedagogy and a process of knowing the borders and crossing the lines. They further posit that workplace is a specialised site of experiential knowledge production. According to Cooper and Ralphs (2016: 266), the question is how to conjoin experiential and formal knowledge in the practice of RPL, to the benefit of both and suggests that this specialised pedagogy needs to be adopted, adapted or developed to connect the two (Cooper and Ralphs 2016: 40-56).

Harris and Cooper (2013: 51-76) conducted an interview survey with academics across Canada's higher education institutions to gather evidence on whether the nature of the discipline or domain offers affordance or barriers to RPL access, whether obstacles to the implementation of RPL lie rather in a lack of political will to implement RPL or in the rejection of forms of knowledge that academics cannot immediately recognize. Findings revealed that RPL cannot be reduced to one size fits all but needs to assume different forms in different institutional and disciplinary

settings. Furthermore, the study confirmed that the knowledge structure does affect the feasibility of RPL but with a few important qualifications.

The study also revealed that students seeking admission to the science-based programmes are required to have senior matriculation in one or more science subjects. The interviewee confirmed that academic subjects and programmes in pure sciences were indeed difficult to access via RPL in Canada. However, nursing programmes demonstrated the likelihood of there being niches that enable access to RPL, even in otherwise unfavourable knowledge conditions and the extent to which the commitment and will of an academic programme leader can increase the feasibility (Harris and Cooper 2013: 51-76).

Hawthorne (2013: 65-66) states that in a study funded by the European Union on recognition of foreign qualifications, it was revealed that in regulated professions like the health profession, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and physiotherapists want to work with professional bodies to ensure the quality and integrity of the recognition systems, mindful of any risk to public safety. Van Kleef and Werquin (2012: 18) defines quality as a social construction with procedures, criteria and indicators, the meaning of which is negotiated by stakeholders to achieve public confidence. In RPL, quality is defined as establishment of an environment and the implementation of policies, processes and assessment practices that maximise the individual's opportunities to fully and accurately demonstrate relevant knowledge, skills and competencies (Van Kleef and Werquin 2012: 18). In a study conducted by Salini and Bedmarz (2010: 13), recommendations stress the need for a solid knowledge of the RPL field including best practices.

According to Bergan (2008: 87), the main challenge at a global level is that of developing a positive attitude towards RPL and that academics lack awareness of RPL processes and procedures. Hawke (2000: 158) further states that RPL challenges the academics' notions about the production of knowledge since they view the university as the site for the production of knowledge. According to Sutherland (2006: 245), the issue of knowledge production may serve as a barrier to the implementation of RPL at universities. Adam (2008: 42) asserts that UNISA have established a link between the world of study and the world of work. In this manner, RPL promotes networking between academics and the employers. The current study will enhance the quality of the RPL process at DUT which is completely dependent upon the abilities of those implementing the procedures. Over and above role-specific training, RPL practitioners wishing to operate at a professional level also need an advanced level of competence.

2.14 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The SAQA Policy for the implementation of RPL in South Africa states that RPL is part of the overall quality assurance system and quality criteria that applies to quality assurance of taught programmes. Quality assurance of RPL is manifested by the establishment and adherence to policies, standards processes and associated practices that ensures that knowledge, skills, competences and values of learners are recognised and validated so that they can successfully engage in further learning that contributes meaningfully to their educational and employment goals (SAQA 2012: 12).

It is further noted in this policy that learners, staff and external stakeholders should form part of on-going evaluation exercises. In particular, learners should be encouraged to provide feedback on the entire RPL process on completion of the personal RPL undertaking. Institutions need to monitor and adapt the RPL service and assessments in order to make the process more effective and efficient and to ensure that the RPL process is in line with national standards and developmental objectives (SAQA 2012: 12).

As stated in SAQA Policy (2012: 12), the quality assurance of RPL and standardisation can only take place between similar types of RPL. An effort must be made to allow standardised practises to grow within sectors, as one approach does not necessarily work across different contexts. Quality assurance of RPL must be undertaken with explicit intention to protect the integrity of the processes and outcomes concerned. Monitoring, evaluation and verification are important elements in the on-going development of the RPL process in relation to the quality of assessment. This process is on-going, and monitoring the quality of entire RPL process is important.

2.15 PORTFOLIOS AND e-PORTFOLIOS/ DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS

According to Werquin (2012: 272), most countries endorse the development and recognition of a tangible document which act as a portfolio. Typically, a portfolio contains at minimum a narrative description of candidates learning from a variety of contexts, with supporting evidence.

2.15.1 Paper-based portfolio

Wihak and Wong (2011: 95-112) is of the opinion that use of paper-based portfolio to document and demonstrate adult learning has become increasingly prevalent in Australia, Europe, North America and South Africa. The portfolio comprises a narrative description of a candidate’s learning experiences from a variety of

contexts (work, community service, hobbies) with supporting evidence. Individual institutions and organisations take different approaches to portfolio creation, structure and content requirements. Wild *et al.* (2008: 73-75) state that developing a portfolio involves three stages and that going through these stages reveal new perspectives on prior learning. The first stage is a private one in which students collect all their evidence. The second stage is about organising the evidence and artefacts into a story-portfolio through which personal learning experiences are shared.

Wild *et al.* (2008: 74-75) states that this contextual embedding forces the candidate to reflect more intensively and to structure the individual learning process along meaningful dimensions of a coherent story. The last stage is the test portfolio where candidates decide what will be presented for assessment. This final act moves the learner from a private space to a public space, which formalises the learning acquired through informal and formal contexts. Wild *et al.* (2008: 74-75) conclude that this helps documenting their working experience for their learning management. They also construct portfolios that materialize their learning achievements. This makes it possible that such rather informal learning can get accredited in the formal curriculum (Wild *et al.* 2008: 74-75).

2.15.2 E-portfolio or Digital portfolio

According to Slaato (2005: 147-148), an e-portfolio is a personal digital collection of information, describing and illustrating a person's learning, career experience and achievements. The advantage of a digital or electronic portfolio resides in its multi-dimensional nature and it is an evidence of candidate's experiential learning. In the context of knowledge society, where being information literate is critical, the e-portfolio provides an opportunity to demonstrate one's ability to collect, organize, interpret and reflect on documents and sources of learning. The interconnectivity capabilities of e-portfolio enable learners to demonstrate learning by using multimedia such as video, material showing their skills, digital files of music they have created, live links to their web pages or full colour high- resolution images of art work. Slaato (2005: 145) points out that this kind of portfolio can give a more complete record of their accomplishments than a paper portfolio.

Attwell (2005: 100) states that using e-portfolio to support the RPL process is a natural progression in the field. In many ways, research trends on e-portfolios and RPL have resulted in similar findings, which indicated that reflections involved tend to deepen learning. However, Herman and Kirkuk (2008: 79) point out that, in their study, some of the women preferred paper portfolios due to the learning curve associated with gaining technological competence which can be overcome if individuals were given active support to document their prior learning.

Cooper and Ralphs (2016: 58-66) suggest that experiential or every day knowledge is not always horizontal and context-bound and that increasingly, specialised forms of experiential knowledge are being produced, circulated and acquired outside of the academy, in the sphere of work and civil society. They are, therefore, of the opinion that successful RPL needs an understanding of the boundary between experiential and formal knowledge in any given RPL claim or context and this has been referred to as "*knowing the borders and crossing the lines",* and as necessitating a specialised pedagogy which is attuned to the particular configuration of knowledge that is involved (Cooper and Ralphs 2016: 58-66). Scott (2010: 43), in support of RPL argues that Europe 2020 with its focus on building a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy, delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

Stenlund's (2010: 791 situational analysis of RPL in Canada revealed that, at the public policy level RPL remains fragmented and marginalised, and subject to uncertain funding. The researchers argue that an integrated approach is required which needs to include the development of a coherent, foundational policy framework. On the other hand, Wong and the National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning (2013: 123), in their studies state that a systematic approach to policies has been adopted in Australia. Twenty-six (26) of twenty-nine (29) universities in his study included RPL in their formal policies and procedures. Over 70% contained guidelines on quality assurance procedures and policy on advising, moderation, training, course preparation, maximum credits, learning outcomes as the criteria.

Stenlund (2010: 790) established a basis for interpreting the research on quality which leads to a proposition that, if learning and transfer are inherently personal and cultural enterprises, so is, by extension, the assessment of learning. Assessment is a social act of interpreting an individual's navigation through transitional experiences of knowledge, skills and identity continuity and transformation that occurs when learning transfers across contexts. On this basis, consequential transitions (the process of change that individuals and their learning undergo) from school to work or work to school are more complex and more static than transitions experienced by students in the classroom. Therefore, RPL candidates seeking access to educational programmes or applying for academic credit must broaden their view of their prior learning to position themselves in an academic context (Stenlund 2010: 788).

2.16 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter the relevant literature that addresses the implementation of RPL globally, in Africa and in South Africa was reviewed. In the next chapter the theoretical framework that informed the study will be presented.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework that guided the study is presented in this chapter. The aim of this study was to develop a practice framework to enhance the implementation of RPL in the FOHS at DUT. Creswell and Creswell (2017: 227) assert that a theoretical framework advances an abstract and is a formalized set of assumptions to guide the design and conduct the research. Furthermore, the theoretical framework as a set of ideas predicted, explained and directed the nature of the phenomenon under study.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK THAT GUIDED THE STUDY

Polit and Beck (2012: 142) describe a framework as an underpinning overall concept of a study. A framework in research assists the researcher to organise and contextualise a problem, to gather and analyse data (Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensburg 2012: 26). The theoretical framework interrelates concepts to develop specific ways of looking at a phenomenon. It provides the researcher with a framework within which ideas are organised, thus enabling the researcher to show that the proposed study is a logical extension of current knowledge (Brink, Van der Walt and Rensburg 2012: 26.) It is necessary that the researcher reviews several theories in order to select the most relevant and appropriate one for guiding the study which is based on the research problem.

3.2.1 Selection of a theoretical framework to guide the study

RPL is grounded in the theory of experiential learning which is development a growth and LLL. Van Rooy (2002: 37) defines experiential learning as learning that happens outside the classroom. It occurs in an environment where learners have contact with the realities being practiced, the aim being to develop a level of competence in that area or field of practice. Experiential learning is, however, more concerned with development of older learners as opposed to school

leavers. In support of this notion, Van Rooy (2002:76) points out that experiential learning theory has its taproots in humanistic psychology and introduced a range of perspectives and social purposes of experiential learning through four villages, especially village three which was concerned with the link between experiential learning and social change. Experiential learning cycle has been fundamental to RPL. The assumption here is that learning cannot happen without the cognitive and psychological process of internal mental reconceptualization.

3.2.2 Theories reviewed

Walt and Van Rensburg 2012: 28) put forward the notion that theories assist people to sort out the world make sense of it guide one how to behave in it and predict what generalisation could establish relationships between things within a system. Several theoretical frameworks were considered to guide the study. These included Kolb's Experiential Learning, Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory, Vygotsky's Developmental Theory, and Piaget Developmental Theory.

3.2.2.1 Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning

David Kolb (1984: 45) insists that all learning is experiential. Experiential learning is about: acting and observing, understanding the effects of the action in a specific instance and understanding the general principle and applying it in new circumstances. The value of learning by experience, experiential learning, is an activity in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied. It is not about observing only the phenomenon only, but also doing something with it such as testing the action and interaction to learn more about it, or applying the theory to achieve some desired results (Kolb 1984: 45).

The four elements of learning Kolb presents are: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Kolb (1984: 47), points out that these elements are used to describe how this reflective learning takes place which in principle is what is needed from potential RPL candidates. To demonstrate what they have learnt during the assessment

process. In the learning process Kolb (1984: 47) further describes four types of learners: accommodators (action-orientated and intuitive problem- solvers), diverges (people-orientated and ideas driven), assimilators (observers, ideas driven, inductive thinkers and models) and converges (uses logical analysis and deductive reasoning). Kolb's concept of learning styles has cab support for experiential learning. Learners who often prefer to begin the learning process by doing (Kolb 1984: 45). Kolb (1984: 48) assert that RPL learners can more effectively describe their learning around the cycle by targeting each quadrant:

3.2.2.1.1 Concrete experience

Creating experience involves a description of one's experience, such as what did you do what action you took. The candidate's life learning narrative should reflect common verbs such as worked, created, prepared, implemented, conducted and produced (Kolb 1984: 48).

3.2.2.1.2 Reflective observation

Kolb (1984: 48) assert that reflective observation involves what one noticed and observed about the experience. The candidates' life learning narrative should exhibit common verbs such as observed, watched, noticed, saw, thought and discovered.

3.2.2.1.3 Abstract conceptualization

According to Kolb (1984: 49) abstract conceptualization is about rules, theories and concepts applicable in a particular situation. The candidate s life learning narrative should display common verbs such as concluded, theorized, found, realized, deducted and learned.

3.2.2.1.4 Active experimentation

Active experimentation according to Kolb (1984: 49) is about how one applied his/her learning in new situations. The candidate's life learning narrative should

show the use of common verbs such as used, updated, implemented and charged (Kolb 1984: 52).

Kolb (1984: 52) posits that the concrete experience coupled with active experimentation especially when they occur in the workplace, in community involvement or in life experience, can be classified as informal or non-formal learning. It is generally accepted that the RPL candidate must employ some form of reflective observation in order to be able to identify, formulate and document his/her prior learning (abstract conceptualization) in ways that are acceptable in higher education academic standards (Kolb 1984: 54).

Kolb (1984: 55) points out that the challenge that remains after determining this form of learning is to access and accredit the candidate's prior learning against learning outcomes and express it in terms of formal education credits. Kolb argue that there is a link between experience and assessment for college or university credits, people do learn from their experience, and the results of that learning can be reliability assessed and certified for college or university credit. However, he puts forward the notion that the area is not free of problems (challenges).

The final step in the RPL candidate's integration into higher education is making the transition between informal and non-formal learning on the one hand and formal learning on the other hand. In other words, it is important that the RPL candidate be able to arrive at obstruct conceptualization, which is requirement of formal higher education-level learning. RPL situation calls for the appointment of the RPL coach (trainer or mentor) to facilitate the correct articulation of the needed learning acquired from other learning situations Kolb (1984: 56). Figure 3.1 below depicts Kolb's model of experiential learning.

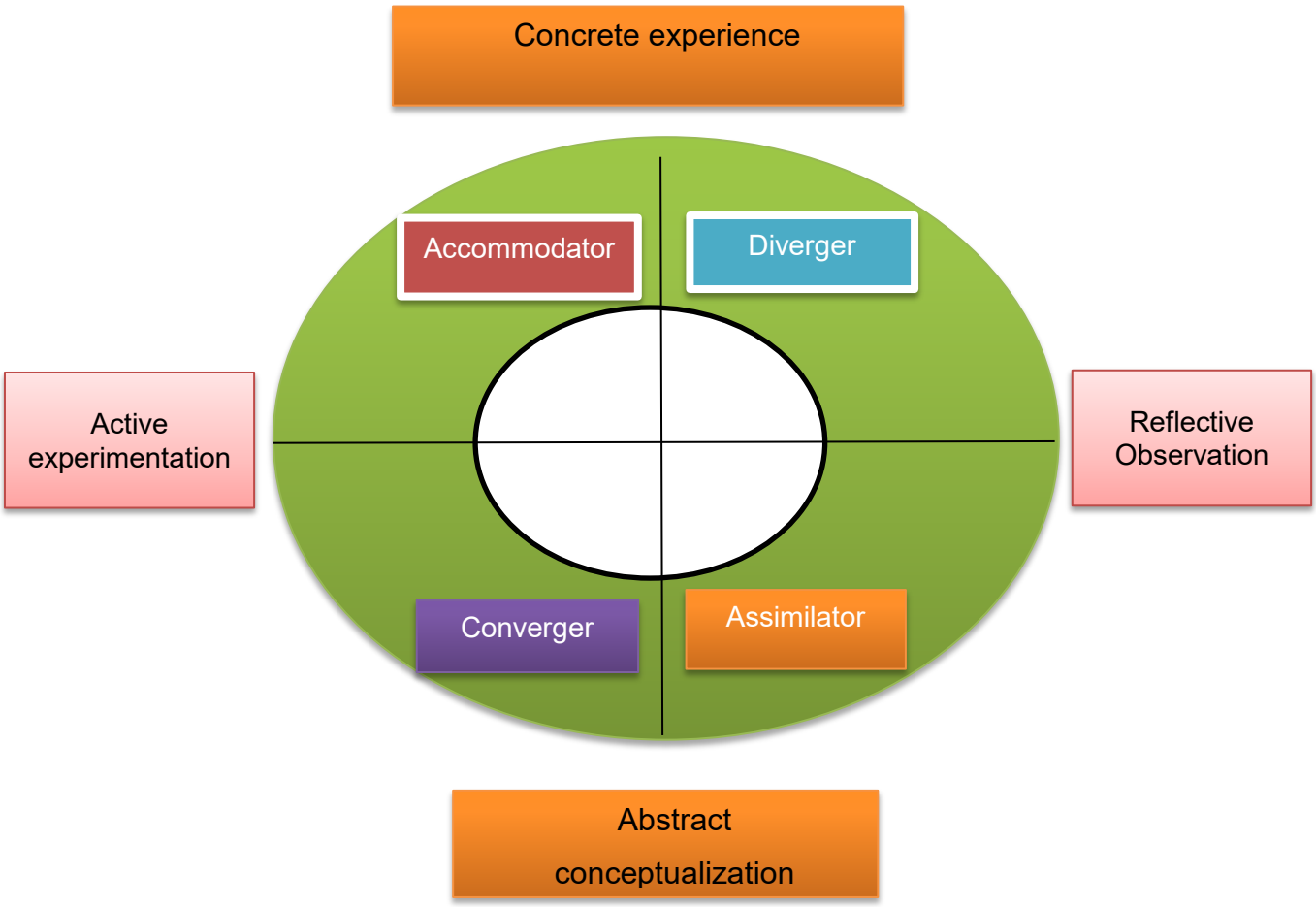


Figure 3.1: Kolb's model of experiential learning

3.2.2.2 Dewey and Experiential Learning

Dewey (1929: 34) puts forward the notion that learning is whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge is transformation process being continuously created and progressively recreated, not independently to be acquired or transmitted. Learning transforms experience in both its objective and subjective forms.

Dewey (1929: 37) asserts that pragmatism is consistent with the view of the relationship between learning, knowledge and RPL. He perceived learning as needing to actively engage with and expand experience in an interactive dialectical relationship with the environment. Instruction should commence with

the experiences learners already have. The experiences and capacities that have been developed during its course to provide the starting point for all further learning and knowledge as being constructed by the thinking subject rather than being in any way objective (Dewey 1929: 37).

3.2.2.3 Vygotsky Theory of Development

Vygotsky's theory of development had its emphases on development which emphasises individual empowerment and LLL through continuous growth and professional development. Vygotsky's theory of developmental emphasise that it is important to recognise that learning happens even in a more natural setting like work and home environment (Vygotsky 1984: 49). Vygotsky's theory of development stresses the role of everyday life activities and social environment contribution in the experience and development process. Vygotsky believed that knowledge developed through experience has a far more lasting impact on the individual's life. Vygotsky further posits that there should be a greater control by mentor who creates activity that will lead towards mastery (Vygotsky 1987: 55).

3.2.2.4 Piaget's Developmental Theory

Finally, the researcher settled for Piaget's theory of development. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017: 227) human development is a complex process involving many influences that need linking with each other in a more cumulative fashion over time. Supporting this notion, Piaget's theory advocates that people create their own meaning through interacting with the environment. Experiential learning is inclusive in that it refers to experience obtained from work, living and reading. Developmental theory highlights that people value life experiences as they promote practical development of knowledge and growth.

According to Piaget (1987: 67), cognitive learning theories, learning achieved through practice is stored in the long-term memory and has a greater chance of not being forgotten as compared to learning that takes place through reading which theoretical knowledge is. They further assert that every-one's experience

is a series of psychosocial crises as they develop. Thus, the developmental framework approach focuses in-depth on past experiences (Piaget 1987: 67).

According to Piaget (1987: 68), there are three processes at work in cognitive development: assimilation, accommodation and equilibration. Assimilation occurs when we modify or change new information to fit into our schemas (what we already know). It keeps the new information or experience and adds to what already exists in our minds. Piaget (1987: 69) also viewed intellectual growth as a process of adaptation (adjustment) to the world. This happens through assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration.

3.2.2.4.1 Assimilation

Piaget (1987: 69-72) defined assimilation as the cognitive process of fitting new information into existing cognitive schemas, perceptions, and understanding. Overall beliefs and understanding of the world do not change as a result of the new information. This means that when you are faced with new information, you make sense of this information by referring to information you already have (information processed and learned previously) and try to fit the new information into the information you already have (Piaget 1987: 69-72).

3.2.2.4.2 Accommodation

Psychologist Jean Piaget (1987: 69-74) defined accommodation as the cognitive process of revising existing cognitive schemas, perceptions, and understanding so that new information can be incorporated. This happens when the existing schema (knowledge) does not work, and needs to be changed to deal with a new object or situation. In order to make sense of some new information, individuals actually adjust information already have (schemas already have) to make room for this new information (Piaget 1987: 69-74).

3.2.2.4.3 Equilibration

Piaget (1987: 74) believed that all human thought seeks order and is uncomfortable with contradictions and inconsistencies in knowledge structures. In other words, we seek equilibrium in our cognitive structures. Equilibrium occurs when an individual schema can deal with most new information through assimilation. However, an unpleasant state of disequilibrium occurs when new information cannot be fitted into existing schemas (assimilation) (Piaget 1987: 69).

Piaget (1987:74) also believed that cognitive development did not progress at a steady rate, but rather in leaps and bounds. Equilibration is the force which drives the learning process as we do not like to be frustrated and will seek to restore balance by mastering the new challenge (accommodation). Once the new information is acquired the process of assimilation with the new schema will continue until the next time we need to make an adjustment to it.

Piaget (1987: 75) did not explicitly relate his theory to adult education, although later researchers have explained how features of Piaget's theory can be applied to teaching and adult learning. Discovery learning, the idea that learners learn best through doing and actively exploring was seen as central to the transformation of learning. According to Piaget (1987: 75), assimilation and accommodation require an active learner, not a passive one, because problem-solving skills cannot be taught, they must be discovered (Piaget 1987; 75).

Within the classroom learning should be student-centered and accomplished through active discovery learning. The role of the teacher is to facilitate learning, rather than direct tuition. Therefore, teachers should encourage the following Piaget's stages of Cognitive Development within the classroom:

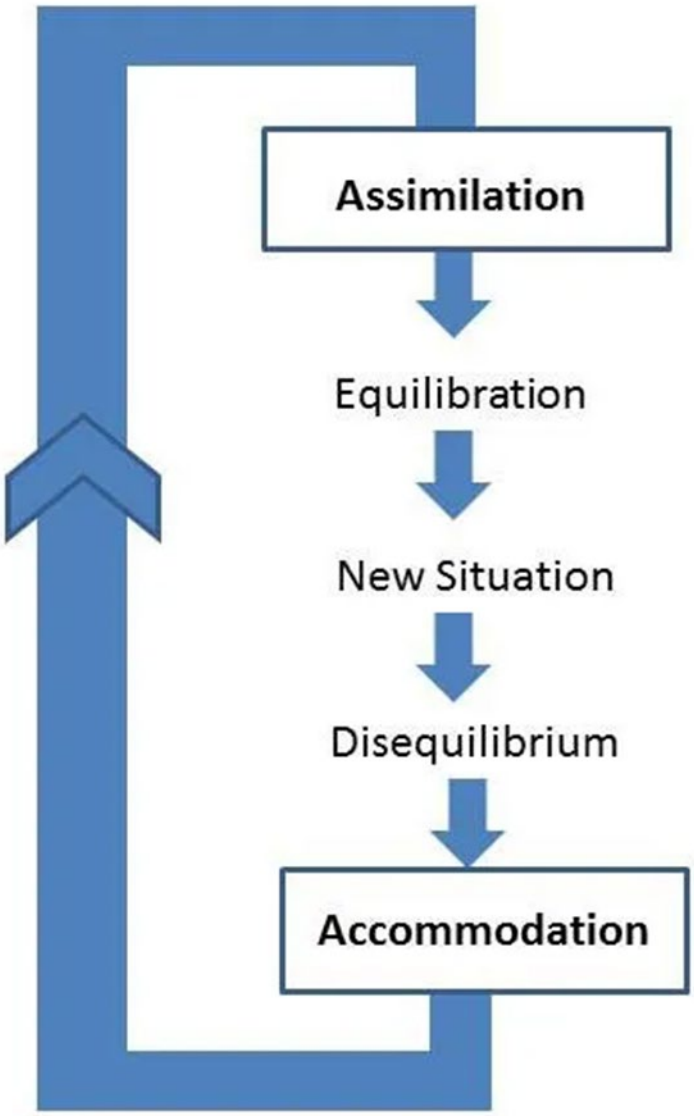
3.2.2.5 Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development is a comprehensive theory about the nature and development of human intelligence. Piaget believed that one's childhood experience plays a vital and active role in a person's development Piaget's idea is primarily known as a Developmental Stage Theory. The theory deals with the nature of knowledge itself and how humans gradually come to acquire, construct and use it (Piaget 1987: 74).

According to Piaget (1987: 76), a progressive reorganization of mental processes resulting from biological maturation, development and environmental experience. He believed that children construct an understanding of the world around them, experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment, and then adjust their ideas accordingly. Moreover, Piaget claimed that cognitive development is at the center of the human organism, and language is contingent on knowledge and understanding acquired through cognitive development (Piaget's 1987: 76-78).

Piaget (1987: 79-80) noted that reality is a dynamic system of continuous change and, as such, is defined in reference to the two conditions that define dynamic systems. Specifically, he argued that reality involves transformations and states. Transformations refer to all manners of changes that a thing or person can undergo. Humans change in their characteristics as they grow older in size; this, Piaget (1987: 69-74) argued that if human intelligence is to be adaptive, it must have functions to represent both the transformational and the static aspects of reality. He proposed that operative intelligence is responsible for the representation and manipulation of the dynamic or transformational aspects of reality, and that figurative intelligence is responsible for the representation of the static aspects of reality. Table 3.1 below presents Piaget's developmental theory.

Table 3.1 Piaget's Developmental Theory



3.3 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter the researcher discussed the developmental theory which was selected as the theoretical framework to guide this study. The next chapter, Chapter 4 focuses on the research methodology that was used for this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to develop a practice--+e framework to enhance the implementation of RPL in the FOHS in DUT. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010: 11), the emphasis in research methodology is the process of research, procedures and tools to be used. (Polit and Beck (2006: 68) define research methodology as the general principles, philosophy or strategies required to elicit the required data for the study. Research methodology, therefore, encompasses the whole process of the research, from the philosophical assumptions, to the questions, data collection, and data analysis, the interpretation of findings, ethical considerations and issues related to trustworthiness of the data. A multistage mixed methods design was used to conduct this research.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a plan and structure of the investigation to obtain evidence to answer research questions. Scotland (2010: 9) further describes research design as a logic that links the data to be collected and the conclusions that are drawn from the initial questions that motivated the study. Creswell and Creswell (2017: 60) describe the mixed methods research design as the design with a philosophical assumption that guides the direction of the collection and analysis of data (Creswell and Creswell 2017: 60). The mixed methods design is a mixture of qualitative data and quantitative data and mixed methods reside in the idea that all methods have biases and weaknesses and the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data neutralizes the weaknesses of each type of data. This approach enables the researcher to answer the research questions and achieve the study objectives (Creswell and Creswell 2017: 65).

4.2.1 Multistage mixed methods design

Creswell and Creswell (2017: 65) states that the multistage mixed method framework is the most general framework among advanced research designs. Its purpose is to build a comprehensive understanding of the case under study. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003: 67), researchers using multi-stages of data collection may include different groupings of convergent, explanatory sequential and exploratory sequential approaches. This study employed a multistage mixed methods design with an embedded exploratory sequential design as illustrated in (Figure 4.1). The first stage utilized the collection of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. The second stage utilized quantitative data collection through candidates' portfolios of evidence, checking availability of documents required as evidence of prior experiential learning and competencies. The third stage utilized the collection of quantitative data through reviewing the selection criteria and learner profiling for the approval process, using the flow chart for RPL application and approval process records. In each stage, the researcher drew upon meaning that provided innovative approaches for addressing contemporary issues and ultimately achieved the goal of developing a theoretical model to enhance RPL implementation in the FOHS at DUT.

4.2.2 Origin of multistage mixed methods

Health services research includes investigation of complex, multilevel processes and systems that may require both qualitative and quantitative forms as a powerful tool for investigation of such systems. Health services also use advanced frameworks that entail adding a larger framework that incorporates the basic design. The larger framework involves multistage mixed methods framework, which is defined as three or more stages where there is sequential component or two or more stages where there is a convergent component. This type of framework may be used in longitudinal studies focused on evaluating the design, implementation, and assessment of a programme or intervention (Creswell and Creswell 2017: 65). Multistage mixed method framework exploratory sequential design is presented in Figure 4.1 below:

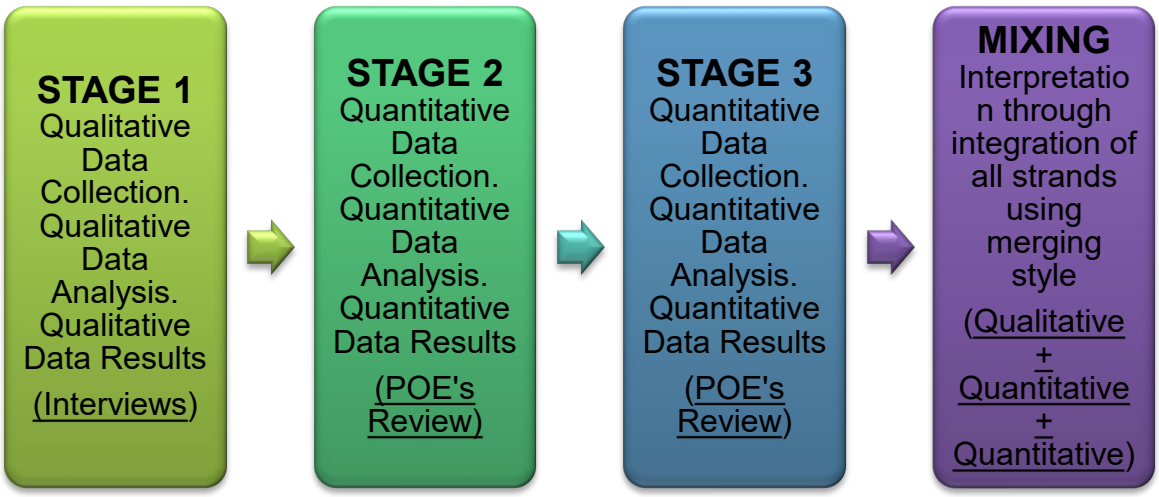


Figure 4.1: Multistage Mixed Methods Framework

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Creswell and Creswell (2017: 32) points out that research cannot be conducted in a theoretical vacuum as researchers bring with them background knowledge, which they use to interpret what they see. This background knowledge is used to understand and study what exists in social science and this knowledge is called a paradigm. This research took place within the pragmatic paradigm, which guided the researcher to understand the world of lived experience from the point of view of those who lived it. The focus of this research is on the people who need RPL and those who are involved in the RPL programme, namely, The Director of CELT, Heads of Departments, RPL Assessors and RPL Moderators who are involved in assessments and moderation of the RPL candidates in the FOHS at DUT.

In this pragmatic paradigm, the researcher gained an understanding of the participants' experiences by interacting with them and collecting data from them. As stated by Lincoln and Guba (2019: 56), a paradigm comprises four elements, namely epistemology which describes how the truth is extracted from existing knowledge; ontology which explain reality as it exists in the world; methodology, which explains the field, set of steps or plan of research; and axiology defines ethical requirements and the researchers' standpoint in the study. These elements guided the design used in the study.

In addition to this, investigators specify the philosophical views and assumptions which guided them on how to obtain information to solve a problem. They made positivist, constructivist, participatory and pragmatist assumptions in order to search for meaning in the world in which they live or work and use all available methods to solve the problem (Creswell 2003: 6).

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010: 11) convey the philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies and its importance for focusing attention on the research problem in social science research and then using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem. Creswell and Creswell (2017: 10) assert that pragmatism provides a philosophical basis for research, which states that pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality. This applies to mixed methods research, as researchers draw liberally from both qualitative and quantitative assumptions when they engage in their research. Furthermore, pragmatists do not see the world as an absolute unit. In a similar way, mixed methods researchers look for different approaches for collecting and analysing data rather than subscribing to only one, such as qualitative or quantitative. Creswell and Creswell (2017: 10) conclude that, for mixed methods researchers, pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions as well as different forms of data collection and analysis.

4.3.1 Epistemology

Creswell and Creswell (2017: 10) define epistemology as the study of the nature of knowledge and justification. Epistemology is used to describe how we come to know something or how we know the truth or reality. To extract the truth from the participants, the researcher interacted and had a dialogue with them, and used a narrative form of analysis to uncover their understanding of real meaning of the social phenomenon. In so doing, the researcher discovered and obtained a deep understanding of the participants' multiple meanings of the occurrence. In the current study, the social actors or participants were the director of CELT, ten(10) heads of departments, ten (10) RPL assessors and

ten (10) RPL moderators, who are also moderators in the FOHS as they are directly involved with RPL implementation.

4.3.2 Ontology

According to Scotland (2010: 9), ontology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the assumptions we make in order to believe that something makes sense or is real. It is a philosophical study of the nature of existence or reality. Reality is subjective, can be repeated and may fluctuate, depending on the social actors involved in its construction. It is constructed through group interactions of people with different perceptions, backgrounds, assumptions and experiences. In this current study, individual interviews as a data collection method were used to enable the researcher to obtain rich, in-depth information from the participants and enabled the researcher to interact with participants, thus gaining insight through their non-verbal communication.

4.3.3 Methodology

Scotland (2010: 9) states that term methodology refers to the research procedures, design, approaches and methods used in a well-planned investigation to gather data, identify participants, instruments used, and data analysis as part of the broad field of methodology. The researcher followed the steps in the investigation process, namely philosophical worldviews, definition of the assumptions, and formulation of the research questions, the research design, collection of data and analysis, and interpretation thereof. In this current study, a multistage mixed methods approach, using a case study framework was employed.

4.3.4 Axiology

Finnis (1980: 154) describes axiology as ethical issues that need to be considered when developing a research proposal. It considers what values we should attribute to the different aspects of the research approach and entails making the correct decisions so that the researcher minimises risk or harm. The

researcher discussed the trustworthiness, validity and reliability of the research with participants in the study. Finnis (1980: 155) points out that answers to questions related to ethical issues are best guided by criteria of ethical conduct, namely deontology.

4.4 RESEARCH SETTING

Naturalistic setting is the real world of participants (Polit and Beck (2006: 58). Polit and Beck (2006: 58) point out that research setting is classified as a natural, partially or highly controlled environment within which a research phenomenon of interest is studied. The research phenomenon occurred within the natural environment, which is the FOHS that is located at Ritson Campus at the DUT. This faculty comprises eleven (11) departments, namely Basic Medical Sciences, Biomedical and Clinical Technology, Chiropractic, Community Health Studies, Dental Sciences, Emergency Medical Care and Rescue, Homeopathy, Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics, Nursing, Radiography and Somatology. The Basic Medical Sciences Department is a service department which is not involved in the assessment of RPL applications.

4.5 TARGET POPULATION

The target population is defined by Burns and Grove (2007: 34) as a well-defined set of elements, which could be records, participants or events, a population. It is an aggregate of elements that meets the inclusion criteria of the study in terms of the phenomenon of interest. The target population in this study included those who are directly involved with the assessment of RPL applications.

4.5.1 Population for Qualitative Stage 1

Population in this stage included individuals involved in the implementation of RPL, one (1) Director of CELT, ten (10) heads of departments, ten (10) RPL

assessors as well as ten (10) academics as RPL moderators from each of the ten (10) departments in FOHS, bringing the total number of participants to 31.

4.5.2 Population for Quantitative Stage 2

Population in this stage included eighty (80) portfolios of evidence for RPL applicants between 2009 and 2018 from each selected department which were reviewed to check the availability of the documents needed as evidence of experiential learning.

4.5.3 Population for Quantitative Stage 3

Population in this stage included eighty (80) portfolios of evidence for RPL applicants between 2009 and 2018 from each selected department which were reviewed, reviewing the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile.

4.6 SAMPLING PROCESS

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010: 169) state that the sampling process involves selecting units of analysis, which can be people, groups, artefacts or settings. The same authors point out that sampling techniques for mixed methods include choosing participants for a study using both non-probability and probability samplings for the qualitative and quantitative methods. The sampling process for the three phases was as follows:

4.6.1 Non-probability sampling in Stage 1

According to Polit and Beck (2006: 763), non-probability sampling is used in qualitative research and participants are selected on the basis of having rich information about the phenomenon. This technique is used mainly in qualitative research to select unit of study or participants who can provide data that will address the research questions. Purposive sampling was used in this study. The sample size of 31 comprised one (1) Director of CELT, ten (10) heads of departments, ten (10) RPL assessors and ten (10) moderators were

purposively selected from the ten (10) departments in the FOHS. The selected participants had information about the phenomenon because of their direct involvement in the implementation of RPL policy in the different departments in the FOHS at DUT. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were as follows:

4.6.1.1 Inclusion criteria

- One (1) Director of CELT involved in the implementation of RPL.
- Academics involved as RPL assessors from ten (10) departments in the FOHS.
- Heads of departments in the FOHS from ten (10) departments in the FOHS.
- Academics involved as RPL moderators from ten (10) departments in FOHS were included in this study.

4.6.1.2 Exclusion criteria

- Academics in CELT not involved in the implementation of RPL in FOHS.
- Heads of departments who were not RPL assessors in the FOHS.
- Academics who were not RPL moderators in ten (10) departments in FOHS.

4.6.2 Probability sampling in stage 2

Probability sampling techniques are used mostly in quantitative research to obtain a sample that most accurately represent the entire population. A simple random sampling was used to select the sample of 80 portfolios of evidence from the ten (10) departments in the FOHS. The portfolios of evidence fulfilled the following criteria:

4.6.2.1 Inclusion criteria

- Applicants who were above 23 years.
- Applicants with prior learning in the relevant field of study.
- Applicants with minimum 5 years work experience in the same field of learning.

- Applicants who had paid an application fee as stipulated by the university.
- Applicants who applied between 2009 and 2018.

4.6.2.2 Exclusion criteria

- Applicants who applied after 2018 because the study was reviewing the implementation of RPL in a period of 10 years from the date of approval of this study.

4.6.3 Probability sampling in stage 3

The sample of 80 portfolios of evidence used in stage 2 were used to review the selection criteria, using the RPL flow chart to assess the approval process in the practice of each selected departments.

4.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Before data collection process, the study was approved by the Institution and the Institutional Research and Ethics Committee (IREC) the Ethical Clearance (IREC 100/19) was provided for the study (Appendix 1). The researcher sought gatekeeper permission from the Director of Research to access the Faculty of Health Sciences (Appendix 2a) and permission was granted (Appendix 2b). Permissions to conduct the study were sought from the Heads of Departments (Appendix 3a) and were granted (Appendices 3b – 3k).

In the current study, the data collection process was done in three stages. In stage one, qualitative data collection was conducted through interviews to explore the RPL implementation in the FOHS Departments at DUT. In stage two, records of the portfolios of evidence were reviewed to obtain an in-depth knowledge and evidence of the candidate's competencies submitted to the Health Science Department in the FOHS at DUT. The third stage was reviewing of the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile, including RPL application and approval process review.

4.7.1 Stage 1: Qualitative data collection through interviews

Structured, one-on-one individual interviews, utilising open-ended questions were used in this study. Denzin and Lincoln (2015: 64) state that individual interviewing is the most common and powerful method used by researchers to understand human beings. The individual interview is a qualitative technique that was used by researcher, in the first stage, to elicit in-depth information from the participants on the research topic (Guest *et al.* 2009: 29). In this study, the individual interview was used to explore the participant's perceptions of the RPL implementation in the FOHS at DUT. In this study, 31 participants from different departments in the FOHS at DUT were interviewed. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants, using an interview guide (Appendix 6). One (1) Director of CELT, ten (10) heads of departments, ten (10) RPL assessors and ten (10) RPL moderators were from the ten (10) departments that were selected

The interviews were conducted in the participant's offices as soon as participants confirmed the date, time and their availability. The researcher used both the voice recorder and field notes to collect data. The voice recorder was used to record the interviews with participants to ensure that voices of participants were kept alive to convey the actual verbatim message of the participants. Field notes were used to support the recorded information and to record non-verbal cues. All participants were advised during the information sharing session that the interviews will be recorded and the field notes will be taken and were reminded before each interview commenced.

The participant's rights to participate in the study were explained during the information sharing session. All participants were assured during the information sharing session that there were no risks/discomforts involved from participation in the study (Appendix 4). All participants were also assured about anonymity and confidentiality aiming at ensuring the principles of beneficence which, according to Polit and Beck (2012: 169), is one of the most fundamental ethical principles imposing a duty on the researcher to minimise harm and maximise the benefits.

The right to anonymity and confidentiality was maintained in data handling to ensure that there was no untoward association with data. All interviews were conducted in privacy. Linked anonymity was observed during the study should it happen that the researcher required to revisit the participant to get more information or clarity on data collected. The data collection tool had no participant name written on it. Only the researcher had access on this information which was kept under lock and key. All participants signed consent before interviews started (Appendix 5). Each interview lasted for forty-five (45) minutes. Probing was done for some questions to allow clarity and in-depth information. This assisted to confirm that the researcher understood the message correctly. This is a simple method of confirming the accuracy of qualitative data. Participants were given the opportunity to respond with the researcher probing for further information. Data was collected from the interviewees until data saturation was reached.

- What is your opinion regarding the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile in the FOHS?
- What RPL competences do you have as RPL practitioner in the FOHS?
- What are your perceptions as RPL assessor and RPL moderator with regard to RPL implementation?
- What training programmes are available for RPL practitioners in the FOHS?

The researcher collected data through face-to face in-depth interviews from one (1) Director of CELT, ten (10) heads of departments, ten (10) RPL assessors and ten (10) RPL moderators from the departments that were selected in the FOHS at DUT (Appendices 6a-6d). The participant's interviews from these various departments continued until there was no new information coming forth. All interviews were conducted in English and audio-recorded.

4.7.2 Stage 2: Quantitative data collection to review portfolio of evidence

This stage involved review of the RPL candidates' portfolios of evidence in the ten (10) departments in the FOHS at DUT. Data collection tool checking available evidence in the portfolio was used to obtain data from the portfolios. The consent to access the PoEs in the FOHS was obtained from the FOHS Deans office. The researcher examined the portfolios of evidence to check for availability and content of all documents that were needed as evidence of the experiential learning and competencies. Table 4.1 below present the data collection tool:

Table 4.1: Data collection tool for portfolio of evidence

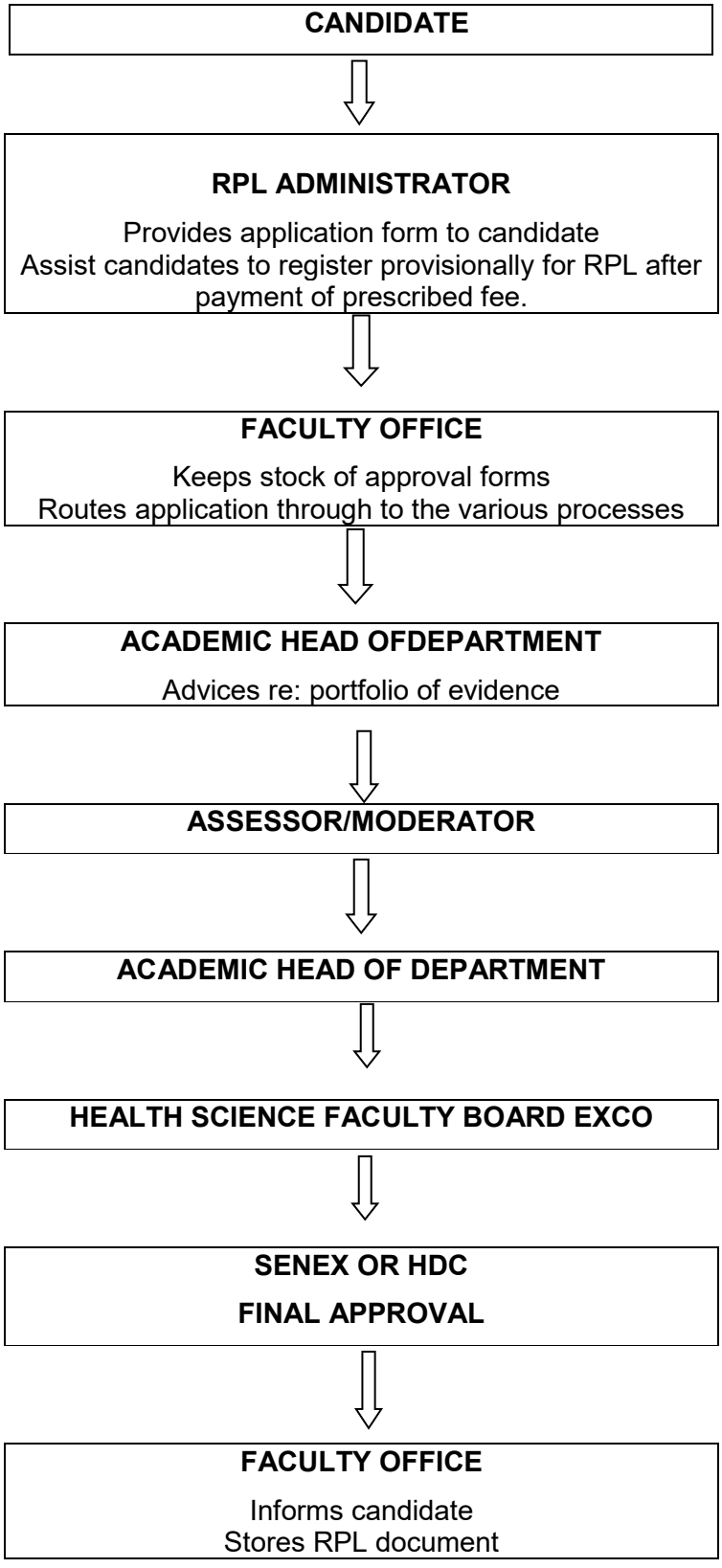
Available evidence	Yes	No
• Cover page		
• Table of contents		
• Covering letter of why the candidate is applying		
• RPL Application Form 1A, ticking as it may be applicable, option (1) for undergraduate qualifications, or (2) for RPL exemptions of subjects / s and / or (3) for Advanced standing, • Signing dates.		
• Proof of payments (non-refundable application fee)		
• Detailed curriculum vitae		
• Human Resource Job Profile where applicable with key performance area/indicators and level / scope of candidates' expertise.		
• Sections of samples of portfolio of evidence aligning and matching against the outcomes of the requisite qualification		
• Letters of support AND /OR awards are admissible. • Testimonials.		
• Certified identity document and matric certificate or / and equivalent.		
• Annexures of professional skills development training, continuous professional development activities and transcripts of any qualifications attained that you may find suitable to support your application. • Reflective diary.		

4.7.3 Stage 3: Quantitative data collection to review the RPL selection criteria

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 649) quantitative evaluation procedures can be used to evaluate practice which can include record review. In the current study, the RPL application and approval processes were reviewed, using the flow chart for RPL application and approval process in the FOHS at DUT. Each PoE was checked if it went through both processes. This was achieved through the use of the flow chart and this is how the quantitative data was generated.

Each PoE was attached a flow chart and as we check a tick was made for each step. Table 4.2 presents the flow chart for RPL application and approval processes.

Table 4.2: Flowchart for RPL application and approval process



4.7.4 Data management, storage and disposal

The researcher used both the voice recorder and field notes to collect and store data. The voice recorder was used to record the interviews with participants involved in the implementation of RPL in the FOHS and CELT at DUT in order to ensure that voices of the participants were kept alive to convey the actual verbatim message of the participants. Field notes were used to support the recorded information and the non-verbal cues.

The participants were advised during the information sharing session that the interviews would be recorded and field notes taken and were reminded again before each interview commenced. Transcripts from data collection were stored in a locked cupboard to which only the researcher had access. All forms of data will remain stored in a password protected computer and the external hard drive will be stored in a locked cupboard that is accessible to the researcher and supervisors only. All data will be destroyed five (5) years after completion of the study by shredding the hard copies of transcribed data. The electronic versions of the transcribed data from the in-depth individual interviews and field notes and audio files of the collected data will be deleted from the PC hard drive and external hard drive and deleted from the PCs recycle bin.

4.8 PRE-TESTING OF THE DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

A pre-test was conducted before the commencement of the main study to establish reliability and validity of data collection instruments. The pre-test was also used to identify whether there is a need to refine the methodology or the data collection tool. According to Creswell (2003: 185-187), pre-testing of the data collection tool assists in assessing the instrumentation rigor and formulating measures to address any limitations or threats to bias and management procedures, before carrying out the formal phase of quantitative and qualitative research. Pre-test interviews were carried out in one faculty in the FOHS at DUT which was not part of the main sample of subjects to avoid contamination of the study.

The research instruments were tested in the Department of Basic Medical Sciences, which did not participate in the main study, to check for wording of questions, lack of clarity of instructions that could impede the instrument's ability to collect data in an economical and systemic fashion. Only structured interview guides were tested and five (5) participants participated in the pre-test. The pretesting of the data collection tool resulted in changing the sequence of the questions to provide the smooth flow of questions and answers.

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS

This study consisted of three data sets: qualitative data, quantitative data from the record review and data from review of the portfolios in the FOHS at DUT. These sets of data were analysed using SPSS version 26.0 and interpreted to conclude findings of the study and to develop a tailored practice framework.

4.9.1 Stage 1: Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data analysis was performed simultaneously with data collection to detect data saturation. Data was organized and stored using the ATLAS TI program. The ATLAS TI programme allowed the researcher to capture, organize and store data into categories and sub-categories, themes and sub-themes and assign codes. This organisation of data facilitated understanding, interpretation and creation of the meaning of qualitative data. The researcher listened to audiotapes and also read and re-read all the transcripts to get a sense of the whole data and some ideas were jotted down as they emerged. One transcript of the interview was picked up at a time from the field notes and read and re-read, underlining meanings of the data were sorted out and jotted down until the researcher fully understood the meaning of the data.

The voice recorded responses were listened to again and again there after transcribed and compared to the transcribed data. Important quotations from the participant's responses were identified. Information from the field notes was compared to that on the audiotape to make sure that all data had been captured correctly. Themes according to which to organise data were predetermined,

guided by the theoretical framework that was guiding the study. The data were coded in order to allow for organising it into sub-themes which were grouped according to already predetermined themes. The researcher focussed on roundedness and density of data by describing how many times different categories appeared in the data and linking the codes to create meaning. An analytic procedure, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2017: 185-187) consists of the following five phases:

4.9.2 Data sifting

Data sifting is the process of extracting meaning from raw data. Since mixed methods data can be disordered and ambiguous, the process of data analysis is crucial in reconstructing the data in a more meaningful way. The process involved sorting and sifting the data whilst searching for patterns and classes. The researcher commenced with describing the data, followed by analysing and interpreting the data. As a means of converting data into findings, a basic process for data analysis was followed. This included the phases of organizing the data, becoming immersed in the data, coding the data-generating categories and themes and interpreting the data through analytic memos. Each of these phases of data analysis consists of data reduction and interpretation.

4.9.2.1 Organizing the data

Organising the data comprises general cleaning up of the data to make it more manageable. This involved transcribing all the individual interviews and recording notes during participant's interviews.

4.9.2.2 Becoming immersed in the data

Researchers need to engage with the data constantly to become familiar with it. This involves reading and re-reading the data to assign codes and identity themes. Being immersed in the data allows the researcher to become more aware of the life world of the participants. For this investigation, the researcher made notes constantly, at every stage of the research process, that is, while

rereading all transcripts, during the application process observation, during the interviews and the portfolio reviews, repeatedly.

4.9.2.3 Coding the data

Coding, which is the core of the analytical procedure, facilitates the identification of patterns and themes. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004: 502-503), coding is a procedure whereby the researcher uses descriptive words to make chunks, segments, parts, sentences, phrases and whole paragraphs of collected data. They also state that a code is a label or tag that gives meaning to a segment of the data. With coding, a large amount of data is condensed into simpler and manageable data sets for data analysis. In the current study, the researcher engaged in a process of defining and sorting data and vice versa, to create a developmental framework. This initial process of coding, known as open coding enabled the researcher to inductively develop major codes directly from the data.

4.9.2.4 Generating categories and themes

On completion of the open coding of the data collected in this study, codes were grouped according to categories of commonality. The open codes were then grouped into four to five emerging themes. These themes were used to link the underlying meanings together in the various categories, those found within the categories and those that cut across categories. The researcher identified verbatim quotes from the data to illustrate important findings. In this regard, various quotes were functionally included in the different themes.

4.9.3 Stage 2: Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data set was analysed in two forms. The first analysis included a composite analysis of all the data from eighty (80) portfolios of evidence to assess the availability and the content that is required to assess the experiential learning and competencies from each of them. Secondly, comparisons were made amongst all portfolios.

4.9.4 Stage 3: Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data from the eighty (80) RPL applications were reviewed, reviewing the selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile. RPL approvals were analysed independently, reviewing the process of approval with the intention of mixing the results during the overall interpretation (Creswell and Creswell 2017: 70).

4.9.4.1 Writing up of data

The last phase in the analysis of data includes writing up findings that emerged from the data. The interpretation of data necessitates elucidating the meaning of themes identified, and linkages and clarifying the findings by making inferences, drawing conclusions and explaining the significance of findings.

In the write up of the research, the emergent themes were used as headings because they reflect the major findings of the research (Creswell 2003: 189). For this study, the researcher linked the empirical findings to the literature review and made comparisons. The researcher's arguments were supported by verbatim quotations from the empirical investigation. The collected data can be presented in narrative form as graphs, matrices, mind maps or flow charts. The findings of this study were presented in a narrative format.

4.9.5 Mixing of data from the three stages

This study called for conducting a multistage sequential mixing method design due to its nature to enable answering the study questions.

4.9.5.1 Multistage Sequential Mixing

This stage involved an iterative sequential data analysis which occurred as the sequential design used had more than two stages Tashakkori (2009:56). One stage occurred after the other. Quantitative analysis emerged from qualitative analysis. Data analysis was conducted separately at each stage.

4.9.5.2 Mixing of data sets: determining when and how to mix data sets

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011: 66) distinguish between four distinct levels at which data sets can be mixed, these include mixing during study design, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. Data analysis was done independently at each stage. Mixing occurred at the point of interface also known as the stage of integration. The point within the process of research where the qualitative, quantitative and quantitative strands are mixed. In this study mixing was conducted during data interpretation. The researcher first individually analysed each strand of data. By comparing and interpreting the results of three strands, the researcher was able to draw inferences.

4.9.5.3 Meta-inferences

The inferences were integrated to create Meta-inferences which enabled the researcher to gain additional insight to draw meaningful conclusions from all stages. The experiences, viewpoints and opinions of participants assisted the researcher in developing the quality and effective practice framework. Multi-stage sequential mixing is presented in Figure 4.1.

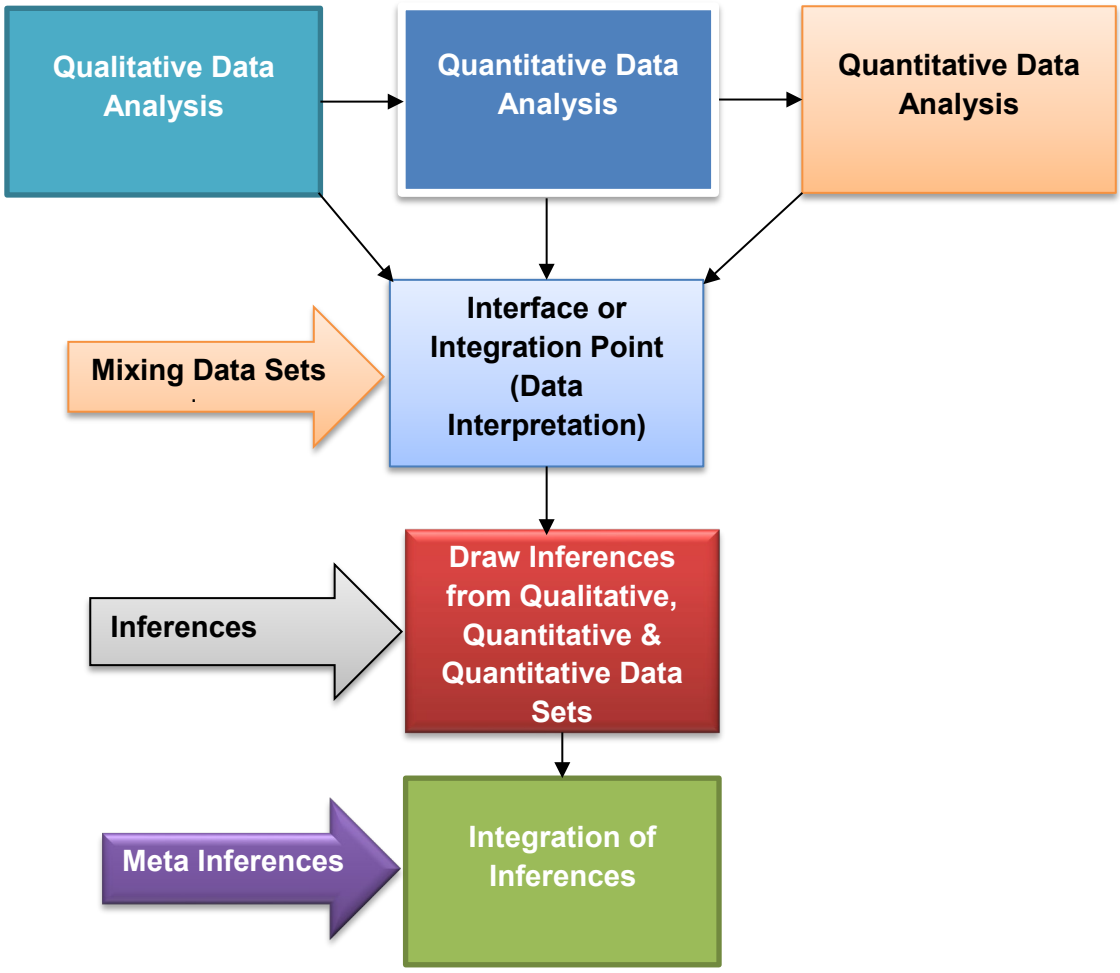


Figure 4.2: Multi-Stage Sequential Mixing

4.9.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in this study was ensured through employing the following strategies as described by Guba and Lincoln (2006: 290): (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability and (d) conformability. These were examined to establish the worth of this study.

4.9.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is concerned with the following questions, did the study measure what it was supposed to measure. When determining the credibility of a study the researcher needs to consider what was done during data collection, how the data were analysed and how it was presented the data. Triangulation: This involves the cross-checking of data, by different sources and research methods and also by different researchers. Triangulation across sources pertains to using several types of informants to obtain the evidence, while triangulation across methods involves the researcher using different methods to obtain the data Guba and Lincoln (2006:295). For this study the research sample consisted of RPL assessors, RPL moderators and head of departments in the FOHS. The researcher obtained data by conducting structured interviews using open-ended questions and interviewing the participants personally gave the researcher an opportunity to observe participants non-verbal ques.

4.9.6.2 Member checks

Member checking pertains to the importance of researchers sharing the data and their analysis of the data with the participants. With regard to this study the researcher verified with the participants whether the transcripts were a true reflection of what transpired in the interviews. The same applied to the research findings. The researcher examined the previous research findings. It is advisable that researchers verify their findings with research conducted in the past on the topic of study. For this study, the researcher did a thorough literature search prior to developing the interview guide for open-ended questions.

4.9.6.3 Transferability

Transferability is considered as the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to another context Guba and Lincoln (2006:295). For the purposes of this study the researcher has described the research process in detail and has given a thick description of the collected data. This will enable other researchers to check if the findings of this particular study can be applied

elsewhere. The researcher discussed the research findings in detail and illustrated important findings with verbatim quotations from the interviews. Research findings from the empirical investigation were integrated with the literature findings.

4.9.6.4 Dependability

The issue of dependability relates to ensuring that the replication of a study in a similar context using a similar sample would provide the same findings (Shenton 2004: 71). In order to ensure this Shenton (2004: 71) proposes that the research report stipulate the processes in detail so that another researcher can repeat the study. With regard to this study, the researcher has described in detail the research design and its implementation and the way in which data were gathered and analysed. The study also fulfils the requirement of authentication because the researcher documented the research process in a logical and traceable way.

4.9.6.5 Conformability

Conformability confirms the authenticity of the research findings as a true reflection of the participant's responses and views and not the researcher's bias and perspectives. Conformability is established using triangulation across researchers and methods, reflexive journals and auditing.

4.9.7 Triangulation

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010: 32-33), triangulation is defined as a process which involves the combination and comparison of multiple data sources, data collection and analysis procedures, research methods and inferences that occur at the end of the study. In this study, triangulation was used to add richness to the study and to substantiate selected aspects of the text. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010: 32-34) argue that triangulation does not refer to mixing of qualitative and quantitative data but to checking validity of an

interpretation based on a single source of data by recourse to at least one further source that is of a strategically different type.

In this study, data and methodological triangulation was ensured by conducting one-on-one interviews with the heads of each department within the faculty, analysing the portfolio of evidence and using the flow chart to analyse the RPL implementation process. Data triangulation entails gathering data through several sampling strategies so that slices of data at different times, as well as a variety of data sources are gathered. Methodological triangulation refers to the use of more than one method for gathering data (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010: 32-34).

4.9.8 Clarifying research bias

Merriam (1988:52-66) asserts that it is imperative to clarify the researcher's bias in qualitative research because it helps the reader to comprehend the bias or the position of the researcher, as well as the assumptions that may affect the study in different unpredictable and predictable ways. In the current study, research bias revolved around what is seen as the implementation process of RPL in DUT faculties.

4.9.9 Deontology

Deontology is defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 314) as the understanding that every action undertaken during the research has its own consequences, intended to benefit participants. The aim of this study was to develop a practice framework to enhance RPL practice in the FOHS at DUT. Therefore, ethical considerations that were addressed in this study included four principles, namely privacy, accuracy, property and accessibility.

4.9.9.1 Privacy

Privacy and confidentiality were ensured throughout this study. Participants were informed that they were allowed to withhold sensitive information about themselves if they wished to.

4.9.9.2 Accuracy

The researcher ensured that the information was authentic, accurate and also took cognizance of the fidelity of the information. The researcher also ensured that all participants were aware that the data would be recorded accurately. The participants were assured that there were no risks involved in this current study.

4.9.9.3 Property

The researcher is the sole owner of the data. There was no exchange of data or any payments for the data. Information from this study will be disseminated through manuscript publications.

4.9.9.4 Accessibility

Data from this study will remain confidential. Only the researcher, supervisor and co-supervisor will have access to the data. Transcripts from data collection will be stored in a locked cupboard, and all forms of data will remain stored in a password-protected computer and the external hard drive that will be kept in locked cupboards.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before the commencement of the study, ethics clearance was obtained from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC Number 100/19) (Appendix 1). Thereafter, gatekeepers' permission was sought (Appendix 2a) and granted by the DUT Gatekeeper Permission Committee (Appendix 2b). Permission was also sought (Appendix 3a) and granted by the Heads of Departments in the FOHS, namely Biomedical and Clinical Technology (Appendix 3b), Chiropractic

(Appendix 3c), Community Health Studies (Appendix 3d), Dental Sciences (Appendix 3c), Emergency Medical Care and Rescue (Appendix 3f), Homeopathy (Appendix 3g), Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics (Appendix 3h), Nursing (Appendix 3i), Radiography (Appendix 3j) and Somatology (Appendix 3k).

Bassey (1999: 73) argues that ethical consideration should address the ethical principles which include: (a) respect for democracy (b) respect for truth and (c) respect for person as data- gathering involves a person and the gathering of most educational case data involves at least some invasion of personal privacy. Data gathering was limited to elicit information that was relevant to the study, which involved face-to-face interviews and the use of probing questions. To ensure that ethical consideration was addressed, three broad principles on which standards of ethical conduct research are based were used (Polit and Beck 2006: 152). These principles are beneficence, respect for human dignity and justice.

4.10.1 Beneficence

Beneficence is the moral obligation of the researcher to act for the benefit of the others (Polit and Beck 2006: 152). The principle of beneficence holds that there is an obligation for the researcher to protect participants from harm and discomfort, and the right to protect participants from exploitation as well as removing conditions that might cause harm to participants. Participants in this study were not subjected to any harm such as psychological distress and discomfort. Participants, in the Letter of Information (Appendix 4) were assured that there is no harm in participating in the study.

4.10.2 Respect for human dignity

Respect for human dignity refers to the norm that obliges researchers to respect decisions or self-determination of adults who have decision-making capacity. Merriam (1988:52-66) holds that moral rules or obligations are derived from the application of the principle of respect for human dignity such as obtaining an

informed consent from participants to participate in the study and to protect confidential information, as well as telling participants the truth (Merriam 1988: 52-67).

All participants who were interviewed for this study were given a Letter of Information (Appendix 4) which explained the details of the study. They were given time to read and sign the letter (Appendix 5), thus securing informed consent. The researcher achieved this by explaining the goal and the methodology of the research to the participants. The document reinforced their right to refuse consent to participate or to withdraw from the study without punishment. The researcher ensured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time during research if they so wished without being penalised.

4.10.3 Justice

Merriam (1988: 52-68) states that the principle of justice obliges researchers to treat participants fairly and uphold participant's rights to privacy, equitable distribution benefits, and resources. Protecting the anonymity and confidentiality was another practical component in this study as all data were treated confidentially. Participants were also ensured the provision of proxies during the writing up to strip off identity. Participants were informed that there will not be any remuneration for participating in the study (Appendix 4).

4.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The research methodology that was used in the study was described in this chapter. The study design, study setting, stages and sampling, data collection and data analysis were described. The findings and results of this multistage mixed methods study is presented in the next chapters as findings of qualitative phase stage 1, results of the quantitative phase stage 2 and 3 in chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS IN STAGE 1

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the methodology that was used in conducting the study. As described in the previous chapter, data was collected in three stages. This chapter will present the findings of Stage1. The presentation of findings will be guided by three processes in the developmental theory. The three processes include assimilation, accommodation and equilibration which occurs when we modify or change new information to fit into our schemas (what we already know). It keeps the new information or experience and adds to what already exists in our minds. Piaget (1987: 69) also viewed intellectual development and growth as a process of adaptation (adjustment) to the world. This happens through assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration.

Stage 1 qualitative data collection was done through in-depth interviews intended to achieve the objectives of the study which were to:

- Explore competencies of RPL practitioners in the FOHS.
- Explore the perceptions of applicants and RPL practitioners with regard to RPL implementation.
- Explore training practices available for RPL practitioners in the FOHS.

5.2 SAMPLE REALISATION

Participants were as follows:

- One (1) Director of CELT.
- Ten (10) heads of departments in the FOHS.
- Ten (10) RPL assessors.
- Ten (10) RPL moderators.

Departments included in the study

The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), eight (8) FOHS departments situated at Ritson Campus of DUT, one (1) department situated at M.L. Sultan Campus and one (1) department located at Wentworth Hospital were included in the study. Table 5.1 below present the sample realisation:

Table 5.1: Sample realisation

The FOHS Departments

Departments	Campuses	Number of interviewees
Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)	Steve Biko Campus	1
Biomedical and Clinical Technology	M L Sultan	3
Chiropractic	Ritson Campus	3
Community Health Studies	Ritson Campus	3
Dental Sciences	Ritson Campus	3
Emergency Medical Care and Rescue	Ritson Campus	3
Homeopathy	Ritson Campus	3
Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics	Ritson Campus	3
Nursing	Ritson Campus	3
Radiography	Ritson Campus	3
Somatology	Ritson Campus	3
Grand Total		31

5.3 PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

All participants that met the inclusion criteria and were involved in the RPL implementation in the FOHS departments were included in the study namely, the Director of CELT, ten (10) FOHS heads of departments, ten (10) RPL assessors, and ten (10) RPL moderators, adding up to a total of 31 participants who were interviewed.

There were 31 participants whereby one interviewee was the Director of CELT, ten (10) interviewees were with each head of the 10 departments in the FOHS, ten (10) RPL assessors in the selected departments in the FOHS, and ten (10) RPL moderators in the selected departments.

5.4 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings that were gathered from the data analysis stage 1 of the study. The results were presented according to the emerged themes and sub-themes. Five themes and nine sub-themes emerged from data analysis as presented in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5:2 Themes and sub-themes that emerged from data analysis

Emerged themes	Sub-themes
1. Conceptualization of RPL selection criteria	1.1 A tool to quality assures previous learning. 1.2 Mechanism to certify practical competencies.
2. Perceptions with regards to RPL. implementation	2.1 Vehicle of transporting previous learning. 2.2 A tool to verify informal knowledge.
3. Opinions about the RPL training opportunities.	3.1 Mechanism of licensing skills and abilities. 3.2 A tool for growth and development.
4. Understanding of the RPL Practitioner's competences	4.1 A step by step upwards process. 4.2 Mechanism for complying to RPL standards
5. Views about enhancing RPL implementation.	5.1 Mechanism for integrity of RPL as a tool for converting experience into knowledge.

The emergent themes, namely conceptualization of RPL selection criteria, perceptions with regards to RPL implementation, opinions about RPL training opportunities, understanding of the RPL practitioner's competences and views about enhancing RPL implementation, together with the sub-themes that emerged will be discussed below.

5.4.1 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF RPL SELECTION CRITERIA

The emergent sub-themes that were identified through the analysis were aligned to the study objectives. RPL was conceptualized as a tool to quality

assures previous learning and a mechanism to certify practical competencies. The sub-themes which emerged are elaborated below.

5.4.1.1 A tool to quality assure previous learning

Participants conceptualized RPL as a process in need of recruiting the quality, expertise and specialist academics versed in both the explicit and tacit criteria of RPL knowledge practice. It was revealed that disciplinary knowledge and pedagogic knowledge is crucial in RPL to match the informal and experiential learning of the candidate. This was indicated in the following quotations from the participants:

"…I think RPL as a whole is a specialized discipline that cannot be done by an ordinary lecturer who has no RPL knowledge at all. I think that we need specialist with a specialized skill to be able to assess and moderate the assessments and match them with qualifications outcomes in the RPL" (Moderator #1).

"I think we also need RPL qualifying advisors to advise all candidates prior to submission of the application this might assist candidates to gain insight of what she is planning to do, this will also contribute to quality assurance".(Assessor #7).

It also emerged that the RPL process should have a researched model for monitoring and evaluation to enhance the institution's RPL practice. This is evident in the following excerpts from participants:

"This university must have a set of RPL monitoring and evaluation systems so that really we get to know how we are *expected to implement RPL and know how other departments are doing".* (HOD #7).
"I think we can even benchmark from other universities how they maintain quality in their RPL processes this is something new and we don't do it every day so it is necessary that it is done correctly". (Assessor #5).

Some participants mentioned that quality assessments are central indicators of effectiveness and success of RPL. This was indicated in the following excerpts:

"…hey, quality assessments are very important that is where we are able to judge the level of knowledge the candidate is having this can be a written or oral assessment. The portfolio of evidence alone is not enough candidates can also demonstrate the skills they have accumulated over the years". (Assessor #8).

"Quality assessments will always remain the backbone in teaching and learning where teachers are able to see how much learners have understood what they have been taught. RPL assessments I think should be taken as a specialized assessment". (Moderator #9).

In terms of proper RPL data management systems in FOHS, the majority of participants mentioned that the institution should have a system where RPL candidates are tracked, focusing on the number of students undergoing the RPL process every year including learner progression and retention. It was mentioned that focus should not be on actual performance but on the pass and fail rate. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

"I think we have to have a central RPL data management system where all RPL candidates' information is kept so that we are able to monitor the progress of the candidates as well as knowing how many candidates finished the qualification. It can be good as well to compare them with other students". (Moderator #3).

"…yes, what is important we are now beginning to create electronic forms rooted and we will track and capture the data for RPL. This is very important and that this data is reported for quality assurance purposes". (HOD #1).

It is important that the RPL programme is adequately and properly coordinated to ensure that quality is maintained throughout the process. Some participants mentioned that the institution has a centralized model involving a central RPL coordinator who is working in partnership with subject matter experts but acting as a central point of contact, providing support and guidance for staff and candidates. It was further revealed that it is important to ensure a coordinated, transparent and consistent approach across the institution. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

"The university has a centre of excellence that ensure that RPL is coordinated nicely, and there is guidance, support and mentoring for us and the across the institution not only for RPL candidates". (Assessor #3).

"I'm just thinking an RPL advisor is important to advise candidates even before the start with the application so that they know what is required in the process, how and why other things are needed to be included in the portfolio of evidence is developed and guide throughout the entire process some candidates can benefit from these advises". (Assessor #5).

With regard to data capturing of RPL candidates, which is an important measure to be taken to maintain quality in RPL practice in the FOHS, the majority of participants revealed that there is a great need for an improved data capturing and analysis system to improve the evidence of recruitment, progression, retention and completion. This is revealed in the following excerpts from some participants:

"Firstly, before candidates make applications there should be able to get information on how and what is needed if one need to apply for RPL an institutional web page with all requirements needed in the process of RPL. Even the documents needed to compile the portfolio of evidence can be listed in that page. This can assist candidates and time can be saved. I also think this can assist to assure quality in the RPL implementation". (Moderator #4).

"…mmh! I think may be a one system learner data capturing solely responsible to store only data for RPL candidates even if its linked with other system its fine as long as it is available. This can help in monitoring progress and retention as well as performance of the RPL candidates". (HOD #6).

It also emerged that streamlining and enhancing RPL support and ensuring more effectiveness require a set of institutional enablers related to policy and standards, and good practices that mainstream and integrate RPL within admission, learning, teaching and assessment strategies and quality assurance mechanisms. It further emerged from one participant that increasing visibility of RPL across the institution and in staff workload is paramount. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

"*I did not know if there is a policy that is specific to RPL or not we need to have one so that we know what is expected from us. There should be standardization of the process in the university. We need to be familiar with these policies so that we are effective in the Implementation of RPL"*. (Moderator #7).

"I have seen the policy but it is old I think it must be renewed and be aligned to the current procedures like using the e-portfolio and application can be done on line and again the interview can be done on videos to save time and paperwork". (HOD #1).

"…. Ya! I think the Department of Education and the CHE has these policies we have to look them up and see what is required for the RPL Implementation process, in this way we will be able to do things correctly as required by the national Department of Education". (HOD #4).

The data revealed that assessors need to reflect on their past experiences in relation to attitudes and language barriers. The ability to assess is made easier by language ability, pedagogic knowledge, attitudinal disposition and collegial

support. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

"I just think that as assessors we need to reflect back and engage with our past experiences, with the attitudes and language this can be of great help as other candidates can be let down by language they might not be able to put down on paper their prior knowledge due to the language barriers". (Assessor #8).

"Some candidates might be good in practical demonstration of the skill due to time long exposure in the workplace but has a challenge to write down or communicate due to the language barrier or anxiety what she has learnt over the years This then require a well-developed assessor and support from the RPL advisor". (Moderator #7).

The notion of RPL as a developmental practice was seen in relation to the accumulated past experience of the candidate, which indicated that this could come up in the formative and summative assessment process. This was evident in the following quotation:

"Yes; we are aware of the fact that formative and summative assessments should be comprehensive this means that not only the theory is formatively and summative assessed but also the practical skill demonstration is also required. The abilities and competencies are observed during the demonstration". (HOD #9).

Furthermore, some participants mentioned that robust and explicit RPL-specific assessment policies and procedures are needed, as indicated in the following excerpts:

"The RPL assessment policy standing alone, including pre-assessment meetings with moderators checking the validity and reliability of the assessment tools, pre-assessment meeting with candidates discussing time, venues

assessments guides and also the appeals processes including identification of candidate's special needs prior to the assessments". (Moderator #4).

"Candidates attitude plays a very important role in RPL assessments. Therefore, there is a need for it to be observed including the critical cross field outcomes have to come out of the formative and summative assessment". (Moderator #3).

Participants explained that candidates could benefit from interacting with students who have previously gone through the RPL experience as this would provide peer support. Some participants mentioned that candidates' support throughout the RPL process is important as they may be apprehensive of not knowing what is going to happen next. This is indicated in the following excerpt:

"I'm just thinking that if candidates get an opportunity to meet and talk to candidates who have previously gone through the process of RPL this can assist candidates to receive support and practical guidance from persons who has the experienced process and this can improve the quality and enhance the implementation of RPL in the institution as anxiety is minimized". (Assessor #9).

5.4.1.2 Mechanism to certify practical competencies

It was revealed that the combination of skills that was obtained by candidates from different places of work and involvement in the community or at home should be organized and recognized with awarding certificates if they achieve the outcomes of the qualification. This is indicated in the following excerpts:

"*Yes, I fully support RPL because it assists people who have gained knowledge, skills and experience outside the formal learning institutions. These skills and knowledge are verified and given an official and formal recognition".* (HOD #6).
"Mmm this is good, as there are so many people who have worked for so many years and have accumulated experience and skills but they don't have

certificates that recognize those skills. Some have worked with doctors for more than 20 years". (Moderator #6).

5.4.2 PERCEPTIONS WITH REGARDS TO RPL PROCESS

Some of the participants perceived RPL process as a vehicle to transfer previous knowledge, skills, experiences, capabilities, attitudes and abilities to the programme the candidate is intending to be admitted into. The sub-themes which emerged are elaborated below:

5.4.2.1 A vehicle to transfer previous learning

Participants expressed the view that RPL should compare outcomes of the previous qualification knowledge and outcomes of the intended programme and that previous experience should be transferred to the intended qualification. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

"…we have only had one candidate in this department but experienced lot of paper work before coming to the programme, first take documents to the faculty office from there it must go to the quality section for benchmarking. Compare content that was covered; compare outcomes of the qualification, Compare procedures. There should be 70% to 80% match to the outcomes of our qualification. If satisfying we complete the process for admission". (Assessor #10).

"Yes; in all the stages and all papers what we need is the evidence that is satisfying that the candidate indeed is having enough previous knowledge". (HOD#2).

"It just depends on the individual. But the most important thing is to look at people's qualification, experience over the years and how that relates to whatever programme they want to enter into. In this particular example I'm making the student wanted to move from being a graduate assistant, they used to be called Assistants". (Assessor #2).

Participants perceived RPL as means of comparing the previous learning and experience of the candidate against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification and for the purpose of admission to the qualification. If all the requirements are met, the candidate is admitted. This was indicated in the following quotations from the participants:

"…Um we have to scrutinize each and every document submitted by a candidate to check evidence of knowledge or skills to recognise. Each document is needed for a specific reason. The content of each document is to be read with understanding so that no important information is missed by mistake if I can make an example the curriculum vitae should be comprehensive because that is where we discover the history of the candidate. I think that is why the guidance is needed even before the portfolio is developed". (Moderator #7).

"One candidate that we have RPLed in our department we had request the study guides used in the previous institution to actually see the content whether it is correct and enough of the study guides. If it was possible we were going to request even the qualifications of the lecturers as other Institutions use lectures with the same level of qualification as the qualification being taught". (Assessor #1).

*"Of course, there are those candidates who will always take chances. We have to be very alert sometimes verify with the previous institution if they are the ones who issued the certificates sometimes certificates have unique certificates numbers". (*Assessor #3).

Some participants revealed that RPL is articulation that values past informally acquired learning which needs to be transformed in ways that are consistent with formal learning contexts as stated in these excerpts:
"It is very important to acknowledge that people have diverse circumstances that closed up opportunities their previous knowledge to access higher

institutions of learning. I think there *is a need to transform those previous learning. It is our mandate to provide consistent recognition. That is why a sound RPL policy and guidelines are crucial. The policy stands and does not change to suite individual's needs"*. (Moderator #9).

"I'm of the opinion that standardization and proper guidelines for the RPL process and implementation is very crucial if we were to be consistent enough in this department and in the university as a whole". (Assessor #10).

"We don't use same assessments tools for all candidates we assess. A bank of assessment tools is available in our department. This is how we display our consistency. It can be nice if we can develop marketing material for the RPL programmes in our departments". (HOD #6).

5.4.2.2 A tool to verify informal knowledge

Some participants perceived RPL as a tool to verify informal knowledge. They revealed that with RPL, the candidate's knowledge that was gained informally is verified, using the evidence that is submitted by the candidate in the portfolio of evidence, as stated in the following excerpt:

"*I think if candidates want their informal knowledge gained in workplaces to be recognized they have to collect and submit sufficient evidence of what has been gained. These should be organized nicely and be submitted to the Faculty office so that it can be verified in different stages of RPL process". (*HOD #10*).*
*"Yes; it is true that in RPL the evidence of previous experience and abilities are verified using the information that is provided by candidates in the PoEs. That information must be prepared in such a way that it is convincing that the candidate qualifies to access the intended qualification". (*Moderator #5*).*

5.4.3 OPINION ABOUT THE RPL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Participants perceived RPL as a process that requires special knowledge and skill. RPL academics needs more training opportunities, to be able to assist open career pathways especially for those who were denied opportunities to access higher education. It was revealed that these candidates accumulate a lot of informal knowledge and experiences. Participants perceived that the prior experience accumulated should be recognised. The sub-themes which emerged are elaborated below:

5.4.3.1 A mechanism of licensing skills and abilities

Participants perceived that RPL is a bottom-up process linked to development. Adequately trained staff is needed. They explained that prior knowledge, experiences, abilities, skills, attitudes and competencies need to be licensed by competent RPL practitioners to increase access to all phases of learning to shape one's future. This is articulated in the excerpt below:

"…. Yes! it's so important to assist candidates with knowledge gained in an informal place wishing to take an upwards career pathway because education is seen as development that opens up future opportunities that is why all kinds of learning should be granted the license". (HOD #1).

Some participants mentioned that the introduction of learning outcomes assisted in opening the learning world by licensing through RPL. It was further stated that valuing learning and improving the ways in which learning participation and outcomes are understood and appreciated required licensing prior competencies, skills, abilities attitudes, knowledge and experiences. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

"There is no other way that can be used to give value to prior learning except through evaluating the evidence of previous learning presented by candidates. If it satisfies the requirements of the qualification then it is approved and the certificate or license is granted". (HOD #9).

"Candidates are made aware in the pre-assessment meeting that they have a right to appeal should the candidate is not satisfied with the outcome of the RPL process. Appeals forms are always included amongst other document". (Assessor #10).

"We always give opportunity to our candidates to be re-assessed if the need for re assessment arises. According to my understanding there is no extra cost for the re-assessments". (Assessor #2).

"In this department, we always offer full guidance and support to our candidates. Remedial lectures are always available to the candidates in need of the remedial lectures". (HOD #5).

Participants explained that assessment of RPL claims are done by programme leaders or subject academics. Some participants revealed that departmental committees rather than institutional committees and external examiners should assess RPL claims. It also became evident that RPL claims should be ratified or approved either by programme assessment board or by RPL committees. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

"I think it might be a good practice for RPL claims to be done by programme leaders within the department that I'm just thinking because we have just had one RPL candidate so far RPL committees are also suitable for this on knowledge of the subject and the outcomes involved the candidate has to achieve". (Moderator #2).

"I will always maintain the view that RPL must be treated as a special programme that requires special training for all academics involved since quality need to be ensured throughout the process on knowledge of the subject and the outcomes involved the candidate has to achieve". (Moderator #7).

Furthermore, participants mentioned that the RPL assessment process tends to mirror the normal assessment process as part of the institutional quality assurance system. This was indicated in the following quotation from a participant:

"…they do a theory assessment; they do a practical assessment and an interview. And then we change that, we change those things all the time so that it's slightly different. So, we don't keep using the same, you know, draw a circle, draw a circle, and draw a circle, no! They'll draw a square next time. So, we test them on their practical ability and their hands skills. So, for example, we have a piece of clay and we give them a model and they have to model it exactly out of that clay for us and then we will mark that. So, we use a rubric to mark, we have a set rubric that we use judging by the scores at the end of the day, we'll then look at how we're going to do things". (Assessor #2).

5.4.3.2 A tool for growth and development

Participants believed that RPL is a tool for the candidate's growth and development, especially for those who were previously denied access to higher education. This was indicated in the following quotations:

"What I can say is that RPL will not only recognize candidates prior learning and experiences but it also develops the candidate for example when the candidate is putting together all documents in the portfolio she or he develops new skills learns like organizing the file systematically in that way the candidate is also growing". (Moderator #3).

"*I think most candidates are looking for growth when they applying for RPL as some might have worked for a long time without any recognition and any growth. They know that if the application is successful they will take step up the level they were".* (HOD #4).

5.4.4 UNDERSTANDING OF THE RPL PRACTITIONERS' COMPETENCES

Participants indicated that the RPL process needs practitioners who are knowledgeable and competent. RPL is a specialized pedagogy. The process needs proper understanding by RPL practitioners and candidates as the application is scrutinized by different people at different stages. The sub-themes which emerged are elaborated below:

5.4.4.1 A step by step upwards process

RPL was understood by some participants as a step-by-step process, starting by communication between the assessor, candidate and the institution to enact a successful process. It was further revealed that the RPL process must be fair and valid and that candidates need to understand what is required to be able to identify and communicate their experiences, abilities and competences. Below are excerpts from some of the participants:

"I can say RPL success will depend on set of enablers like clear contact with competent and knowledgeable RPL practitioner to support potential applicants, existing students and staff. Again, reviewing and revising RPL process mechanisms should also be made explicit at all time". (HOD #9).

"It is very important that the candidate constantly communicate with the institution. Advisable a face to face communication with the advisor or the assessor I think is important in this way the candidate will be able to receive advices". (Assessor #6).

"I think pre-application meetings and communications between the candidate and competent / knowledgeable RPL practitioner in the institution is crucial in RPL for the process to be successful. An ongoing even post assessment support is needed". (Moderator #3).

“I think RPL again should provide and show pastoral strengths for candidates to tell their life stories in individual interviews or written narratives ideally in simple language so that they can afford to build the knowledge into the RPL strategies for upgrading and up skilling purposes”. (HOD #6).

Participants also explained that for fairness in assessments, assessors need to understand RPL and what is required and be able to translate and explain them in everyday terms. It was also evident that assessor and candidate have to communicate and understand each other if the RPL process is to be successful as indicated in the following excerpts:

“An understanding between the candidate and the assessor plays an important role in RPL especially if the assessor understands the processes involved in RPL”. (HOD #9).

“Adequate knowledge from assessors and advisors are crucial for the success of RPL implementation. Candidate’s requirements are to be communicated in simple language on knowledge of the subject and the outcomes involved the candidate has to achieve”. (Moderator #10).

Some participants suggested that RPL academics can also use the most popular tool called Blooms Taxonomy to label stages using verbs which describe the level of the learner’s cognition. This has proved to be successful as indicated in the following excerpt:

“I think the use of Blooms Taxonomies will assist a lot as an effort to make candidates succeed in their RPL and move up to the next level”. (Moderator #3).

Some participants also said that candidates should be able to present their prior learning to make it visible, and they should know what learning they are expected to present. It was further revealed that tacit or invisible knowledge

needs to be articulated to become visible. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

"RPL is all about previous learning and what the candidates needs is recognition of this prior learning therefore they need to be supported and guided so that they are able to present this learning in different forms. In demonstration practically, in writing or in the documents contained in the portfolio of evidence". (Moderator #10).

"…guidance in this process is important for the candidates to be able to present correct information and correct documents as the process need to establish the extent of the learning and whether enough has been gained to proceed with new learning in the next *level and build on previous learning. They also need help in how to compile the portfolio"*. (Assessor #5).

It also became apparent from a participant who has articulated upwards through RPL that the RPL process should be time-efficient, indicating that the turnaround time should be revised. On the other hand, it became evident that there is a risk if the process does not go deep enough to fulfil individual's needs and expectations as stated in the following excerpts:

"I got my degree through RPL in this department members of staff were surprised about the amount and quality of knowledge and skills I had, but this was not an easy process. Most of the staff are planning to develop this process further and become champions and experts". (HOD #3).

"I waited for a long time to receive my results, it might be better if they speed up the process so that we don't have to wait. I'm now enrolled for my Master's Degree. It is working, what is needed its support from academics to help translate experiences into language of learning outcomes". (Moderator #4).

Some participants explained that it is important for candidates to be involved and kept busy in the process so that they feel needed, valued and gain personal recognition to strengthen their self-confidence. This is evident in the excerpt below:

"It is obvious that students who are successful with their RPL are those more prepared and happier to engage as recognition require that candidates reformulate knowledge in the abstracted terms of formal knowledge domain. However, candidates who are self-regulated and less reflective do struggle. In all the process is complex but worthwhile". (HOD #1).

Participants further revealed that the use of a portfolio as the sole means of RPL is considered to have low validity. Furthermore, it was apparent that classic reliability of portfolio assessments is challenging in terms of input and interpreter reliability. Participants revealed that portfolio assessment by nature requires a high degree of interpretation. They suggested use of common assessment protocols, rubrics, holistic marking, multiple assessors combined with moderators and ensuring adequate assessor and moderator training as stated in the following excerpts:

"I think the positioning of RPL practice as an academic enterprise is dependent upon its ability to enhance and develop learning as a meta-cognitive when candidates demonstrate their past experiential learning in the portfolio of evidence which is sometimes not enough". (Assessor #8).

"In this department, we use assessment protocols, rubrics, holistic marking, and multiple assessors' reports that are combined with moderator's reports". (Moderator #7).

The participants indicated that portfolio presentation is simply relating what had been done. Therefore, it must be de-emphasized and replaced with structures and instruments that foster critical thinking and encourage the connecting of

experiential critical incidents to education and professional choices. This was evident in the following excerpt:

"What I can say about the portfolio is that it must promote critical thinking of the candidate not only telling what was done". (HOD #9).

5.4.4.2 Mechanism for complying to standards of RPL

Participants understood RPL as a mechanism for the RPL practitioners to comply with standards of RPL. They stated that RPL requires more team-work between and across academic faculties and central services, such as admissions and students support services. A more quality and up to date explicit recognition of RPL activities in staff workload as well as provision of CPD opportunities for staff engaged in RPL support and assessment is needed to achieve the RPL standards. Strategies for standardization and training was stated in the following excerpts:

"RPL staff across the institution has to support each other. A good working relationship amongst all facilities involved in the RPL process". (HOD #4).
"In my opinion the development of RPL awareness, more training, continuous professional development CPD opportunities for staff to widen the pool of expertise. I think the RPL implementation will work best when the staffs using it are well informed so that it is regarded as normal practice and not something set aside for a central service to deal with". (HOD #6).

"We cannot run away from the use of technology for the RPL assessment process like for example questions and answer sessions may be captured on video and be used as evidence for the assessment. This will mean RPL academics should be ahead of all these developments". (Assessor #10).

It also emerged that there is a greater need for staff RPL awareness, RPL understanding through institutional workshops, seminars, reflective RPL practitioner modules and peer support networks for staff engaged in RPL

support. This will build capacity and confidence in the process. This is indicated in the following quotation:

"It is important that staff is aware of all RPL processes, RPL understanding can be done through institutional workshops, seminars, reflective RPL practitioner modules and peer support networks for staff engaged in RPL support this will build capacity". (HOD #4).

Some participants mentioned that staff confidence is a necessary pre-requisite for a successful implementation. They also said that a more effective institutional data capture and analysis system is important to enable monitoring and evaluation to enhance practice and student's experience. This is evident in the excerpts below:

"Continuous trainings in-service training and workshops are needed to develop self-confidence amongst the staff". (Assessor #8).

"I think a central institutional database for RPL to enable effective monitoring, tracking and evaluation of RPL process and outcomes". (Assessor #5).

Participants also expounded that building of confidence requires well defined standards, clear information on the RPL assessment process as well as knowledge and skills acquired by practicing academics as indicated in the following excerpt:

"Sometimes RPL needs to recognize the specialized knowledge and skills that practicing academics acquire on the teaching career in the classrooms. Such expertise has a bearing on a person's ability to perform on a much higher level of sophistication and responsibility within that same subject or phase domain which means such expertise enables up skilling for academics as well…" (HOD #1).

Participants suggested that continuous learning opportunities should be offered to all RPL academics. Premised on the notion of Paulo Freire, who stated that there should be professional development training, complementary studies, recycling and developmental studies, RPL needs solid knowledge and best practices because the quality of its process is completely dependent upon the abilities of those who implement the procedures. This was indicated in the following quotations:

"… actually, don't know to be honest. I've got no idea if there is training. If, you know, when the courses come up obviously, we get an email to say, 'would you like to do this course, that course'. I've never seen anything that has a whole bug handbook on, these are the course that you can do. We normally get it on that pin board; we get those courses that they come and offered to us". (Assessor #2).

"… mmm! I have been in this university for nineteen years now but I have never been invited to RPL training. I don't think there is any training available for RPL. It will be good if the training is done around November or December when the students are finished with their examinations". (HOD #1).

"None existing never attended RPL training". (Assessor #2).

"I have never been involved in any RPL training". (Moderator #3).

It was further revealed by participants that there is a great need for RPL training in their departments as they have never been involved in any training of this nature. This is evident in the following excerpts:

"… no, I don't think there has been one recently, I have never seen one. There should be one system that involves training of staff in RPL. There is a great need! Yes, it is important that we receive training". (HOD #4).

"…no, no training at all". (Assessor #5).

Participants indicated that an RPL hand-book would be of great benefit to the staff involved in RPL and they also suggested online training. This was indicated in the following quotation:

"…I think that it can be done online. Online training. I don't think that it's necessary for people to actually come in and do a workshop on RPL, I think that it's very much easier to be able to access the internet and find everything on the internet that we require". (Moderator #7).

Participants also suggested that an RPL procedure manual should be posted on the institution's website and that there should be a copy of the procedure manual in the department so that it is easily available to the staff. They suggested that the procedure manual should have a step-by-step process of RPL. In addition, they suggested that a set of standards for RPL should be developed for the institution. The suggestions are evident in the following excerpts:

"…I think there should be a system with procedures to be followed or like a procedure manual that will stay in the department for use by the staff". (HOD #9).

"Since there is no training available for RPL my suggestion is to set up standards with step by step clearly defining the process". (Assessor #8).

Participants stated that learning is a lifelong process that raises the need to avail adult learners' access and participation in different types of education and training in the frame of education and training for competitiveness and personal development, as is evident in the excerpts below:

"RPL learners are adult learners practicing in various fields wishing for personal development in their fields and careers". (CELT #1).

"These are adults who are wishing to participate in different types of education and training as they are looking forward to better their lives and be able to compete in future". (HOD#2).

It became apparent that the RPL process allows adults to take stock of what skills they have attained through education, work, volunteering and life that demonstrate satisfactory achievement of the required competency standards or learning outcomes for entry or progression into higher levels of education. This was indicated in the following quotations:

"…it is very important that we improve the implementation of RPL in the institution. We hope that this study is going to assist to improve the standards and integrity in faculty RPL implementation". (Assessor #8).

"I think in RPL adults are given opportunities to sit down think back to check which Skills, abilities and experience they have attained through education, work and volunteering in different places in their lives". (Moderator #4).

Some participants revealed that in the preparation of evidence, adult learners are encouraged to provide documentary evidence of relevant past learning and reflective discourse that analyses their learning processes. The previous learning presented in the portfolio should be equivalent to the learning outcomes of the components of the destination qualification. This was indicated in the following quotations:

"Learners in RPL are encouraged to provide documentary evidence of relevant past learning a reflective discourse that analyses their learning processes. The previous learning should be equivalent to the learning outcomes of the components of the destination qualification". (CELT #1).

"In RPL candidates must be able to submit papers that are showing and talking to all experiences that have been gained in life at work and. This learning is not formal as it was not gained in class". (Assessor #5).

It was continuously emerging from participants interviewed that RPL assessment standards should be the same as the main-stream qualifications standards and RPL assessments should be undertaken by academic or teaching staff with expertise in the subject, content or skills areas as well as knowledge of and expertise in RPL assessment. This is evident in the following excerpts:

"RPL assessments standards should be the same as the main stream qualifications standards and RPL assessments should be undertaken by academic or teaching staff with expertise in the subject, content or skills areas as well as knowledge of and expertise in RPL assessment". (Moderator #7).

"In my opinion I can say assessments standards even in RPL should be the same as those assessments of other qualifications that are not through RPL because candidates are going to progress to other higher levels in education". (HOD #5).

It was further revealed that various programmes differ, selection criteria vary, and each programme has its own selection criteria, tests, interviews, panels, assessors, moderators and advisors. This is evident in the following excerpts from participants:

"We all know that programmes are different within the faculty departments we are going to see different criteria, different panel, assessors, moderators and advisors who advise candidates within the faculty". (CELT #1).

"Criteria that is used in selecting candidates is different because the qualifications are different there are qualifications where you cannot assess practical competences. Only written competences can be assessed". (HOD #8).

"Interviews and selections are not the same within the faculty because different departments are not offering same programmes". (Moderator #3).

Some participants mentioned that the selection criteria vary with different departments such as the Emergency Medical Care and Rescue. In this department, there are RPL applicants who have been practicing for years with short course certificates. A requirement in this department is that applicants have to write and pass tests before they are interviewed. From a class of 30, only three (3) are accepted, as evident in the following excerpts:

"Selection criteria vary with different faculties such as emergency services people are trained short courses they practice for years and they write tests after passing test they are interviewed but only the few are accepted. In a class of 30 only three are accepted, only 10% of the admitted cohort". (Assessor #1).

"In the emergency services, they recruit staffs mainly that were trained short courses they practice for years and they are made to write tests after passing test they are interviewed but only the few are accepted". (HOD #6).

"Access in other departments is not easy at all as selection criteria's and entry requirements are different and strict". (Moderator #4).

"It can be easy to get in but progressing in not easy as entry requirements are becoming high with the introduction of the NQF levels". (Assessor #5).

Some participants stated that it is the responsibility of the institution and departments to align RPL implementation with RPL policies, such as CHE policy, SAQA policy, DHET policy and DUT policy to ensure that qualifications outcomes and integrity of qualification outcomes are maintained. According to participants interviewed the RPL policies are not adequately implemented at this point and these are identified as barriers to proper RPL implementation. This was indicated in the following quotations:

"It is the responsibility of the institution and departments to align RPL implementation with RPL policies, such as CHE policy, SAQA policy, DHET policy and DUT policy to ensure that qualifications outcomes and integrity of

qualification outcomes are maintained. The policies are not adequately implemented at this point. These are identified as barriers". (HOD #2).

"It is very important to adopt other RPL policies such as CHE RPL Policy, SAQA Policy of 2013 and 2016 respectively as it states clearly that qualifications outcomes and integrity of qualifications outcomes must be maintained. There is a huge outcry of resources and funding. These are identified as barriers it is now addressed by DHET policy". (CELT #1).

Some participants mentioned that consistency, fairness, and transparency in the assessment process should be practised in all departments for RPL. This must also include policies and procedures that govern implementation. This is evident in the excerpts below:

"I think we need to adhere to what the policy states and be consistent and fair in implementing RPL assessments so that we can achieve its objectives". (Moderator #8).

"All departments must do one thing there must be uniformity and constant implementation in order for RPL to be fairs in this faculty". (Assessor #4).

"I think there must be some kind of transparency and fairness in RPL implementation and again adhering to the institutions policy and procedures". (Moderator #10).

Some participants indicated that the RPL policy is not updated. The institution needs to update the policy to align it with RPL Coordination Policy which aims to provide a strong enabling policy environment for the further development and implementation of RPL across all levels of NQF. This was indicated in the following quotation:

“RPL policy is not updated. The institution needs to update the policy to align it with RPL coordination policy which is aiming at providing strong enabling policy environment for the further development and implementation of RPL across all levels of NQF”. (HOD #4).

“It is not right that we are still using RPL policy that was developed long time ago. The institution has to update the policy to be aligned with new developments in RPL”. (Moderator #9).

Some participants mentioned that according to their understanding the coordination policy seeks to provide a solid policy to ensure that RPL objectives of the NQF Act are met. They also stated that the coordination policy’s aim is to facilitate access to mobility and progression within education and training and career paths, and also accelerate redress of past unfair discrimination in education and employment opportunities. This is evident in the following excerpts:

“According to my understanding the coordination policy seeks to provide a solid policy to ensure that RPL objectives of the NQF Act are met. Furthermore, with co-ordination policy the aim is to facilitate access to, mobility and progression within education and training and career paths, also to accelerate redress of past unfair discrimination in education and employment opportunities”. (Assessor #4).

“I also noted that the policy is aiming at also accelerating redress of past unfair discrimination in education and employment opportunities in this country by recognizing previous experiences and competences from learners who are applying for RPL”. (Moderator #7).

With regard to updating of RPL policy, participants revealed that RPL policy is not updated to include CHE and Co-ordination policy. This had been identified as a challenge before but now it is identified as a gap in the RPL implementation. It needs therefore to be aligned with RPL coordination policy

which is aiming at providing strong enabling policy environment for the further development and implementation of RPL across all levels of NQF. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

"RPL Policy is not updated to include CHE and Co-ordination policy. This has been identified as a gap and a challenge in the RPL implementation. Ours is to align it with RPL co-ordination policy which is aiming at providing strong enabling policy environment for the further development and implementation of RPL across all levels of NQF". (HOD #4).

"In my opinion, the policy seeks to provide a solid policy to ensure that RPL objectives of the NQF Act are met. Its aim is to facilitate access to, mobility and progression within education and training and career paths, also to accelerate redress of past unfair discrimination in education and employment opportunities". (Assessor #5).

"It also recognizes a range of RPL related initiatives some underway Strategic policy drawn on international future trends in recognition in the new policy it is clarified". (CELT #1).

"If we have to be like other countries such as Australia who are implementing the NQF Levels with the objectives of improving access and progression, we need to implement policies properly so that RPL is recognized and seen to be valid". (HOD #2).

Some participants interviewed revealed that there are faculties with challenges the main one being the FOHS. Most of the programmes in this Faculty require core knowledge modules, thus making it difficult to recognise the practical aspect of competencies. This was indicated in the following quotations from some of the participants:

“The main faculty with challenges is the Faculty of Health Sciences for the fact that most programmes require *core knowledge modules, Anatomy, Pathology, and Microbiology. It becomes difficult to recognize its practical aspect of competencies”*. (CELT #1).

“There are faculties with strict entry requirements such as Applied Sciences and Engineering and Built Environment. These faculties require core knowledge modules”. (HOD #5).

It is important that faculties develop courses that are going to assist candidates to upgrade their subjects as some do not meet the entry requirements. Participants mentioned that it does not help anyone to block prospective candidates because of lack of core knowledge. The advice was that there should be Cohort courses that will include mathematics, statistics, chemistry, microbiology if they do not have such resources. This was evident in few of the following excerpts from participants:

“My opinion is that it does not help anyone to block prospects candidates because of lack of core knowledge my advice is Cohort courses that will include Mathematics, statistics, chemistry, microbiology if they do not have such resources”. (Moderator #7).

“Bridging courses will assist all candidates that are not meeting the entry requirements. These must be offered by the institution to open up rather than closing down opportunities for candidates who were denied such opportunities”. (HOD #8).

It also emerged that transparency of the RPL process is important and informing prospective candidates of RPL access is equally important. Candidates should be well-informed through orientation sessions and career guidance information so that they can make informed choices. Capacity building workshops to assist with access into the higher level of education

should also be conducted. This was suggested by some of the participants as evident in the following quotations:

"In my view, it is also very important to organize orientation days, capacity building workshops and have career guidance information circulating in order to allow RPL prospective candidates to make choice". (Assessor #3).

"Transparency in RPL implementation is important but candidate's preparations before application are very important so that candidates have full information about what to choose". (HOD #8).

In terms of capacity building, CELT is conducting capacity building workshops, seminars for staff, colloquiums and conferences which are very important. Some participants mentioned that even staff can be invited to present papers or articles on RPL to create awareness about the importance of RPL. This was indicated in the following quotes from the participants:

"As part of the capacity building workshops, workers seminars for staff, colloquiums and conferences that are conducted by CELT are important. Staff can be invited to present papers or articles on RPL". (CELT #1).

"I think RPL awareness can be created capacity building workshops, seminars for staff, colloquiums and conferences that are conducted". (Assessor #2).
It was further revealed that the most important area that needs faculty improvement is manual filing of RPL applications assessed in the portfolios of evidence by the faculty office because portfolios get misplaced. This was stated in the following quotations:

"Manual filing of RPL application assessed in the portfolio of evidence by faculty office needs improvement by each faculty". (HOD #5).

"The other most important area that needs faculty improvement is manual filing of RPL applications assessed in the portfolios of evidence by faculty office. Portfolios with candidate's information and evidence can get lost somehow". (HOD #6).

Participants mentioned that the Information Technology system is discriminative because it fails to capture all RPL applicants that are applying including those that are approved for RPL. This was stated in the following excerpts:

"The IT system is discriminative as all RPL applicants and approved RPL applications are not captured properly". (HOD #8).

"What is not right is the way RPL applications are captured at the moment. An out-dated system is used. We need to be using new ways of data capturing". (Assessor #1).

"It is very important to acknowledge that the IT system data should not discriminate candidates in RPL but it has to be able to say this is RPL applicant and these are capabilities and skills acquired through RPL". (HOD #2).

"I also think that the capturing system for RPL should be the same system. It must not separate RPL learners and their credentials from the main stream learners". (Assessor #2).

Some participants revealed that the institution still does not have a proper capturing of RPL candidates into National Learner Registration Data (NLRD). They are now beginning to create electronic forms to track and capture RPL data. This was indicated in the following quotations:

"What is important is that we are now beginning to create electronic forms rooted and will track and capture the data for RPL. This is very important and data is reported for. We still do not have proper capture into NLRD". (HOD #6).

"What is important for quality assurance in RPL we are now beginning to create electronic RPL application forms rooted to be able to track and capture the data for RPL. This is very important and data is easily available to report for quality assurance". (Moderator #1).

"I think it is only through quality assurance which is programme review and programme evaluation that we can have data for RPL". (HOD #4).

With regard to development of the RPL framework, some participants revealed that this research topic is important as it is going to assist to develop an implementation framework for a clear blueprint that can be adopted by all departments in the FOHS. It will need to start with what has been asked about adult learners and address limitations and gaps, including the capacity building interns for training staff as experts. This is stated in the following excerpts:

"This topic is important I think it is going to assist to develop an implementation frame work for a clear blue print that can be adopted by all departments in the FOHS. It will need to start with what has been asking about adult learners. Address limitations and gaps including the capacity building interns for training staff as experts". (CELT #1).

"I think the first question to be addressed is who is the adult learner, what are their needs, challenges, graduates' attributes, core knowledge and competences even ethics that are required for selections criteria and areas in health sciences". (HOD #6).

"This framework will need to identify barriers and propose enablers that will authenticate, validate and acknowledge various knowledge that may not been acquired in the formal education such as radiography, the training has always been on diagnostic use of x-rays energies and all of the sudden there is emerging of Medical Rescue Team". (CELT #1).

5.4.5 VIEWS ABOUT ENHANCING RPL IMPLEMENTATION

Some participants believed that RPL needed new curricula that will accommodate new knowledge brought in by RPL candidates. They also said that new RPL curricula are needed that are specific to the training of academics to be able to assess RPL candidates. The sub-themes that emerged are elaborated below.

5.4.5.1 Mechanism for integrity of RPL implementation

Participants observed new opportunities to promote integrity by looking at the existing curriculums and embark on re-curriculate and redesign new programmes as the University offers new diplomas and degrees. Some participants mentioned that, in future, it is important to have qualifications that are going to recognize people who have been doing the work. This was indicated in the following quotations:

"My observations are that we have a new opportunity to re-curriculate and redesign our programmes as we move to new Diplomas and new degrees this has raised the bar the question remains as we are, who practitioners are if these programmers are not going to recognize people who have been doing work". (HOD #2).

"My opinion is that it is going to be easy to recruit critical care nurse than ambulance people". (Assessor #5).

Some participants mentioned that, in future, professional bodies and registering professions must be aligned and involved in the curriculum development and to the needs of RPL implementation. Professional bodies are such important institutions as they promote public understanding and trust in professions through the establishment and the registration of professional designations. This is evident in the following excerpts:

“Lastly, professional bodies have to come on board; RPL will not be serious if not recognized by professional bodies. Professional bodies have to be aligned with needs of RPL and create professional categories”. (CELT #1).

“Professional bodies should start to create scales requirements for articulation through profession”. (Moderator #5).

“Professional bodies should in future need to be involved in the recognition of suitable workplace experiences”. (HOD #4).

“The professional bodies must support the continuous professional development of its members; therefore, they must be fully involved in RPL and register them in their database so that they have full information of the members involved in professional development”. (Assessor #6).

5.4.5.2 Mechanism to convert experience into knowledge

Participants viewed RPL as a mechanism to convert experience into knowledge. Participants mentioned that the experience that is demonstrated in the collection of evidence in the PoEs is gradually converted to knowledge if it is adequate and clearly articulated to match the outcomes of the intended qualification. This is evident in the following excerpts:

“*Yes, I can say that all the information about the applicants experience whether obtained at work, at home or in the society if it is well represented and convincing it can be converted into formal knowledge”.* (Assessor #2).

“*My thinking tells me that if the candidate is bringing all the experiences that she or he has accumulated in different places even if it is informal, that experience can be turned into formal knowledge if it is enough and clearly written to be understood”.* (Moderator #4*).*

5.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, the main themes and sub themes which emerged from findings were presented. In the next chapter findings from the PoE reviews, Stage 2 data collection, will be presented.

CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS: STAGE 2: PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE (PoE) REVIEW

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, findings from PoE reviews, Stage 2 data collection will be presented. The researcher examined the portfolios of evidence (PoE) to check for availability of the documents that were needed as evidence of the experiential learning and competencies.

6.2 PORTFOLIOS OF EVIDENCE (PoE) REVIEW

In this study, Stage 2 data collection involved a review of the RPL PoEs for candidates who applied to the ten (10) FOHS departments at DUT between 2009 and 2018. A total of 80 PoEs were reviewed. included individuals involved in the implementation of RPL, one (1) Director of CELT, ten (10) heads of departments, ten (10) RPL assessors as well as ten (10) academics as RPL moderators from each of the ten (10) departments in FOHS, bringing the total number of participants to 31. The results are as follows:

The results of the review are indicated in Table 6.1 below and Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.1: Results on PoEs Review

CHECKLIST ITEM	PoE																																									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	Total	%
Cover page.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	80	100%
Table of contents.	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	80	97.6%
Covering letter of why the candidate is applying.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	80	97.6%
RPL application form 1A, ticking as it may be applicable, option (1) for undergraduate qualifications, or (2) for RPL exemptions of subjects / s and / or (3) for advanced standing.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	80	100%
Signing dates.	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	75	93.75%
Proof of payments for (non-refundable application fee).	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	80	97.6%
Detailed curriculum vitae.	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	80	97.6%
Human resource job profile where applicable with key performance area/indicators and level / scope of candidates' expertise.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	80	97.6%
Section of samples of PoEs aligning and matching against the outcomes of the requisite qualification.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	80	97.6%
Letter of support and /or award are admissible.	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	80	97.6%
Testimonials.	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	80	97.6%
Certified Identity document and matric	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	80	97.6%

certificate or/and equivalent.																																									
Annexure of professional skills development training, continuous professional development activities and transcripts of any qualifications attained that may be found suitable to support the application.	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	80	97.6%
Reflective diary.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	80	97.6%

Key: ✓ = Yes X = No

PoEs = 80

Total check list items = 14

Table 6.2: Results on PoEs Review (continuation)

CHECKLIST ITEM	PoEs			
	80	**80**	**Total**	**%**
Cover page	√	√	80	100%
Table of contents	√	√	80	97.6%
Covering letter of why the candidate is applying.	√	√	80	97.6%
RPL application form 1A, ticking as it may be applicable, option (1) for undergraduate qualifications, or (2) for RPL exemptions of subjects / s and / or (3) for Advanced standing.	√	√	80	100%
Signing dates.	X	√	75	93.75%
Proof of payments for (non-refundable application fee).	√	√	80	97.6%
Detailed curriculum vitae.	√	√	80	97.6%
Human resource job profile where applicable with key performance area/indicators and level / scope of candidates' expertise.	√	√	80	97.6%
Section of samples of PoEs aligning and matching against the outcomes of the requisite qualification.	√	√	80	97.6%
Letter of support and /or award are admissible.	√	√	80	97.6%
Testimonials.	√	√	80	97.6%
Certified identity document and matric certificate or/and equivalent.	√	√	80	97.6%
Annexure of professional skills development training, continuous professional development activities and transcripts of any qualifications attained that may be found suitable to support the application.	√	√	80	97.6%
Reflective diary.	√	√	80	97.6%

6.2.1 Cover pages

Results in this study showed that of all RPL PoEs reviewed, 100% had cover pages.

6.2.2 Table of contents

It was further revealed from results in this study that, 97.6% PoEs had a table of contents.

6.2.3 Cover letters of why the candidate is applying

Results showed that 97.6% of PoEs had cover letters of why the candidate is applying.

6.2.4 RPL Application Form 1A, ticking as it may be applicable, option (1) for undergraduate qualifications, or (2) for RPL exemptions of subjects / and / or (3) for advanced standing

Results in this study showed that all PoEs (100%) had RPL Application Form 1A, ticked as it may be applicable, option (1) for undergraduate qualifications, or (2) for RPL exemptions of subjects /s and / or (3) for advanced standing.

6.2.5 Signing dates

Results showed that 93.75% signed and put the date on the application forms.

6.2.6 Proof of payments for non-refundable application fee

Results showed that 97.6% PoEs had the proof of payments for non-refundable application fee.

6.2.7 Detailed curriculum vitae

Of the eighty (80) RPL PoEs reviewed, results showed that 97.6% PoEs had detailed curriculum vitae.

6.2.8 Human resource job profile with key performance area/indicators and level / scope of candidate's expertise

Results revealed that 97.6% PoEs had human resource job profile key performance area/indicators and level or scope of candidate's expertise.

6.2.9 Section of Samples of PoEs aligning and matching against the outcomes of the requisite qualification

Results showed that 97.6% PoEs had the section of samples of PoEs aligning and matching against the outcomes of the requisite qualification.

6.2.10 Letter of support and /or award

It was revealed from results in this study is that 97.6% PoEs had a letter of support and /or award.

6.2.11 Testimonials

Results in this current study revealed that 97.6% PoEs had testimonials.

6.2.12 Certified identity document and matric certificate or/and equivalent

Results showed that 97.6% PoEs had a certified identity document and matric certificate or/and equivalent.

6.2.13 Annexure of professional skills development training, continuous professional development activities and transcripts of any qualifications attained that may be found suitable to support the application

Results showed that 97.6% PoEs had annexure of professional skills development training, continuous professional development activities and transcripts of any qualifications attained that may be found suitable to support the application.

6.2.14 Reflective diaries

The results indicated that 97.6% PoEs had reflective diaries. Figure 6.3 below present results on PoEs review:

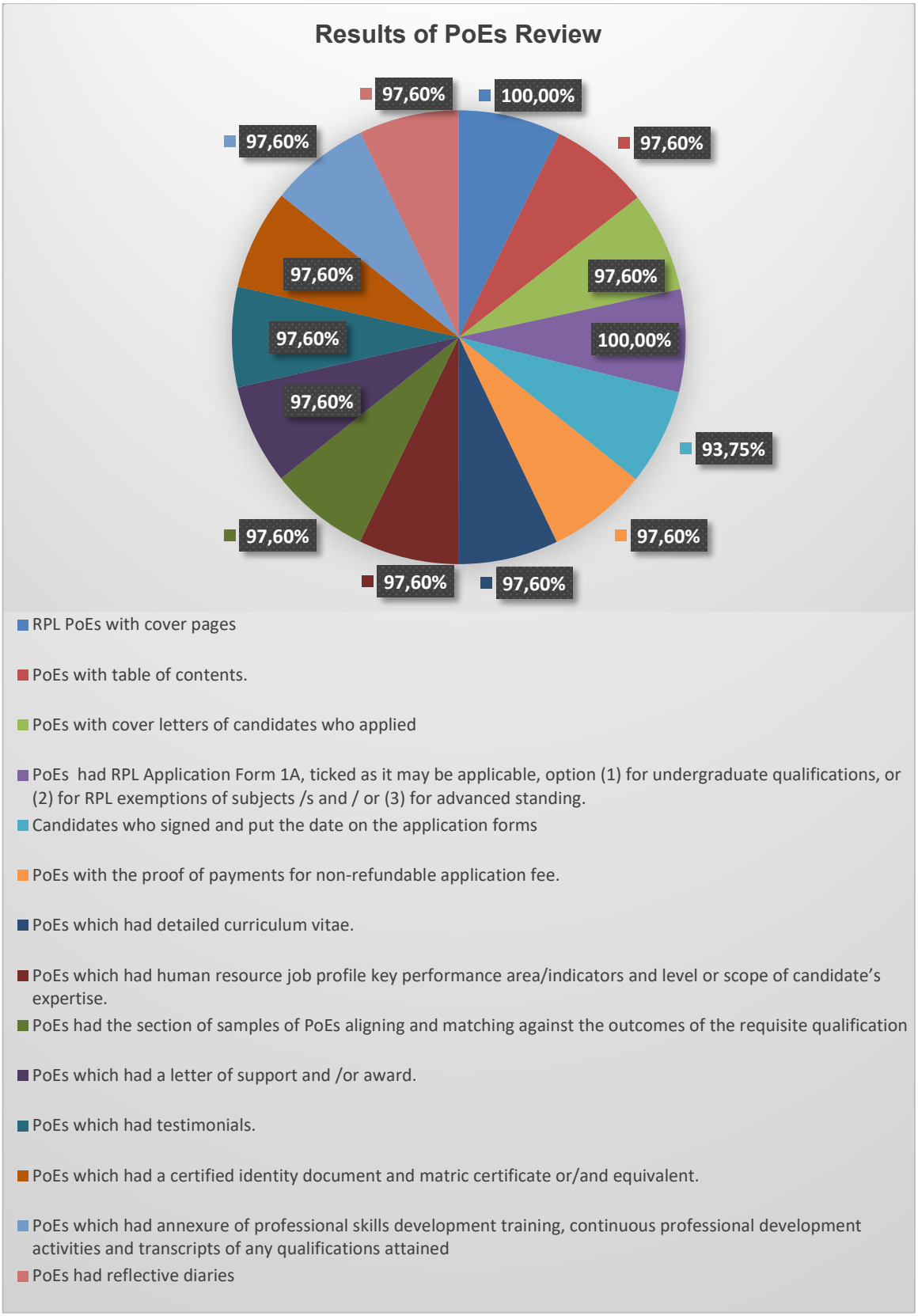


Figure 6.3: Results of PoEs review

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Table 6.1, in this chapter, demonstrated the results of PoEs reviewed. In the next chapter, results of Stage 3 which is the review of the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile will be presented.

CHAPTER 7: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS STAGE 3: REVIEW OF THE RPL SELECTION CRITERIATO DETERMINE THE DEGREE OF CORRELATION WITH THE LEARNER'S PROFILE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results obtained from 80 RPL applications reviewed to determine the degree of correlation between the selection criteria and learner's profile. Selection criteria are part of the RPL approval process. At DUT, a flow chart is used for the approval process. The flow chart depicts the approval process from (a) candidate; (b) RPL administrator: (c) Faculty Office; (d) Academic Head of Department; (e) assessor and moderator: (f) academic Head of Department: (g) Faculty Board EXCO; (h) SENEX and (i) Faculty Office. The main objective of this stage was to:

- Review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile in the FOHS.

The data collected was analysed using SPSS version 26.0. The results will present the descriptive statistics in the form of graphs and cross tabulations to describe the data of the selection process, using the flow chart. Inferential technique used included the use of chi square test (X_2). The chi square test was used to test whether or not there is a statistically significant association between the two categorical variables. Independent variable selection criteria and dependent variable profiling. Analysis by reviewing of PoEs to review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner profile. The paragraphs below discuss the demographics of the learners in the RPL applications.

7.2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF LEARNERS IN THE RPL APPLICATIONS

The demographics section was used to determine who the candidates were in terms of gender and race. Therefore, this section would be used to present the demographics of all candidates.

7.2.1 Gender

The majority of candidates in the study, 51.2% (n=42) were males, while females had only 48.7% (n=40) representation in the study. As demonstrated in Figure 7.1

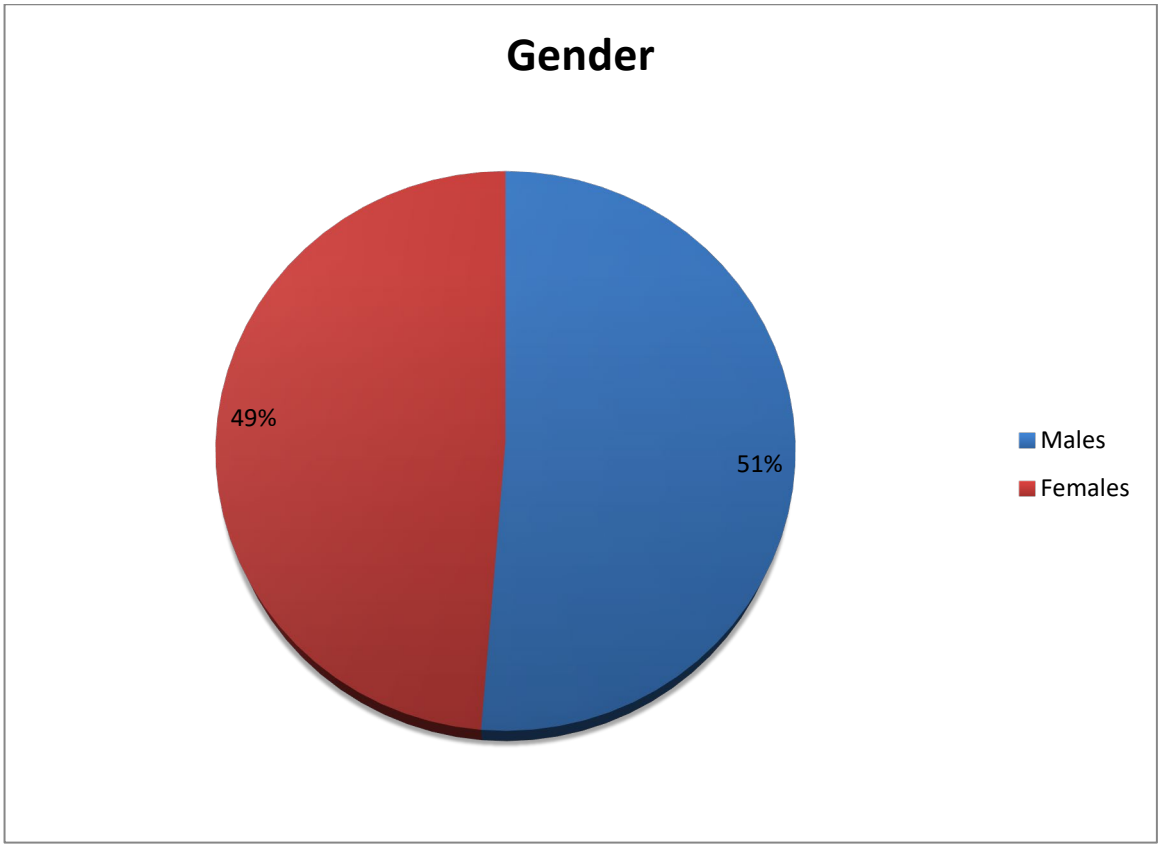


Figure 7.1: The representation of gender (n=80)

7.2.2 Race

The race category was divided into three sections and these were Africans, Indians and Whites. The majority of candidates were Whites, 40.2% (n=33), followed by 30.5% (n=25) Indians and Africans 29.3% (n=24). The percentage distribution of candidates is demonstrated in Figure 7.2.

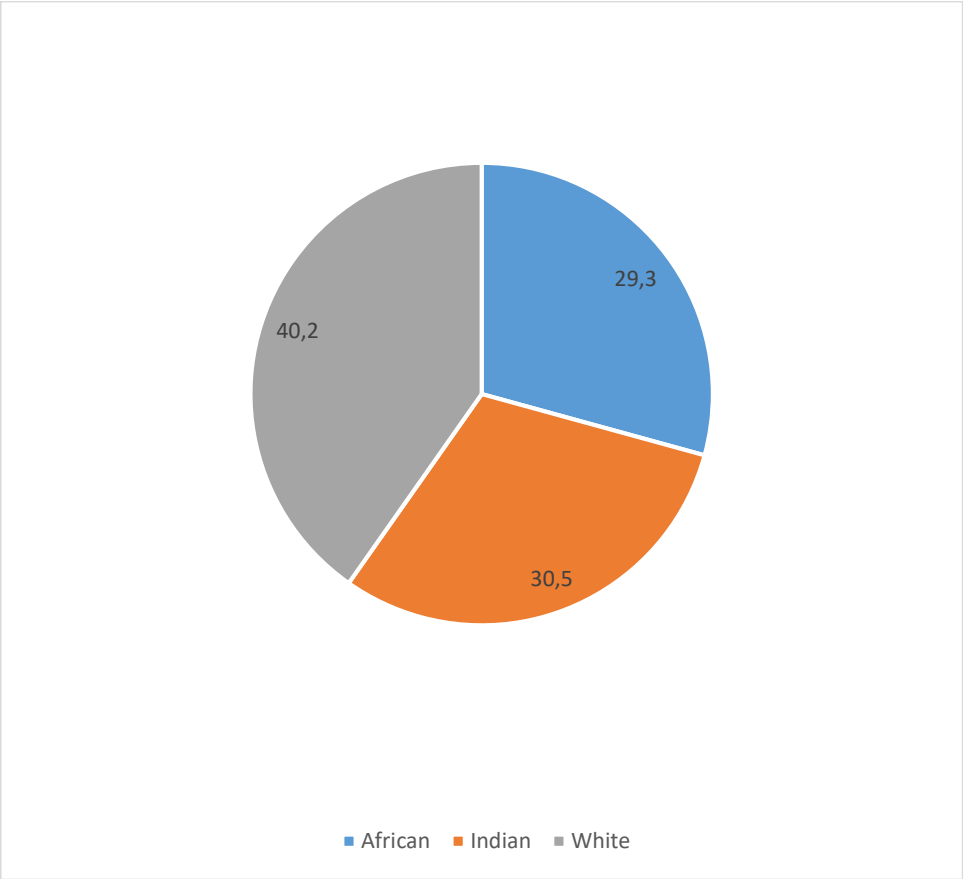


Figure 7.2: The distribution of race (n=80)

7.2.3 Age

In this study, the age was not used as a category. Motaung (2017: 242) states that in RPL, generally, candidates fear that they will be discriminated against on the basis of age and as a result may feel uncomfortable in disclosing their actual age.

7.2.4 RPL applicant's distribution of gender by race

The analysis of two variables, namely gender by race was also performed. Table 7.1 below presents the RPL applicants' distribution of gender by race.

Table 7.1: RPL applicant's distribution of gender by race

Race		Female	Male	Total
African	Count	11	13	24
	% within Race	45.8%	54.2%	100.0%
	% within Gender	26.8%	31.7%	29.3%
	% of Total	13.4%	15.9%	29.3%
Indian	Count	12	13	25
	% within Race	48.0%	52.0%	100.0%
	% within Gender	29.3%	31.7%	30.5%
	% of Total	14.6%	15.9%	30.5%
White	Count	18	15	33
	% within Race	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
	% within Gender	43.9%	36.6%	40.2%
	% of Total	22.0%	18.3%	40.2%
Total	Count	40	42	82
	% within Race	40.0%	42.0%	100.0%
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	40.0%	42.0%	100.0%

The distribution of gender by race (42.0%:40.0%) (p = 1.000) which means male candidates were higher than female candidates. There were different numbers of male and female candidates by race groups as well. The difference by race was also significant (p = 0.411). By race, the White candidates (40.2%) outnumbered Indian candidates (30.5%) and African candidates (29. 3%).

7.2.5 Significance of applicant's race and scoring pattern

The researcher was also interested in finding out the significance of applicant's race and scoring pattern. Table 7.2 below presents the significance of applicant's race and scoring pattern.

Table 7.2: Significance of applicant's race and scoring pattern

			Race			Total
			African	Indian	White	
RPL Assessor	No	Count	2	0	0	2
		% within Race	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
	Yes	Count	22	25	33	80
		% within Race	91.7%	100.0%	100.0%	97.6%
	Total	Count	24	25	33	82
		% within Race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It is noted that all of the possible cross tabulations relating to gender and race had p-values of more than 0.05, implying that there is no significant relationship.

7.3 THE DEGREE OF CORRELATION OF RPL SELECTION CRITERIA WITH LEARNER PROFILE

Hung, Bounsanga, and Voss (2017: 905) point out that correlation is the measure of association or relationship between two variables. Correlation does not indicate causal relationship. In the current study, the variables were learner profiling and selection criteria, profiling being the dependent variable and selection criteria, the independent variable. Interviewed participants indicated that, with regard to the selection criteria, some departments use tests and others use panel assessments. Panel assessment is an independent variable and the test is the dependent variable.

The chi square test was used to ascertain whether there is a statistically significant association between the categorical variables. The independent variable is selection criteria and the dependent variable is profiling. Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients were conducted. Table 7.3 presents the results from the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients.

Table 7.3: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	.100	1	.752
	Block	.100	1	.752
	Model	.100	1	.752

The p-value (0.752) indicates that the model is not significant. This is due to two of the variables, Selection Criteria and Panel Assessments, having no variation in the scoring pattern. All of the respondents had the same rating.

The case processing summary was done. Table 7.4 presents the case processing summary:

Table 7.4: Case processing summary

	N	Percent
Selection Criteria * Profiling	80	100.0%
Panel Assessments * Profiling	80	100.0%
Tests * Profiling	80	100.0%

A chi square test was performed for the selection criteria and it was discovered that numbers remained constant. Table 7.5 presents the values of the chi square test for selection criteria.

Table 7.5: Chi-Square Tests

	Value
Pearson Chi-Square	.[a]
N of Valid Cases	80

a. No statistics are computed because Selection Criteria is a constant.

The chi square test indicates that the numbers in the selection criteria did not change they remain constant. This phenomenon was due to the fact that all RPL applications were subjected to the selection criteria, whether the candidate was profiled or not.

Table 7.6 presents the chi square test for panel assessment.

Table 7.6: Chi-Square Tests for panel assessment

	Value
Pearson Chi-Square	.[a]
N of Valid Cases	80

a. No statistics are computed because Panel Assessments is a constant.

The chi square test indicates that the number of RPL applications that went through the panel assessment did not change. This occurred because all RPL applications went through the panel assessment whether the candidate was profiled or not. It was found that 2.4% applicants did not go through the test as the panel assessor did not approve them.

Table 7.7 below presents the case processing summary for panel assessment, selection criteria and test.

Table 7.7: Case processing summary

	Valid		**Missing**	
	N	**Percent**		
Panel Assessments * Selection Criteria	80	100.0%	80	100.0%
Tests * Selection Criteria	80	96.7%	2	2.4%

Results show that 2.4% RPL applicants did not do the test as they were not approved by the panel assessor.

In the Logistic Regression Model, the log of odds of the dependent variable is modelled as a linear combination of the independent variables. The dependent variable was profiling. A Pearson Chi square test was also done. Table 7.8 presents Pearson Chi square test.

Table 7.8: Pearson Chi square test

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	.051[a]	1	.821	1.000	.952	
Continuity Correction	.000	1	1.000			
Likelihood Ratio	.100	1	.752	1.000	.952	
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.952	
Linear-by-Linear Association	.051[c]	1	.822	1.000	.952	.952
N of Valid Cases	80					

a. 3 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

c. The standardized statistic is .225.

The data statistically analysed from the sample showed that the relationship between two variables selection criteria and profiling is linear as all RPL applications, profiled or not profiled did go through the selection criteria.

7.4 ANALYSIS OF RPL SELECTION PROCESS IN LINE WITH DUT FLOW CHART

The analysis of RPL application and approval process, using a flow chart was also done. Table 7.9 below analyses the scoring patterns for RPL application and approval process per variable per process. The results are presented, using summarised percentages for the variables that constituted the RPL application and approval process.

7.4.1 Scoring Pattens for RPL application and approval process

Analyses of the scoring patterns for RPL applications and approval process per variable per process were performed. Table 7.9 below presents the analyses.

Table 7.9: Scoring Pattens for RPL application and approval process

	No		Yes		Chi Square
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	p-value
Paid Application Fee	0	0.0%	80	100.0%	-
Went to Faculty Office	0	0.0%	80	100.0%	-
Academic Head of Department	0	0.0%	80	100.0%	-
RPL Assessor	2	2.4%	80	97.6%	< 0.001
RPL Moderator	2	2.4%	80	97.6%	< 0.001
Academic Head of Department - 2nd step	2	2.4%	80	97.6%	< 0.001
Faculty Board EXCO	2	2.4%	80	97.6%	< 0.001
SENEX	2	2.4%	80	97.6%	< 0.001
Faculty Office	2	2.4%	80	97.6%	< 0.001
Approved and not approved	2	2.4%	80	97.6%	< 0.001

Step 1: All RPL candidates paid application fees, 80 (n=100.0%).

Step 2: All RPL applications went to Faculty Office, 80 (n=100.0%).

Step 3: All RPL applications went to Academic Head of Department,80 (n=100.0%).

Step 4: All RPL applications went to the Assessor, 80 (n=100.0%). 2.4% (n=2) was not approved which means the assessor approved 97.6% (n=80),< 0.001.

Step 5: All RPL applications went to the Moderator, 80 (n=100.0%). 2.4% (n=2) was not approved which means the Moderator approved 97.6% (n=80),<0.001.

Step 6: All RPL applications went to the Academic Head of Department, 80 (n=100.0%). 2.4%(n=2) was not approved which means the Academic Head of Department approved 97.6% (n=80),<0.001.

Step 7: All RPL applications went to the Health Science Faculty Board EXCO 80 (n=100.0%). 2.4%(n=2) was not approved which means the Health Science; Faculty Board EXCO approved 97.6% (n=80),<0.001.

Step 8: All RPL applications went to the SENEX 80 (n=100.0%). 2.4% (n=2) was not approved which means the SENEX approved 97.6% (n=80),<0.001.

Step 9: All RPL applications went back to the Faculty Office, 80 (n=100.0%). 2.4% (n=2) was not approved which means the Faculty Office approved 97.6% (n=80),<0.001.

Step 10: All RPL applications outcomes were communicated to RPL candidates 80 (n=100.0%). 2.4% (n=2) received no approval outcomes, and RPL candidates who received approved outcomes, 97.6% (n=80),<0.001.

7.4.2 Adherence to the assessment flow chart

The results revealed that all 80, n=100.0% of the RPL applicants had paid the application fee. This resulted in all of the applications being sent to the Faculty Office which was then forwarded to the Academic Head of Department. All RPL applications were fowarded to the Assessor:

- The Assessor did not approve 2.4% of the candidates.
- 97.6% was approved. Approved and not approved candidates were verified by all the remaining structures to determine whether the scoring patterns per stage were significantly different per option; a chi square test was done. The null hypothesis claims that similar numbers of applicants scored across each option for each statement, one stage at a time. The alternate states that there is a significant difference between the levels of agreement (Yes) and disagreement (No).The results are shown in the Table 7.10 below:

Table 7.10: Adherence to the assessment flow chart

	No	Yes
Paid Application Fee	0.0	100.0
Went to Faculty Office	0.0	100.0
Academic Head of Department	0.0	100.0
RPL Assessor	2.4	97.6
RPL Moderator	2.4	97.6
Academic Head of Department - 2nd step	2.4	97.6
Faulty Board EXCO	2.4	97.6
SENEX	2.4	97.6
Faculty Office	2.4	97.6
Approved	2.4	97.6

7.4.3 Levels of adherence to the assessment flow chart

The levels of adherence of RPL applications to the assessment flow chart were analysed. It is observed that all RPL applications adhered to the RPL assessment chart. All RPL applications that were approved and not approved initially by the assessor were taken to various structures in the process for further assessment, approval and not approval until the RPL application outcome was communicated to the candidate by Faculty Office. The Figure 7.3 below shows the levels of adherence of RPL applications to the assessment flow chart.

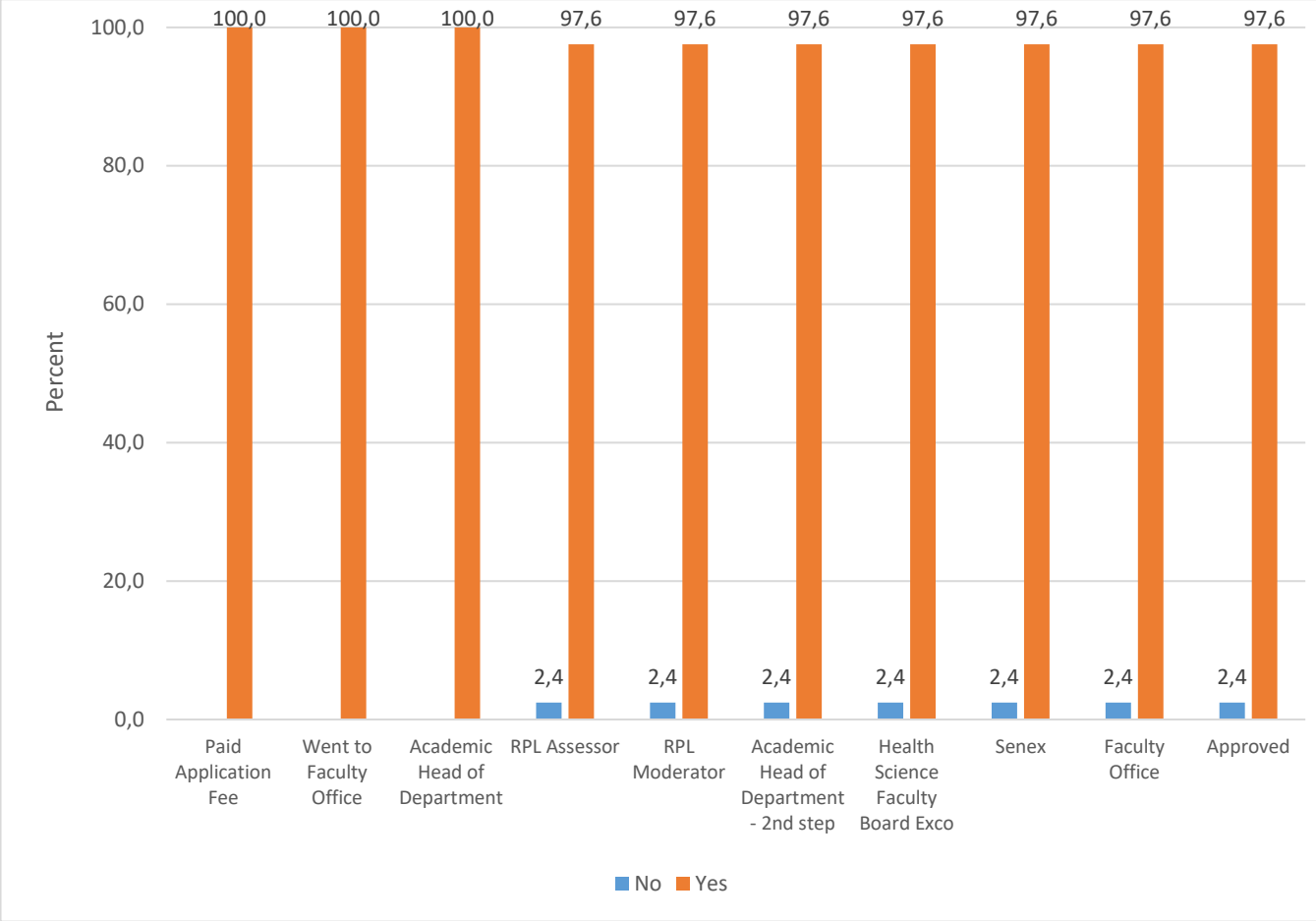


Figure 7.3: Levels of adherence to the assessment flow chart

7.4.4 RPL application and approval process scoring patterns

Analyses of RPL applicant's race and scoring pattern was perfomerd. Table 7.11 below presents the RPL application and approval process scoring patterns.

Table 7.11: RPL application and approval process scoring patterns

Test Statistics

	Race	Gender	RPL Assessor	RPL Moderator	Academic HOD - 2nd step	Health Science Faculty Board EXCO	SENEX	Faculty Office	Approved
Chi-Square	1.780[a]	.000[b]	74.195[b]	74.195[b]	74.195[b]	74.195[b]	74.195[b]	74.195[b]	74.195[b]
df	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	0.411	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

The highlighted significant values (p-values) are less than 0.05, the level of significance which implies that the distributions were not similar. The differences between the way applicants scored (Yes, No) were significant. For example, the p-value between race and RPL Assessor is 0.083. This means that there is no significant relationship between the variables. That is, the race of the students did not play a significant role in terms of how the RPL assessor did the assessment. Significance of applicant's race and scoring pattern is shown in Table: 7.12 below.

Table 7.12: Significance of applicant's race and scoring pattern

			Race			Total
			African	Indian	White	
RPL Assessor	No	Count	2	0	0	2
		% within Race	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
	Yes	Count	22	25	33	80
		% within Race	91.7%	100.0%	100.0%	97.6%
	Total	Count	24	25	33	80
		% within Race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It is noted that all of the possible cross tabulations relating to gender and race had p-values more than 0.05, implying that there is no significant relationship.

7.4.5 Binary logistic regression

Logistic regression is a classification algorithm which is used when the aim is to predict a binary categorical variable (for example, Yes / No), based on a set of independent variables (Creswell and Creswell 2017: 126). In the logistic regression model, the log of odds of the dependent variables is modelled as a linear combination of the independent variables. For the detailed outputs of the flow chart refer to Appendix: 7.

7.4.6 Variables not in the Equation

Table 7.13 below presents the variables not in the equation.

Table 7.13: Variables not in the equation

			Score	df	Sig.
Step 0	Variables	Gender (1)	0.000	1	1.000
		Race	4.954	2	0.084
		Race (1)	4.954	1	0.026
		Race (2)	0.899	1	0.343
	Overall Statistics		4.968	3	0.174

The dependent variable refers to whether the RPL application was approved or not. The Nagelkerke R square values are high (0.292), and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test does indicate that the predictions made by the model fit perfectly with observed group memberships ($p > 0.05$). The classification table indicates a high percentage (97.6%) which implied a correct classification of the applications where the predicted event was observed. Table 7.14 below indicates the variables that are in the equation.

Table 7.14: Variables that are in the equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Gender (1)	0.182	1.478	0.015	1	0.902	1.200	0.066	21.723
Race			0.000	2	1.000			
Race (1)	-18.821	6993.484	0.000	1	0.998	0.000	0.000	
Race (2)	-0.012	10652.107	0.000	1	1.000	0.988	0.000	

There are no significant p-values (Sig. > 0.05). However, it is noted that males are 1.2 times more likely to pass than females (Exp (B) = 1.200), (or confidence interval: 0.066 –21.723). The race groups have similar odds to each other.

7.5 RESULTS

Results showed no statistical significance association between the two categorical variables, namely, independent variable selection criteria and dependent variable profiling. The RPL application and approval process was also reviewed, as selection criteria is part of approval process. Results showed that RPL applications were taken through all the stages.

7.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter presented the results of the review of the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with learner profiling. Results showed no statistical significance association between the two categorical variables, independent variable selection criteria and dependent variable profiling. The RPL application and approval process was also reviewed as selection criteria is part of approval process. Results showed that RPL applications were taken through all the stages. The next chapter will discuss the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the results of the study findings presented in the previous chapter are discussed. Firstly, the results of the demographic profile of RPL applications reviewed for selection criteria, profiling and approval process are discussed. Secondly, results in relation to the study objectives are discussed. Thirdly, the theoretical framework which guided the study is discussed. The literature used in the previous chapters and the new relevant literature was utilized in the discussion of the results, to either support or argue the findings.

8.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RPL APPLICANTS

All RPL applicants included in the approval process had paid their RPL application fee. Results in this study revealed that the ratio of demographic characteristics of the RPL applicant's distribution by gender and race, which is the ratio of males to females is approximately (42.0%:40.0%) (p = 1.000) which means that there were more males than females. Similar findings were reported in a previous study conducted by Motaung (2007:242). In this study, it was discovered that most of the RPL candidates were females. With regard to race, most of the candidates admitted via RPL in this study were whites, not the group that had been previously denied access to higher education. The applicants' ages are known but this information was not utilized in this study, as Motaung (2007: 242) points out that using people's age in research is becoming a sensitive issue in South Africa.

8.3 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS ACCORDING TO THE OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study were to:

- Review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile in the FOHS.
- Explore competencies of RPL practitioners in the FOHS.

- Explore the perceptions of RPL assessors and RPL moderators with regard to RPL implementation.
- Explore training practices available for RPL practitioners in the FOHS.
- Develop a practice framework to guide and enhance access to higher education through pragmatic and holistic implementation of RPL Policy.

Results will be discussed according to each objective.

8.3.1 Objective 1: Review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile in the FOHS

Results revealed that RPL selection criteria in the FOHS were in place, and did not exclude or set up to fail any candidate. Results showed no statistical significance association between the independent variable selection criteria and the dependent variable profiling. Findings also revealed that departments used test, interviews and panel assessments as part of RPL selection criteria. However, it was noted from the findings that one department had full evidence that there is adequate profiling, support and mentor of candidates before development of PoEs. In other departments, evidence was not available to suggest that learner profiling was done. SAQA (2014: 8) postulates that it is important for the candidate to be clear regarding the purpose of RPL at FOHS such as access, advanced standing, RPL for exemption of subjects or admission to commence studies towards an undergraduate qualification. It is emphasised by SAQA that if these matters are not clarified from the outset, candidates may feel deceived and may question the integrity and validity of RPL system.

The study conducted by Baloyi (2014: 67) discovered that the term profiling is used differently from portfolio development to mean that the initial interviewing of the candidate by the designated personnel for that specific qualification the candidate is being evaluated for. The key aspect at this point is to establish the candidate's goals, knowledge of RPL and general expectations. Results in this current study showed that in the FOHS, profiling is not adequately done as adult

learner profile also involves candidate's attributes and characteristics such as the whole spectrum of cognitive, social characteristics, motivation, knowledge, skills, and competences.

According to Motaung (2007: 217), RPL candidates' profiling process should be allocated sufficient time in line with the level of preparedness of each candidate. Some may need less time and others may need extra time in terms of support and assistance to bring candidates to a level where there is a clear understanding of RPL portfolio of evidence development and the assessment process. It is at this point where candidates may enrol for the professional development enrolment module, offered in the Faculty, which deals with portfolio development amongst other topics. The module may run for a period of six months.

Eynon, Gambino and Torok (2014: 110) conducted a survey to ascertain the impact of portfolio development modules on learning, institutional development and on student's success in higher education institutions across USA. Results showed that only one institution had modules to prepare students prior to portfolio development. Similarly, findings in this study showed no evidence of availability of portfolio development modules in the faculty.

According to SAQA (2014: 80), quality and source of evidence that will lead to the attainment of advanced standing will depend on the purpose, outcomes and assessment criteria of the qualification destination. It is stated that it is critical that RPL practitioners be clear on what kind of evidence will be required to offer proof of knowledge and skills in relation to the qualification applied for. Also noted from SAQA (2002: 80) is that RPL practitioners should be open to considering evidence that does not match the formal requirements for the qualification.

Findings in the current study showed that 2.4% of candidates were not accepted in accessing the qualification because the writing skills were poor. Different studies have shown that RPL pre-screening support is very important

and that the prepared, well supported and well guided candidate is much more likely to succeed. The SAQA (2014: 20) stipulate that learner-centeredness is a key principle underpinning the NQF, translated into candidates support. It is further stated that the extent of such support services will depend on the context. Motaung (2007: 217) also states that there should be clear timelines with a definition of responsibilities for further actions which is usually given to all the RPL candidates.

Findings in the current study revealed that there is support and compassion provided to candidates by one department in the FOHS. Prior to the development of PoEs there is full support in the sense that candidates would be called upon by the programme coordinator to establish how they are coping and the coordinator would drive to rural places to have meetings with candidates, that take place once a month, for monitoring the progress made by the candidates.

In support of this notion, UNESCO (2012: 26) reported results of a study where selection criteria correlated with candidates profiling which resulted in 100% candidates admitted to the programmes in a higher education institution in Croatia. Berglund (2012: 76) states that admission to higher education via RPL is set individually by each faculty. The current study also discovered that in 2015, 99% RPL candidates assessed were admitted into different programmes and of this cohort 98% passed the degree, 2% had one module to complete towards the degree.

The survey by Collins (2011: 218) on RPL admission revealed that decision makers called for standardized RPL admission criteria and procedures across programmes and faculties to ensure consistency, reliability of judgment of the relevance and level of candidate's performance, as part of quality assurance in RPL implementation. Findings in the current study revealed that there is a need for standardization of RPL admission criteria in the FOHS to promote uniformity and consistency within the faculty. Standardization will also enhance the implementation of RPL in the FOHS (Down 2011: 175).

According to the UNESCO (2012: 24), determining the competences of the individual through credentials requires careful consideration of a person's knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences. Institutions mostly rely on the evaluation of the credentials to determine the level of competence. Increasingly, however, institutions are realizing that credentials alone do not or cannot provide adequate reflection of what an individual has learned or the level of competency in a practical field.

Findings of the current study revealed that all RPL candidates submitted PoEs to be evaluated for competencies against outcomes of the qualification applied for and competency judgments were based on evaluation of credentials. CAEL (2013: 56) documents that assessment tools such as simulation, demonstration, challenge examinations, case studies, structured interviews, self-assessments processes are used in classrooms and workplaces to help individual's licensing and other competency requirements, even in the assessment of entry level competence requirements. Institutions have to develop multiple options beyond credentials' evaluation for decision makers to consider as they seek greater assurance and confidence in the evaluation process.

The findings in this study further revealed that other departments in the FOHS conduct written and oral assessments in the context of progression and career-pathing of departmental personnel. This is done for candidates who had practiced for years with short course certificates. If candidates are found to be competent, they are admitted into the Diploma programme. Results in this current study also showed that only 10% of the cohort succeeds in this up-skilling and progression intervention of this nature. In the study by Thobejane (2016: 234), it is stated that an assessment is a process of gathering and weighing evidence in order to determine whether a learner has been able to demonstrate the specified outcomes in a qualification registered in the NQF. In the current study, the results showed that assessments were conducted and they were valid and reliable as candidates were able to demonstrate their previous knowledge and achievements of specified outcomes for the

destination qualifications. SAQA (2013: 56) documents that, the credibility of RPL assessment outcomes lies solely on its validity, reliability and fairness. Results in this study showed that assessment tools used were valid, reliable and fair as moderation of assessments were done by both external and internal moderators.

In the developmental theory used to guide this study, the assumption is that cognitive constructivism is an advantage towards the learning process because learning occurs through a process of assimilation and accommodation. As students continually seek for equilibrium and development there is progression, increase in skills and capacity. According to Piaget (1987: 194), RPL is about learning and experience gained informally or formally. He asserts that experience is the input and a measurement of learning is the output, the final aim of which is an increase in the individual's competencies formally recognized and developed. Findings in this study revealed that the inadequate profiling of RPL candidates could have contributed to few candidates accessing a Diploma qualification. On the other hand, it was also found that the Chiropractic programme is highly regulated by its Professional Board of Southern Africa. A Chiropractic professional must have a Masters Degree.to be able to practice. There is no assistant category in Chiropractic, therefore, RPL cannot be implemented. One participant mentioned that, when profiling and screening international candidates with higher degrees and experience in Chiropractic, they do not meet the selection criteria in terms of the knowledge, skills and capabilities which are required for the destination qualification.

8.3.2 Objective 2: Explore competencies of RPL practitioners in the FOHS

Findings from this study revealed that all 100% RPL practitioners in the chosen departments in the FOHS were of the opinion that RPL staff confidence is a necessary prerequisite for a successful RPL implementation. All practitioners had not received formal RPL training but all received guidance and support from the CELT on how to implement RPL. Paul Freire also draw attention to the

professional development issues in RPL. They claim that it is not possible to be totally objective in an assessment process. Yeates *et al*. (2013: 915) argue that even competent assessors often bring implicit pre-theory to their role, such as personal experiences of assessment in the past, and construction of knowledge or particular attitudes and biases, including cultural, social, political and personal dimensions in RPL assessment space. It is emphasized that emotions and subjectivity can affect reliability and validity of assessments in RPL. The study conducted by Harmers (2010: 196) revealed that assessor's competencies cannot totally separate observations or judgments from what the learner knows and that she will often adjust the assessment outcomes accordingly.

On the other hand, the notion of validity and reliability is viewed differently from different philosophical and paradigmatic perspectives (Joosten-ten Brink *et al.* 2012: 74). It is argued that classic psychometric criteria used in educational standards are based on concepts of reliability and validity which are dependent on set and known outcomes and are not necessarily best for assessing prior learning. It is further revealed that reliability is not a straightforward concept outside positivist research which makes it difficult to dispense with it all together. In this current study, results showed that there is no evidence of classic psychometric criteria used.

Stenlund (2010: 785-787) perceives reliability as akin to trustworthiness and argues that it is under-examined in RPL assessment. Stenlund (2010: 786) finds poor reliability across RPL assessor agreement, most specifically when it comes to deciding the level of competence. She recommends the dialogical sharing of values and intuitive criteria in a community of practice in order to reach a higher level of agreement. Stenlund concluded that it is important to have a transparent and a clear definition of the competence being assessed, such as explicit criteria for the different aspects of prior learning to reach a higher level of agreement between accessions and assessors. Furthermore, it is stressed that there is a need for purposeful training and norming procedures around RPL assessments criteria. Findings in this study revealed that there was

transparency and clear definition of competencies that were assessed by departments in the FOHS. However, there is an outcry for standardization and availability of RPL procedure manuals with step by step instructions to be followed by departments in RPL implementation.

Arguing that competent RPL assessors in the portfolio assessment should follow a more hermeneutic interpretative approach, Tigelaar *et al.* (2005: 599) recommend using criteria of trustworthiness to enhance the integrity of RPL assessment outcomes. This concurs with Stenlund who proposed that assessors should be encouraged to debate with each other and use member checking, thick descriptions and audit trails to continually challenge and revise their emerging interpretations until they have considered all the available evidence, thus triangulating to verify assessment processes and results. The results in this study showed that RPL practitioners always debate with each other within departments and further consult the CELT for support to verify assessment processes and results.

Peters (2005: 278) concludes that if the assessor is not convinced by the validity of the student's evidence submitted to match the outcomes of the destination qualification, the claim is not valid in that context. In this current study, findings revealed that one RPL candidate was not approved because the writing skills were poor. Poor writing skills contributed to the inability of the RPL candidate to surface or display the knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviour, and attitude that match with the outcomes of the destination qualification.

Stenlund (2010: 785) established a framework for defining the RPL practitioner's competencies. The framework required that RPL practitioners be accredited, have a proven track record of RPL competencies and keep their professional skills up to date. Stenlund (2010: 786) also discovered that differences between external RPL expert assessment recommendations and institutional decisions raised questions about the clarity and transparency of RPL practitioners' expected competencies. Lack of RPL practitioners' competencies would mean incorrect RPL candidates' assessment. Incorrect

assessment will result in opening up access for unqualified candidates who will drop out along the way or become incompetent at the end, or incorrect assessments would prevent qualifying candidates that were previously denied access to higher education to become good future professionals.

The Travers (2011: 88) project resulted in a set of common standards for the professional development of the RPL practitioners to enhance competencies. Quality, through the use of occupational standards for the RPL process, was recommended for trainers involved in the professionalization of RPL practitioners. It could be argued that unfamiliarity of RPL practitioners with the institutional RPL policy, RPL procedure manuals and standardization of RPL process contributed to RPL practitioners being dependent on CELT for guidance and support in the RPL implementation. SAQA RPL policy (2013: 56) states that there is no doubt that the implementation of RPL will require the allocation of specific roles and duties and the development of expertise in this area of provisioning.

Travers (2011: 243) states that RPL needs to recognize the specialized knowledge and skills that practitioners acquire on the job within the lecture room. Such expertise has a bearing on a practitioner's ability to perform at a much higher level of sophistication and responsibility within that same subject or domain than his or her existing qualifications would imply, which means such expertise enables up-skilling.

A developmental framework was used in this study, which described experience as the input and measurement of the learning as the output. The developmental framework supports the positioning of the self as an actor co-producer of knowledge and learning as a bottom-up process that can be linked to the theories of development. Piaget (1987: 19) emphasizes that the learner's knowledge gained through experience helps to develop the learner, not only in assessing existing levels of competency but also in enhancing critical cross fields outcomes such as critical thinking, communication and problem solving as well as developing the learner's confidence and self-actualization. Findings

in this study showed that candidates' experience enhanced their critical thinking as they submitted systematic, well developed and professionally presented PoEs. This also indicated that candidates had developed their self-confidence.

Travers (2011: 84) is of the opinion that RPL is a promising bridge to LLL opportunities for all. All learning activities undertaken throughout life are taken with the aim to improve knowledge, competencies and skills. A study by Hendricks (2001: 156) revealed that, in the University of Western Cape, the evaluation of the RPL process resulted in comparison of the exit level outcomes of the first year Diploma programme with the exit level outcomes of the programme for enrolled nurses in R2176 SANC. From this comparison the committee identified deficits between the two curricula. According to Hendricks (2001: 156), the deficits were in Anatomy and Physiology, Community Health, Social Science, Biophysics and Biochemistry. As the curricular for enrolled nurses did not cover these subjects adequately, they designed a special programme for the RPL candidates. This deficit was also evident in the results of this study where most programmes in the FOHS such as nursing require core knowledge courses as an entry requirement. Adoption of the bridging programmes offered in the departments will assist in widening up access to higher levels of qualifications in the departments and increase access to higher education for the previously marginalized individuals.

8.3.3 Objective 3: Explore the perceptions of RPL assessors and moderators with regard to RPL implementation

The findings in this study showed that assessors and moderators support the availability and implementation of RPL in the FOHS as it is providing an alternative route for access into higher education. The results revealed assessors and moderators supported improvements to RPL practices to enhance quality in its implementation as they suggested improvement ideas and views. Similarly, Motaung (2007: 288) recommended the promotion of institutional peer review, systems of obtaining information and feedback on

effectiveness of RPL programmes from RPL candidates and others involved in RPL process.

It was also found that assessors and moderators, in this study, perceived a lack of awareness of RPL processes and of the potential value of RPL practice. The findings suggest that more academics should be on board, that RPL champions should be appointed and incentives offered for leading faculties. It was also revealed that officially RPL registered assessors are not available in the FOHS. These findings are supported by Travers' (2011: 243) study which postulates that the philosophical underpinnings of the RPL practice in the institutions have an impact on the way in which prior learning is assessed and credited. He concluded that institutions and organizations need to make their philosophies clear to RPL assessors and moderators including how these shape expectations and impact every aspect of assessment and the RPL process.

The study that was conducted by Hewson (2011: 13) to examine why assessors were reticent to engage in RPL practice found that the reticence seemed to revolve around perceived difficulty of expressing experientially-based learning in such a way as to capture its individual specificity and non-standardized character. This relates to a long-standing issue and concern in RPL regarding the difficulty and desirability of expressing tacit learning in explicit ways, resulting to lack of motivation towards collection of evidence.

Results of this study further revealed that RPL candidates' needs assessment and needs analysis in pre-assessment programmes, and there was inadequate support for RPL candidates in evidence gathering and portfolio of evidence compilation. These findings are supported by an intervention by Boyle (2009: 15) where an RPL programme for indigenous teaching assistants of Australia e-portfolio fulfilled various functions. They proved to be valuable in needs identification and helping candidates to connect their prior work experience with their new learning from the programme. Enhanced communication between candidates and staff and coordination of various activities within the

programme. However, it is highlighted that effectiveness did depend on the technological capabilities of all parties.

The findings of the study that was conducted by Jennings, Bramly *et al*. (2010: 69) showed that technological barriers could be overcome if individuals were given active support to document their prior learning. According to Kawalilak (2013: 47), this is consistent with more general literature on the use of e-portfolio perceptions versus paper portfolio where candidates need initial facilitation and support until they acclimatize to the technology and to the idea of portfolio development and the RPL process as a whole.

Nyatenga *et al.* (2012: 34) conducted a study on RPL perceptions which included the need for RPL model development for sustainable programmes, development and scale-up of RPL implementation. This is in line with SAQA (2013: 68) who states that these models should include developing, ensuring that programme leaders and advisors are conversant with RPL principles and their applications to assessments. They also recommended that each faculty should have a coordinator to enhance subject-specific debates and feedback, and subject teams' nucleus capable of either advising or assessing RPL or claims. The RPL leaders should be able to give appropriate support and feedback to candidates and identifying strengths and weaknesses of the RPL provision through self-evaluation (critical peer review) institutional audits of artefacts, external views and external examiners feedback. External views may include professional bodies or funding bodies.

Findings in this current study revealed that academics in the FOHS were of the opinion that practice models should be developed in FOHS to scale up RPL implementation. These models should include developing programme leaders and advisors and ensuring that they are conversant with RPL principles and their applications to assessments, and that each faculty should have a coordinator to enhance subject specifications (SAQA 2013: 67).

Diedrich (2013: 549) raised views about possible barriers in the implementation of RPL in Canada, and actions that were taken. Diedrich (2013: 550) identified actions taken in Canada to enhance quality which included RPL standards for assessments, policies and procedures have been developed; community outreach activities are undertaken to disseminate accurate information on RPL; national government and funding organizations are funding RPL implementation; faculties, staff and academics have been trained so that adequate support services are provided; academics, assessors and moderators have begun to prepare course descriptions, using learning outcomes which are clear statements about what an individual needs to know and do to be successful in a course (Jaschik 2013: 33).

Findings in the current study revealed that RPL practitioners were of the view that though RPL has no allocation of resources and no funding it has added more work. These findings are supported by Breier (2011: 89) who studied RPL in South Africa and concluded that the barriers in RPL implementation are caused by constraints like lack of resources that have a strong influence and the results in terms of access and redress are negligible. Contrarily, Van Kleef (2011: 19) states that RPL in France is widely accepted and there is funding for it as a practice that has been in existence for over 80 years. South Africa and France have similarities in conceptualization of RPL. (Van Kleef 2011: 19).

Findings in this current study also revealed that RPL practitioners perceived DUT RPL policy as accommodative though it is not visible to RPL implementers. This is also in line with SAQA (2013: 69) who states that all academics should be made aware of the RPL policy and that the policy should be communicated to all academics involved in its implementation which should be improved. According to CHE Policy (2016: 2), learners, staff and external stakeholders should be familiar with RPL policy and form part of on-going evaluation exercises to enhance quality. In particular, learners should be encouraged to provide feedback on the entire RPL process on completion of the personal RPL undertaking to indicate whether the RPL policy was followed. It is further stated that institutions need to monitor and adapt the RPL service

and assessments in order to make the process more effective and efficient and to ensure that the RPL process is in line with national standards and developmental objectives.

Results in this current study further revealed that RPL academics expressed concerns in relation to quality assurance in RPL implementation. It was also found that the SAQA RPL policy presents a good example of a self-audit tool in relation to quality management system to ensure the continuous improvement of assessment systems. The QMS ensures the critical integrity of assessment and reporting and recording processes that inform strategic planning requirements. Results of this study also indicated that SAQA self-audit tool presents core criteria for quality management system. The self-audit tool (Table 8.1 below) is designed such that it constantly reminds RPL implementers of all core criteria.

According to SAQA (2013: 39), quality assurance should not be seen as inspection but rather as an intervention to ensure continuous improvement and development. Furthermore, results in this study showed that RPL academics in the FOHS fully support developmental and incremental approaches that will give the FOHS space to explore and experiment with implementation of the RPL policy. It will also give the faculty autonomy to develop implementation plans within constraints of their organizations while meeting the agreed requirements of the framework and criteria indicated in the policy.

8.3.4 Objective 4: Explore training practices available for RPL practitioners in the FOHS

The results revealed that practitioners involved in RPL implementation had not been exposed to RPL training. It was also found that when SAQA and CHE provided RPL training only two academics attended. Werquine (2010: 3) agrees that RPL requires expert educators to help candidates make sense of the RPL process. Results in this study showed that academics are willing to fully participate in RPL implementation. These results are echoed in the results of

the study conducted by Thobejane (2016: 234) with regard to training of RPL personnel. It was discovered that for successful implementation of RPL there should be trained assessors, moderators and coordinators to implement RPL. The results of this study indicate that training was available but that it was of very low quality.

Salini and Bednarz (2010: 3) indicate that there are few assessors and RPL practitioners who have been trained and registered. SAQA RPL policy (2013: 39) explicitly states that training of staff involved in RPL implementation is critical for the success of RPL in an institution. It is also explicit about the need for appropriate training of staff who will be dealing with the RPL process. Furthermore, the policy states that training enables RPL personnel to provide a holistic, learner-centred service that is in keeping with the objectives of the NQF and related policies. The SAQA cited this as critical because assessments are the cornerstone of RPL. Similarly, Salini and Bednarz (2010: 249) stress the need for solid knowledge of RPL including best practices and different methods of assessments as RPL practitioners have gained recognition as a distinct profession.

The CAEL conducted a study in Europe to explore and articulate core competencies for RPL practitioners and drew attention to the importance of professional development for RPL practitioners, centrality of professional competence including continuous training of RPL practitioners (CAEL 2013: 89). Cedefop (2010: 3) argues that the unique nature of RPL practitioners needs to be recognized as its own profession. The European Commission Leonardo da Vinci project (European Commission 2012: 76) was conducted for the development of RPL training standards, training materials and assessments standards for RPL professionals.

In support of these developments, Salini (2010: 95) revealed that Switzerland and Romania have established procedures to credit RPL professionals who independently deploy RPL process. Furthermore, Salini (2010: 96) revealed that the Swiss Federal Institute has developed a Diploma of Advanced Studies

for specialists in RPL. It is stated that this work has been expanded through trans- border initiative with Italy called Interreg Project VALID O, which has worked on a common qualification path for recognition and validation of specialists. The initiative defines common qualification and assessment procedures, including common competencies for professional roles across the two countries. Salini and Bednarz (2013: 11-12) examined RPL practitioners training across Europe. Their findings determined that projects tend to agree on the specific moments in which professional action should take place in various phases in the RPL process. They further state that most of RPL researchers share the opinion that RPL professionals situate their action in a delicate field between adult education and training and lifelong or life-wide guidance.

Sava (2012: 5) posits that in Romania, national RPL policies require RPL practitioners to meet specific competencies. It is further postulated that the Validation of Informal/non-formal Psycho-Pedagogical Competencies of Adult Educator Project aimed at initiating and developing specific measures, instruments, strategies for recognition, validation and certification of the competencies acquired in non-formal and informal settings and contexts for RPL practitioners. Sava (2012: 6) points out that an RPL process for the certification of adult learning professionals increases their ability to understand their practice which provides support for adult learners.

Observal-Net (2013: 227) states that other countries such as Finland and Denmark have also created competence profiles and associated training programmes for the adult learning professional. The work in these countries aims to describe the role of RPL assessors and moderators. In this way, RPL practitioners are gradually gaining recognition as distinct professionals. Findings in this current study showed that some programmes, in departments such as Nursing, are conducting quality moderations both in external and internal moderations. The study by De Graff (2010: 2) identified a lack of ontological knowledge of what counts as RPL, how it is assessed and its validity and integrity. The results also revealed high demands regarding training on

issues of assessment and raising awareness of RPL at the institution. Results of this study revealed that there is a need for RPL assessor training. It was noted that the Namibia Qualifications Authority spearheaded a campaign to raise RPL awareness and sensitize the nation to the significance of RPL as well as unlocking people's perceptions of RPL.

The findings of the study that was conducted by Conrad (2010: 15) suggests that roles and responsibilities of personnel involved in the RPL process vary. RPL advisers' guide and support RPL candidates in preparation for assessments. Cedefop (2010: 72) states that decision making should be supported by information, advice and guidance as well as support candidates to identify appropriate standards and levels against which their competencies may be assessed. Results further indicate that training for the RPL involved personnel need to take various complex concerns into consideration in order to develop rounded competencies.

The current study findings indicate an urgent need regarding developments and issues in the professional development of RPL assessors and moderators. It was suggested that training should be done in the months of November and December when most of the students have finished the examinations. According to the SAQA RPL Policy (2013: 14), integrity in RPL assessments needs appropriate infrastructure for assessments including appropriate reporting mechanisms. Assessors' and moderators' competencies are reviewed and updated on an on-going basis.

Bednarz and Salini (2013: 95) had similar findings in their research to establish procedures to credit RPL professionals who independently practise RPL. Common and specific competencies for RPL professional's roles were established. Results from the study conducted by the CAEL (2013: 8) also suggested that the quality of RPL process is completely dependent upon the abilities of those who carry out the procedures. The literature review delineates some critical aspects of training that needs to be considered for each role.

Van Kleef (2013: 260) revealed trends in the professional development of RPL assessors and moderators to acquire skills to validate the prior learning and recommend formal recognition. All candidates' credentials and influential documents require the assessor to be a subject or content specialist, with knowledge and skills in assessment of theory and practice. The core role is to select or develop appropriate assessment tools and make reasonable judgment on submitted evidence. Findings of this study revealed that RPL assessors are subject and content specialists, with knowledge and skills in assessment of theory and practice. Their core role is to select or develop appropriate assessment tools and make reasonable judgment on submitted evidence. Findings further showed that RPL assessors in the FOHS have developed quality experience and skills in RPL assessments. With the guidance and support of CELT.

Findings in the current study revealed limited evidence of pre-assessment or diagnostic assessments of RPL candidates. These assessments are crucial as assessors are able to identify candidate's strengths and weaknesses and develop a proper action plan to assist the candidate improve. Supporting this notion, Hardy (2010: 127) also revealed that diagnostic assessment measures a student's current knowledge and skills for the purpose of identifying a suitable program of learning. It is further asserted that self-assessment is a form of diagnostic assessment which involves students' assessing themselves. Diagnostic assessments ask those being assessed to consider themselves in hypothetical future situations. It was discovered from the results in this study that some assessors are fully engaging candidates in assessment activities such as self-assessment in an effort to develop candidates' cognitive abilities and increase self-esteem.

The findings of the study conducted by Conrad (2010: 16) suggest that roles and responsibilities of personnel involved in the RPL process vary. RPL moderators are involved in two processes, namely verification and standardisation. The role of the internal moderator is to ensure that systems for standardised RPL assessments are well established, including monitoring

consistency of assessment records. Moderators also do a sample check of the design of assessment materials for appropriateness before they are used and check results and decisions of assessors for consistency. Assessment is appropriate, consistent, fair, and transparent and does not unintentionally discriminate against candidates with disabilities.

In this current study, it was discovered that some departments engage the services of both internal and external moderators to ensure that quality assessments are done and that internal processes are in line with the requirements stipulated in SAQA RPL policy. It also became evident from findings in this current study that the engagement of external moderators in the FOHS supported the development of a cadre of RPL specialist practitioners. SAQA RPL policy states that assessors dealing with RPL candidates need sensitisation with regards to their own biases towards candidates and processes required to assess such candidates. This will facilitate progress towards a holistic RPL implementation. Holistic RPL implementation results in academics /assessors receiving on-going advice and support, for example, on designing assessment activities. Heyns (2013: 293-296) highlights that internal moderators' role is crucial as they have to scrutinise the integrity and validity of the assessment tools, instruments and processes.

Findings of the present study revealed that RPL practitioners need support structures to critically engage with proposed RPL methodologies and tools in the FOHS so that candidates' work is presented in a manner that supports the moderation process. They need to ensure that evidence of learner achievement is mapped to the assessment criteria and access to qualifications is valid, reliable and consistent. Once all the above are in place, access to qualifications is granted (Fain 2012:102).

Michelson (1998: 141) revealed important themes in the academic research literature concerning different philosophical underpinnings of the explicit and implicit informing assessments. It is pointed out that assessments are viewed as situated practice, hermeneutic, interpretive, and metaphoric and it is found

to be a site for negotiated meaning bringing. In support of the need for assessors' training, Naede's (2013: 69) study revealed that assessor training is crucial, as assessors have to understand the fact that there are approaches to assessments such as, strict psychometric perspective where learning is documented and examined against set assessment criteria regardless of context development. It was further revealed that assessments are a phenomenological revealing of learning in order to understand what exists, much like an archaeological dig which puts found pieces together and uses the context to make sense of what is there.

Contrarily, Diedrich's (2013: 243) study is seen as important in this regard in that it critiques validation practices that are too procedurally efficient and militate against the development of a more comprehensive and ultimately fairer understanding of the heterogeneous nature of skills and knowledge. Two approaches were revealed from the findings of this study that take into consideration knowledge that sits outside of the assessment criteria. Naede (2013: 69) suggests that the trained assessors will be able to negotiate between traditional disciplinary standards which treat knowledge in isolation of other disciplines and applications and the trans- disciplinary aspect of knowledge which considers multivariate and integrated influences.

Hoffman (2006: 278) also conducted a study on RPL practices across 34 North American higher education institutions. Findings revealed a range of approaches regarding the use of assessment criteria from strict criteria matching on the one hand to the development of broader notions of equivalence aligned to the learner's knowledge rather than predetermined criteria. Cavaco (2007: 23) also concluded that training remains the cornerstone of improving RPL practice. Results of this study showed that the assessor's role is fraught with tensions particularly between humanist and instrumental approaches and that these tensions can lead to unevenness within an assessment process, producing varying results. Travers (2011: 23) studied assessor reports and found that some assessors had embedded lessons directed to the learners in their assessment practice as though their roles were to teach as part of the

assessment. When the RPL process reaches the assessor stage, tension can occur between the desire to cultivate more learning and the role of judging the learning. If both are happening at once, the assessor risks giving the learner mixed messages. In the study conducted by Travers (2011: 76), findings revealed that mutual dialogue between candidates and assessors is the basis for the negotiation of meaning and the development of shared understanding regarding the nature and extent of the learning to be assessed.

8.4 THE NEED FOR A TAILORED PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

It is apparent from findings of this study that the FOHS needs to put strategies in place to enhance RPL implementation. The findings of the study, in relation to its first four objectives, highlight the focus areas for developing the practice framework.

8.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter the results of the study findings were discussed. The discussion was based on the study objectives and the theoretical framework which guided the study. The next chapter will present a practice framework to enhance the RPL implementation.

CHAPTER 9: A TAILORED PRACTICE FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE RPL IMPLEMENTATION IN THE FOHS AT DUT

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the results of the current study were discussed. The areas of success and those where improvements were needed in the implementation of RPL were also highlighted. Chapter 9 presents and proposes a tailored practice framework to enhance the implementation of RPL in the FOHS at DUT. This was the fifth and the last objective and the main aim of the study. The aim of the study was to explore and review the extent of RPL implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences and ultimately develop a practice framework to enhance the RPL implementation. The data on the discussion of the themes that emanated from the study was reduced, utilizing the framework synthesis and the practice framework was developed.

9.2 A WORKABLE PRACTICE TO ENHANCE RPL IMPLEMENTATION

The focus of the study in all the information that has been presented so far has been on the first four objectives of the study which were to:

- Review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learners' profile in the FOHS.
- Explore competence of RPL practitioners in the FOHS.
- Explore the perceptions of assessors and RPL moderators with regard to RPL implementation.
- Explore training practices available for RPL assessors and RPL moderators in the FOHS.

The findings in relation to these objectives guided the development of the practice framework. The Developmental Theory used to guide this study also has the assumptions that cognitive development is an advantage towards the learning process because learning occurs through a process of assimilation,

accommodation and equilibration. As students continually seek for equilibrium and development there is progression, increase in skills and capacity. There should be quality and integrity in the formalization of learning and experience gained informally or formally. The developmental theory stresses that experience is the input and a measurement of learning is the output, the final aim of which is an increase in the individual's competencies formally recognized and developed. The findings for each objective are summarized below.

9.2.1 Review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation to the learners' profile in the FOHS

The findings of this study revealed that RPL selection criteria in the FOHS are in place, and it does not exclude or set up to fail any candidate. Findings also revealed that departments in the FOHS use tests, interviews and panel assessments as part of RPL selection criteria. However, it was noted that one department showed evidence of adequate profiling, support and mentor of candidates before development of PoEs. In other departments, evidence was not available to suggest that learner profiling was done.

9.2.2 Explore competencies of RPL practitioners in the FOHS

Results of the current study indicate that RPL practitioners in the chosen departments in the FOHS were competent. Though all practitioners have not yet received formal RPL training they have managed to implement successful RPL with the guidance and support received from the CELT. The incompetence of RPL practitioners has a negative effect on the quality of RPL assessment and judgment of candidates PoEs. Several RPL authors draw attention to the objectivity issues in RPL assessment. The claim is that it is not possible to be totally objective in an assessment process.

9.2.3 Explore the perceptions of assessors and RPL moderators with regard to RPL implementation

The findings of this study revealed that assessors' and moderators' perceptions of the implementation of RPL in the FOHS were all positive. The findings showed that assessors and moderators appreciate the availability and also support the implementation of RPL in the FOHS. It was evident that they supported the provision of alternative route for access into higher education for those previously excluded from accessing higher education. Findings in this study revealed that 100% of assessors and moderators supported improvements to RPL practices to enhance quality in its implementation as they suggested different positive improvement ideas and views.

9.2.4 Explore training practices available for RPL assessors and RPL moderators in the FOHS

The findings of the study revealed that practitioners involved in RPL implementation have not been exposed to RPL training. It was also found that only two academics attended RPL training courses that SAQA and CHE provided. It is true that RPL requires expert educators to help candidates to make sense of the RPL process. Results showed that academics need RPL training as they are willing to fully participate in RPL implementation.

9.3 THE NEED FOR A TAILORED PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

It is apparent from the findings of the study that the FOHS at DUT needs to put strategies in place to enhance the implementation of RPL. Several factors that influenced the implementation of RPL were identified, thus highlighting the need to develop a tailored practice framework for the FOHS at DUT. The findings of the study in relation to its first four objectives highlight the focus areas of developing a tailored practice framework.

The practice framework developed in this study is aimed at enhancing RPL implementation and promoting a holistic RPL assessment process that will streamline and promote integrity in the recognition process for prospective candidates. The framework will also provide RPL practitioners and prospective candidates with generic core features and steps/phases inherent in an RPL assessment process. RPL is meant to be an assessment alternative that counteracts the gate-keeping barriers to access to higher education, which will be comprehensive but credible and rigorous. The RPL process should consist of the following stages: (a) RPL awareness stage (b) pre-entry stage which comprises a screening phase and pre-assessment phase (c) advisory stage, that is rerouting or referral to alternative pathway or career route(d) assessment stage(e) judgment stage and moderation stage academic head of department; health science faculty board EXCO; SENEX or HDC for Master and Doctoral qualifications for final approval (f) faculty office; (g) feedback stage; (h) post-assessment support stage; if a need arises for no approval status appeal, a process is initiated or re- facilitation stage and the approved candidate is uploaded to the National Learner Registration Data and the FOHS RPL registration data and access to a qualification.

9.4 PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RPL

According to the results of this study, attention needs to be paid to each of the elements of the RPL practice framework. The recommendation that the researcher proposed is based on findings of the study. Adequate quality assurance measures should be in place before the RPL process starts as follows: (a) review RPL policy and made available to all RPL practitioners in the FOFS departments, (b) establish RPL quality assurance unit in line with quality assurance strategy, (c) provide adequate RPL training for all staff involved in the process of RPL, (d) train and register RPL assessors and moderators, (e) establish proper quality monitoring evaluation and audit systems, (f) design RPL handbook that is providing step-by-step advice on how to identify, describe and document the knowledge and skills for the purpose of assessments, (g) develop RPL assessment guides to support evidence gathering, (h) design and

develop RPL learning programmes clearly indicating and accommodating prior knowledge, and skills, curricular allowing flexible entry and exit points allowing diverse learning needs and background, (i) arrange orientations, workshops and portfolio development courses, (j) provide adequate profiling candidates to open up and identify suitable RPL candidates, (k) develop a proper FOHS RPL data base and (l) develop adequate National Learner Registration Data (NLRD) base for recording and uploading to SAQA. All required actions could be addressed at four levels/spheres of operation which are: management and administration, Faculty, Departments, operational level with RPL practitioners. It is important that the four levels of operation should cooperate to put systems and processes in place to implement a holistic RPL approach. Strategies for RPL awareness, pre-entry assessments screening and advisory, training of staff, curriculum reviews, audit practices, monitoring, evaluation and feedback are important, and these should be in place at and between all levels.

The proposed RPL practice framework is depicted in Figure 9.1 and thereafter discussed.

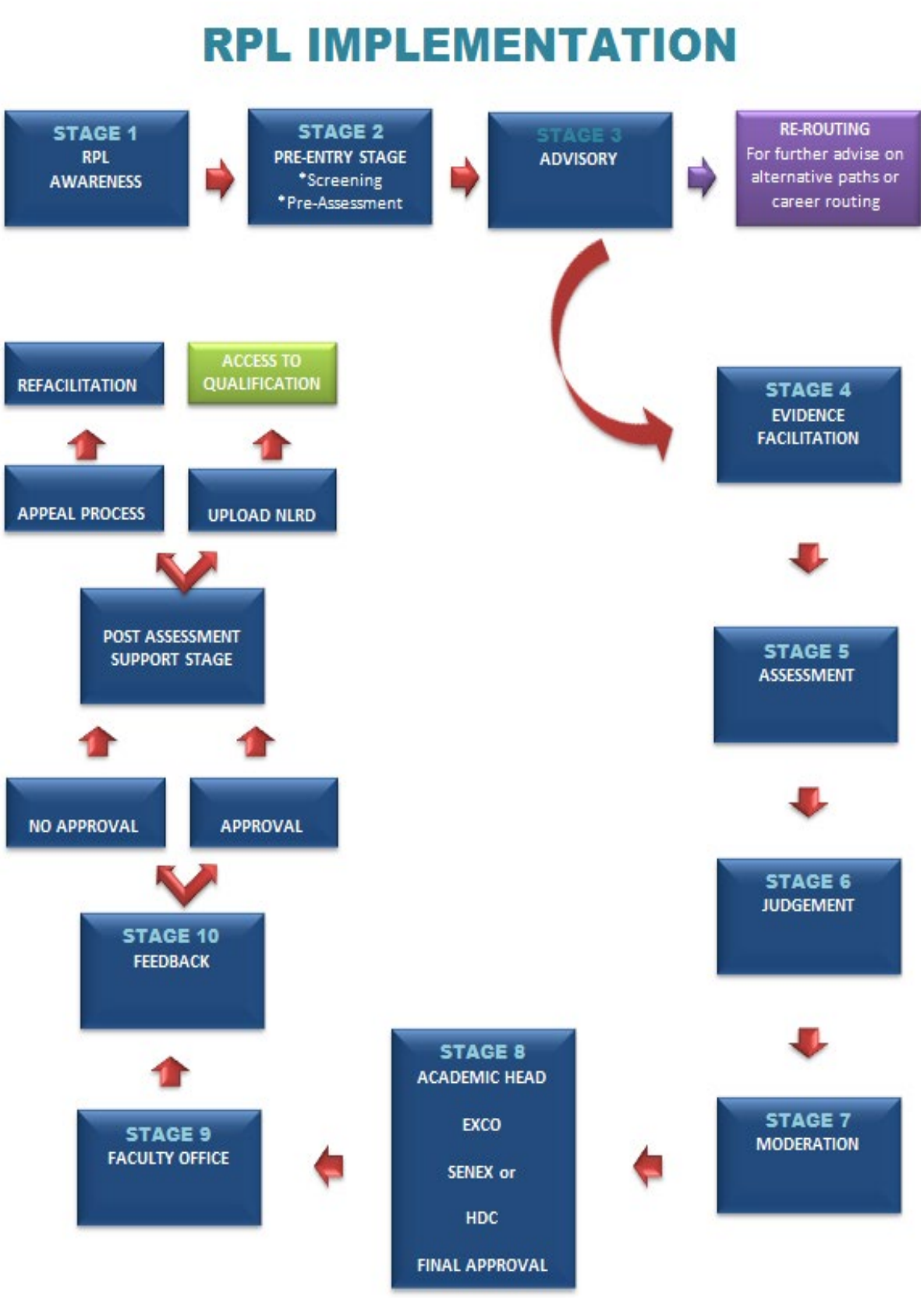


Figure 9.1: A Practice Framework to enhance RPL Implementation

The practice framework is based on certain assumptions. Some assumptions are taken from the paradigm guiding the research and some derived from the emerged themes and concepts identified. The assumptions formed the basis of the presented framework of RPL process in the FOHS. Establish RPL quality assurance measures, modify RPL policy establish measures to evaluate relevance and appropriateness of the developed framework. The stages are: (a) RPL awareness stage; (b) pre-entry stage which consists of screening phase and pre-assessment phase (Profile), (c) advisory stage (Profile). Rerouting or referral to alternative pathway or career route; (d) assessment stage; (e) judgment stage, moderation stage; academic head of department; health science faculty board EXCO; SENEX or HDC for Master and Doctoral qualifications for final approval; (f) faculty office; (g) feedback stage; (h) post-assessment support stage; if the need arises for no approval status, an appeal process is initiated or the candidate moves to the re-facilitation stage and the approved candidate is uploaded to the National Learner Registration Data and the FOHS RPL registration data and access to a qualification.

9.4.1 Awareness creation stage

The purpose of this stage is to create awareness of availability of RPL and its values for academics and prospective candidates. Awareness may be created using the university website, advertising material such as pamphlets and student prospectus.

9.4.2 Pre-entry stage with profiling, screening and pre-assessment

The purpose of this stage is to ensure that information about RPL assessment is available and accessible to prospective candidates. FOHS will have to provide information, adequate advice and support services in terms of modules and outcomes that may be challenged by a learner via an RPL assessment. In addition, FOHS must actively promote or market the availability of this to potential candidates/applicants, and include the following information that will ensure that prospective candidates/applicants will be fully informed about the RPL and RP assessment process: (a) RPL process (b) admission procedures

(c) costs to be paid by applicants (d) available advisory and support services (e)career paths and appeal process/procedures, should there be a need for candidates to appeal against the procedures or outcome of assessment.

9.4.3 Advisory stage

This stage is critical as it assists an individual applicant/candidate with his application. A qualified RPL advisor must scrutinize an application against the relevant modules in a qualification and determine the relevance or appropriateness of the application. This is when the profiling needs of the candidate is assessed. The learning that the applicant claims to have attained is benchmarked against the identified (desired) outcomes or a qualification in order to identify gaps. This phase has three possible outcomes, namely (a) referral to an alternative pathway or career route especially if the prospective candidate's/applicant's learning is not related to health sciences (b) assessment of the candidate if facilitation is not necessary and (c) progression to facilitation stage.

9.4.4 Evidence facilitation stage

The FOHS should utilize various role players for this stage, depending on availability of human resources. During this stage, the qualified evidence facilitator takes the candidate through preparation for assessment. The applicant/candidate is assisted and guided to collect evidence, generate and compile the necessary evidence in preparation for assessment in a form of PoE. This is a one-on-one advising process. The assessor with the facilitator and candidate should develop an assessment plan where they review outcomes of the qualification and requirements, type the source of the evidence, assessment tools to be used in this assessment including dates and time of the assessment. The people who facilitate the evidence are invaluable to candidates, as they will ensure that candidates present complete and coherent evidence to assessors. The onus to produce the necessary evidence regarding knowledge and skills is on the candidate.

The guidelines, criteria and procedure for gathering and compiling evidence are discussed with the applicant /candidate during pre–screening stage, which invariably constitutes the compilation of a portfolio of evidence. Different forms of evidence and data will be required to ensure that assessment is comprehensive and integrated. Direct data may be a portfolio of evidence containing, inter alia, projects, case studies, records of actual performance, results of assignments and examinations. Indirect evidence, which serves as a confirmation of prior knowledge includes, inter alia, letters from previous employers and performance reviews or certificates of competence. It is not the responsibility of the mentor or the facilitator to collect data for the candidate, but to be a support resource for the applicant during this stage.

9.4.5 Assessment stage

This phase may only be conducted by an RPL qualified and registered constituent assessor. The registered assessor or a person who is registered as a constituent assessor for a specific qualification must conduct the assessment. The core activities of the assessor during this stage include:

- Planning and preparing the assessment, which includes the necessary resources, pre-assessment forms, tools, venue, timetable, etc.
- Preparing the applicant for the assessment by explicitly explaining the assessment details, which includes the purpose, process, responsibility and appeal options;
- Performing the assessment through a combination of integrated methods, namely evaluation of portfolio of evidence, practical assessment (performance), theory assessment, projects and demonstrations/simulations. An oral examination, which corresponds with written assessments, may also be conducted. This process only assesses the outcomes incorporated in the relevant unit standards or specific outcomes. A range of assessment criteria should be used including pre and post interviews.
- Evaluating the RPL assessment achievements against prescribed standards;

- Determining whether the standard learning outcomes were achieved
- Crediting the applicant for the knowledge and skills gained from previous learning or experience;
- Recording and making recommendations to the moderator

It is critical that the assessor adheres to and applies the following criteria during assessment:

- Sufficiency: the submitted evidence must be sufficient for an integrated assessment which includes an accurate and fair evaluation. The assessment should include all possible learning areas that culminate in the outcome(s) against which the applicant is being assessed, in order to determine comprehensive competence. The collected evidence should prove that assessment criteria have been met.
- Directness: the required evidence should focus on clearly identified outcomes, hence the aforementioned need for an RPL advisor or facilitator to properly identify gaps during pre-screening.
- Authenticity: the presented evidence should be the applicant's own work, such as work records, videos of practical work, to prevent fraudulent activities.
- Currency: the presented data should be recently acquired knowledge and skills and up to date.
- Quality: the data should demonstrate that the learner is at an acceptable level/ standard and should be within the relevant field.

9.4.6 Judgment stage

This stage includes judgment of evidence by the assessor.

9.4.7 Moderation stage

The person who conducts this phase must be a registered constituent moderator. The moderator will validate the assessment process to ensure that the outcome is based on assessment principles, and therefore objective.

Moderators have to be certified and linked with the ETQA, as they are the first persons called upon when an appeal is lodged.

9.4.8 Academic Head of Department

An RPL application is then passed on to the academic head of department for further assessment and recommendations to FOHS Faculty Board EXCO.

9.4.9 FOHS Board EXCO

The FOHS Board EXCO receives RPL application for further assessment, recommendations and forwards it to SENEX or HDC for final assessment and recommendations.

9.4.10 SENEX or HDC

SENEX or HDC receives the RPL application for final assessment and recommendations for the undergraduate qualification. SENEX recommends the application to Higher Degrees Committee for Master and Doctoral qualifications.

9.4.11 Higher Degrees Committee (HDC)

The HDC further assesses the RPL application for Master and Doctoral degree and makes a final decision. The application, with the outcomes, which can be approved or not approved is taken back to the faculty office to communicate the outcome to the candidate.

9.4.12 Faculty office

The faculty office receives the candidate’s application for proper recoding and safe keeping. The outcome is communicated to RPL candidate.

9.4.13 Feedback stage

The applicant must be provided with feedback regarding the outcome of the RPL assessment process. During this stage the:

- Outcome of the RPL assessment must be discussed with the applicant, namely whether he/she was evaluated as competent or not yet competent (NYC); and
- The way forward must be communicated in accordance with the outcome.

The outcomes of RPL assessments in FOHS at DUT are:

- Admission to commence studies towards an undergraduate qualification.
- RPL exemption of subjects towards a qualification.
- Advanced standing post-graduate.
- Admission to commence studies towards an undergraduate qualification.
- RPL exemption of subjects towards a qualification.
- Advanced standing for post graduate.

9.4.14 Post-feedback stage

At this stage, if the application is not approved, the appeals process may be initiated. The candidate is provided with post assessment support. The candidate may need rehabilitation in order to become competent which means that the candidate goes back to the facilitation stage.

9.5 A GUIDE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED RPL PRACTICE FRAMEWORK IN THE FOHS AT DUT

The implementation of the proposed practice framework in the FOHS at DUT should begin with creating an understanding of what needs to be done and how it should be done by conducting a situational analysis in the FOHS. This process should entail comparing the current practice with requirements according to developmental theory as detailed in Piaget's developmental theory for example accommodation. Accommodation as the cognitive process of

revising existing cognitive schemas, perceptions, and understanding so that new information can be incorporated. This happens when the existing schema (knowledge) does not work, and needs to be changed to deal with a new object or situation. In order to make sense of some new information, individuals actually adjust information already have (schemas already have) to make room for this new information (Piaget 1987: 69-74).

The process should create an understanding of the things that should be eliminated and those that should be retained in the current practice. Some of the things that need to be retained could need to be strengthened. All aspects of the RPL implementation that are missing in the current practice should be identified as things that need to be introduced to enhance the RPL implementation in the FOHS at DUT. These were identified in the current study (Piaget 1987: 69-74). Table 9.1 presents quality indicators and inputs to develop quality RPL system in the FOHS at DUT.

Table 9.1: Quality indicators and inputs to develop quality RPL systems in the FOHS at DUT

Area of practice (inputs)	Quality indicators
Institutional policy and environment **Services and support to RPL candidates**	• The mission and vision statement of the faculty expresses and explicit commitment to the principles of equity, redress and inclusion. • The strategic plan of the faculty reflects planning for RPL implementation, in accordance with relevant legislation and policy. • Information about RPL assessment opportunities and services are widely available and actively promoted. • Admission procedures and systems are accessible and inclusive of learners with diverse needs and backgrounds. • Equal access to opportunities to advice, support, time and resources for all candidates seeking assessments • Organizational structures ensure that evidence facilitators, assessors and moderators and other key personnel, such as advisors, are given sufficient support, resources and recognition for their services. • Regional integration and collaboration are encouraged among institutions, professional bodies and workplaces where possible. • Formal agreements between the FOHS and workplaces are encouraged to ensure effective validation, articulation and recognition of RPL assessment results, where possible. • Advising services and programmes assist prospective RPL candidates to make effective choices about learning programmes, career and work-related opportunities. • Advising services and programmes aid RPL candidates in preparing for assessment. • Evidence facilitators assist RPL candidates in preparing and presenting evidence in a coherent and systematic fashion.

Training and registration of assessors and key personnel **Methods and processes of assessments**	• Structured short learning programmes or articulation-based programmes are increasingly available where required. • The assessment of prior learning to be done by trained and registered assessor in accordance with the relevant principles and standards for assessments and moderation as set out in SAQA and other policy documents • Policies and review mechanisms regarding monitoring and quality assurance of evidence facilitators, assessors, moderators and other key personnel are in place. • The functions of facilitators, assessors, moderators and other key personnel are clearly defined and where possible should not be done by same person. • Training and development encourage mentoring relationships between staff with and those without assessment expertise. • Quality assurance (QA) systems are implemented to ensure that they increasingly meet the development objectives as agreed with SAQA. • The purpose of the assessment and the expectations of the candidate are clarified. • Assessment plans considers the form quality, and sources of evidence required. • The form and quality of support to be provided to the candidate in preparing for the assessment are established. • The candidate is actively involved in all aspects of the assessments process to ensure that the assessment is fair and transparent. Possible barriers to fair assessments are identified and addressed. • Assessment plans indicate a variety of appropriate assessment methods in fit for purpose and ensures reliable and valid assessment outcomes. • An appeals process is in place and made known to the candidates. • Assessment instruments and exemplars are developed and moderated in compliant with ETQA requirements • Assessment reports indicate the assessment plan, evidence presented, the assessment outcomes and

Quality Management Systems (QMS)	recommendations for further actions, including additional training and/or re assessment. • Moderation and review mechanisms are in place, including policy for verification, evaluation and quality assurance of assessments and assessment systems. • Quality management systems ensure the refining of assessment policies, procedures and services at all levels and inform planning for further development aimed at meeting agreed targets. • Provide inputs from all stakeholders, including representation from the candidate's community. • Provide for support in making developmental targets, including diagnostic, formal and summative activities. • Evaluation and monitoring activities are clearly spelt out in QMS documents including diagnostic, formative and summative activities. • Evaluation and monitoring activities ensure consistency within the FOHS. • Assessment documentation, reports and sources of evidence are maintained in agreed criteria and specifications. • RPL results are recorded in accordance with the requirements of the ETQA and SAQA NLRD. • Information on RPL outcomes including unsuccessful applications is maintained • The QMS provides for analyses and reporting of services and results
Fees for RPL services	• Fees should not create barriers for candidates • RPL fees to be less than the cost of a full-time module or learning programme. • Credit barring portfolio development or other articulation programmes are made increasingly available to assist candidates in their preparation for assessment. • Flexible payments options in line with the policies and procedures of the FOHS at DUT. • Research and development priorities are identified, including those that investigate cost and cost effectiveness.

RPL and Curriculum Development **Principles of Assessments**	• Learning programmes increasingly incorporate indigenous and other knowledge forms to reflect the diversity of needs and goals of learner population in the FOHS. • The design of learning programmes indicates how candidate's prior knowledge has been affirmed and taken into account. • The curriculum is sufficiently open-ended to allow flexible entry and exit points to enhance access and the achievement of learning goals. • Emerging trends from assessment and RPL where these have implications for modification and redesign of qualifications are forwarded to the appropriate bodies. • Where candidates demonstrate knowledge that does not for existing outcomes or exit level outcomes, credit equivalencies are established in consultation with subject experts and relevant quality assurance body. • Eligibility for credit based on RPL assessment does not guarantee the applicant a space on the programme in which such credit may be available. • RPL should be available to all. • Participation in an RPL process must be voluntary and each individual must give the appropriate support to enable her to make informed decisions as to whether or not she wishes to participate. • RPL must be affirmative and developmental • RPL must be simple, verifiable and just • RPL process fall within the official language policy of the FOHS. • RPL process exclude training or teaching.

9.5.1 Different roles of the advisors and assessors in the RPL process of assessment

For RPL purposes, each task in the assessment process is distinctive and ideally, different people need to perform the different tasks to avoid potential conflict and bias. This is with special reference to the roles of the RPL assessor, advisor and evidence facilitator. The FOHS in DUT is advised to make use of the terminology RPL assessor and RPL advisor in RPL circles. Table 9.2 below present the different roles and functions in the RPL assessment process:

Table 9.2: The different roles and functions in the RPL assessment process

Role	Quality Indicator
Advisor:	**Description of role**
	• The role of the advisor (evidence facilitator) throughout the process of RPL assessment is that of facilitator • The advisor can be a generalist. • Current practice tends to suggest that the advisor needs to be a subject specialist.
	Functions
	• Initial screening or profiling • Ensuring the candidate understands the RPL guiding principles • Advise on alternative pathways • Advise on general portfolio construction • Advise on nature of evidence • Facilitate the development of self-confidence during the process • When portfolio is ready for submission sign submission form.

Assessor(s):	Functions
	• They are custodians of academic/professional standards (learning outcomes) and quality thereof. • They have to evaluate the evidence against programme learning outcomes or competence criteria. • They also mediate between the individuals' idiosyncratic language and perceptions of their previous learning
RPL assessor training and development: description:	
	• How much training were they allowed? • How much time do they have to carry out the assessment? • What type of assessment material do they deal with? • Does the assessor have the sufficient background knowledge of the area to carry out the assessment? • Are there mechanisms to cross check whether the assessment has been carried out correctly /consistently /comparable with other assessors? • Will an external /verifier check the assessment?

9.5.2 Standards for assessment and accreditation of prior learning

Motaung (2017: 127) put forward the notion that standards are processes that are set up and established by authorities for the measure of quality. Standards for assessing and accrediting prior learning are divided into two, academic and administrative standards. The question here is does the FOHS adhere to these standards when assessing prior learning? The following Table 9.3 present a list of the internationally recognized standards of prior learning assessment and accreditation:

Table 9.3: A list of academic and administrative standards for prior learning assessment

Academic standards	Administrative standards
• Credits should be awarded only for learning and not for experience • College /University credits should be awarded only for higher education learning • Credits should be awarded only for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the subject (course /module), between theory and practical application • The determination of competency levels and of credit awards must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic experts • Credit should be appropriate to the academic context to which it is awarded	• Credit awards and their transcripts entries should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning (double counting) • Policies and procedures applied to the assessments, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available • Fees charged should be based on the services performed in the process and not in the amounts of credits awarded. • All personnel involved in the assessments of learning should receive adequate training for the functions they perform and there should be provision for their continued professional development. • Assessment programmes should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated and revised to reflect changes in the needs being served, and the state of the assessment art.

In determining whether there is quality in the RPL assessments process, the following Table 9.4 present quality indicators at both academic and administrative levels:

Table 9.4: Macro and micro quality indicators

Macro and (administrative) quality indicators	Micro (academic) quality indicators
• The FOHS should have a clear RPL policy which is translated into operational structures. • Have a marketing and publicity strategy. • Ensure appropriate staff development at Macro as well as micro quality level. • Ensure there is in place an RPL committee or board that oversees RPL activities on behalf of the faculty. • Ensure proper co-ordination between the center and the faculty. • Ensure communication channels for staff and candidates are clearly defined and well publicized. • The administrative officer should also have. • an RPL evaluation form and RPL monitoring log. • The administrative officer should have the RPL application forms that combine certificated and non-certificated learning. • Ensure programme annual reports include an evaluation section on RPL experiences together with an appropriate action plan for the future	• Ensure programme or modules have clear learning outcomes or competencies where both staff and learners can base their RPL assessments on. • Ensure programme leaders and admission tutors are conversant with RPL principles and their application to assessment. • Within the faculty each department should have an RPL coordinator to enhance the subject-specific debate and feedback. • Give appropriate support and feedback to learners/candidates. • Identify strengths and weaknesses of the RPL provision through; (a) self-evaluation (critical peer review), (b) faculty audit of artefacts, (c) learner feedback, (d) external views and (d) external examiner feedback. • External views may include professional bodies and funding bodies. • Disseminate good practice in the accreditation of prior learning.

9.5.3 RPL Quality improvement in the FOHS

RPL Quality improvement should never be an ending process in the FOHS at DUT. The ISO 9001 International Standards on the requirements for quality management systems promotes a process-based approach in conjunction with quality improvement cycle, in which the process of implementation converts input to outputs. During this process, products are designed and produced (realized) (Motaung 2007: 107).

This family of standards is primarily concerned with quality management which is what the FOHS should do to meet customer (learners) requirements, meet applicable regulatory requirements, enhance customer satisfaction and achieve continual quality improvement. Figure 9.3 presents a model of a process-based quality management systems:

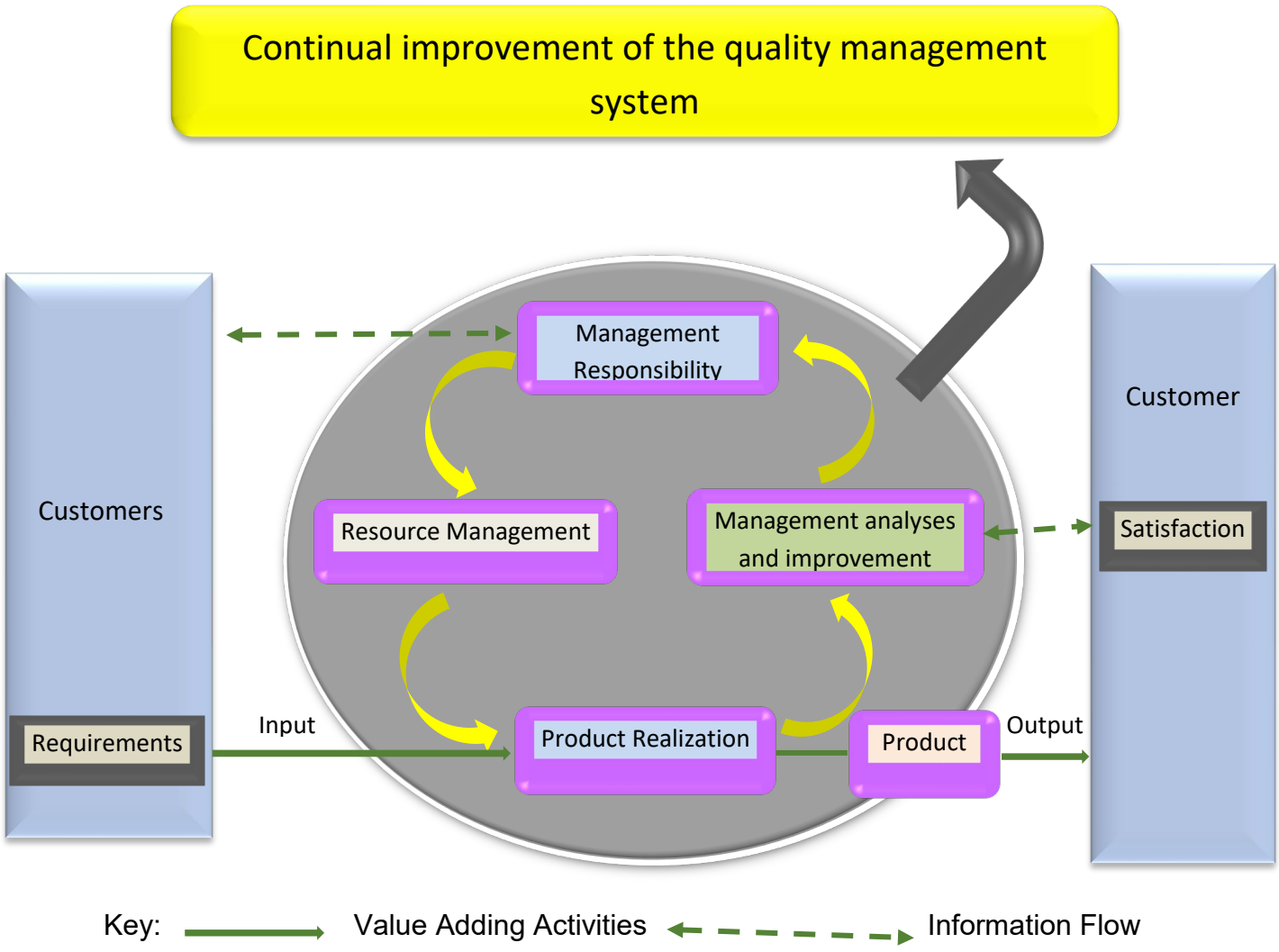


Figure 9.3: ISO 9001 model of a process-based quality management system (SABS 2000 cited by Motaung 2007: 107)

9.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter discussed the final objective of the study which was the development of a practice framework to enhance the RPL implementation in the FOHS. The next chapter summarizes the findings, discusses the limitations and recommendations of the study and concludes with a summary.

CHAPTER 10: SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

10.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarises the findings, discusses the limitations and the recommendations of the study and concludes with a summary. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the enhancement of RPL implementation in the FOHS and also provide clarity on the process of RPL. The aim of the study was to explore and audit the extent of RPL implementation in the FOHS and ultimately develop a practice framework to enhance the RPL implementation in the FOHS at DUT. The study has focused on the research objectives which were to:

- Review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile in the FOHS.
- Explore competencies of RPL practitioners in the FOHS.
- Explore the perceptions of applicants and RPL practitioners with regard to RPL implementation.
- Explore training practices available for RPL practitioners in the FOHS.
- Develop a practice framework to guide and enhance access to higher education through pragmatic and holistic implementation of RPL Policy.

10.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Findings in relation to the objectives of the study guided the development of a practice framework to enhance the implementation of RPL in the FOHS. Findings for each objective is summarized below:

10.2.1 Review the RPL selection criteria to determine the degree of correlation with the learner's profile in the FOHS

Findings of this study revealed that RPL selection criteria in the FOHS are in place and does not exclude or set up to fail any candidate. Findings also revealed that the departments use tests, interviews and panel assessments as part of RPL selection criteria. However, it was noted from findings in this study that some departments had full evidence of adequate profiling, support and mentor of candidates before development of PoEs, while others did not show any evidence to suggest that learner profiling was done.

10.2.2 Explore competencies of RPL practitioners in the FOHS

The study showed that all RPL practitioners in the chosen departments in the FOHS were competent. Though all practitioners had not yet received formal RPL training, they received guidance and support on how to implement RPL from the CELT. The incompetence of the RPL practitioners has a negative effect on the quality of RPL assessment and judgment of candidates' PoEs. Several RPL authors draw attention to the objectivity issues in RPL assessment. They claim that it is not possible, to be totally objective in an assessment process.

10.2.3 Explore the perceptions of RPL assessors and moderators with regard to RPL implementation

Findings in this study revealed that assessors and moderators' perceptions of the implementation of RPL in the FOHS were all positive. The findings showed that assessors and moderators appreciate the availability and implementation of RPL in the FOHS as it is providing an alternative route for access into higher education. It was also found that 100% of assessors and moderators supported improvements to RPL practices to enhance quality in its implementation as they suggested different ideas and views for improvement.

Findings further revealed that assessors and moderators perceived a lack of awareness of RPL processes and lack of awareness of the potential value of RPL practice. These findings suggest that more academics should be on board, RPL champions should be appointed and incentives offered for leading faculties. Findings also revealed that officially registered RPL assessors are not available in the FOHS.

10.2.4 Explore training practices available for RPL practitioners in the FOHS

The study also ascertained whether RPL practitioners in the FOHS had RPL training. The results revealed that practitioners involved in RPL implementation had not been exposed to RPL training. Findings revealed that only two academics attended the training provided by SAQA and CHE. RPL requires expert educators to help candidates to make sense of the RPL process. Results showed that academics are willing to fully participate in RPL implementation.

10.3 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

It is apparent from findings of this study that the FOHS needs training of RPL practitioners, modification of RPL policy and putting in place quality assurance measures to enhance RPL implementation. The findings of the study, in relation to its first four study objectives, highlighted the focus areas for enhancement of RPL implementation when the practice framework was developed.

10.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations of the study refer to the restrictions that might decrease the generalizability of the study findings (Burns and Grove (2007: 59). These restrictions may be either theoretical or methodological.

10.4.1 Limitations with regard to data collection

Academics in the departments are extremely busy. As a result, the researcher could not adhere to the planned dates and times for meetings. Some participants had problems in honouring their appointments because of busy work schedules. In such instances, the researcher had to re-schedule the appointments. Others managed to accommodate the researcher when they had time. Eventually all participants were interviewed. In one department, participants had only been involved with one RPL candidate. In such a situation, all documents that were used in the RPL process of the candidate were used to verify the information which was found to be very useful and a lot of useful information was gathered from participants in the study.

10.4.2 Exclusion of RPL Candidates

Exclusion of RPL candidates as study participants is a limitation to the conclusions that can be drawn from the study.

10.4.3 Single-Institution study

Conducting this study in the single institution instead of multi-site study was a limitation for the implications of the findings and potential application of the framework to the whole of higher education in South Africa.

10.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Physical Inputs into areas of practice to ensure quality in the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning in the FOHS such as physical resources are recommended.

10.5.1 Physical Resources

Where RPL programmes are successful, such institutions have an RPL centre, or office or unit to deal specifically with RPL related matters. The recommendation for having the centre is mainly for enhancing RPL

implementation in the FOHS at DUT. The University of South Africa (UNISA) according to Motaung (2007: 109) prospective RPL candidates become exposed to the required assistance at the RPL Office of Experiential Learning (OEL). In this office/ centre, there are trained assessors (evidence facilitators and advisors), moderators and knowledgeable administrators who give RPL candidates accurate information on what to do to go through the process of assessment.

It is at this centre where there is dissemination of essential information to prospective RPL candidates and interested parties. RPL information made readily available to all. The establishment of RPL centre is highly recommended for the FOHS at DUT (Motaung 2007: 109).

10.5.2 RPL policy implementation

Policies and procedures give legitimacy and structure to the RPL process. Therefore, policy and guidelines should be guided by the three processes of the developmental theory including assimilation, accommodation and equilibration. Psychologist Jean Piaget (1987: 69-74) defined accommodation as the cognitive process of revising existing cognitive schemas, perceptions, and understanding so that new information can be incorporated. In order to make sense of some new information, individuals actually adjust information already have (schemas already have) to make room for the new information (Piaget 1987: 69-74).

Assimilation occurs when we modify or change new information to fit into our schemas (what we already know). It keeps the new information or experience and adds to what already exists in our minds. Piaget (1987: 69) also viewed intellectual growth as a process of adaptation (adjustment) to the new world. This happens through assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration.

The three processes should give guidance, clarity of the intended purpose, direction and outcomes to staff in the faculty and ensure that there is standardization in the RPL process. Procedure manuals should be clear in defining the step-by-step process to be followed in RPL. It is critical that relevant policies, guidelines, and procedure manuals should be available in all departments in the FOHS that implement RPL. All academics and staff members should be trained to use these documents to ensure standardized practice. Recoding system should be developed so that relevant aspects of the implementation of policies required are properly recorded. This will facilitate easy quality monitoring and auditing. Feedback should be provided to the head of departments and further communicated to the Executive Dean of the FOHS.

10.5.3 Training and registration of RPL assessors and key personnel

RPL provisioning is a labour-intensive activity which needs high levels of expertise. SAQA (2010: 34) RPL policy is explicit about proper training and continuous professional development of staff who are involved in the RPL process. Training enables evidence facilitators, assessors, moderators, advisors and administrative personnel to provide quality and a holistic RPL implementation.

10.5.4 Review and evaluation

It is recommended that quality assurance should not be a once off occurrence in the RPL implementation but quality assurance mechanisms and processes should be continuously implemented for credible and accountable RPL in the FOHS. These will also protect the integrity of RPL in the FOHS at DUT. The USA's RPL standards that explicitly state that RPL assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated and revised periodically to reflect changes in the needs being served and in the state of the assessment should be benchmarked.

10.5.5 Improved technology

Training in advanced technological skills is highly recommended as paper-based portfolios will be replaced by digital/e-portfolios in future and RPL applications will be made on-line. It is also recommended that learner information is uploaded to NLRD and a database is created for RPL in the FOHS.

10.5.6 RPL awareness

Recommendations are made for the development of marketing strategies, materials and tools. These will assist to market values and potential benefits of RPL to academics and potential candidates who intend to access higher education in general and more specifically to the FOHS in DUT. The use of the DUT website is recommended for RPL awareness.

10.5.7 Self-audit evaluation

The self-audit evaluation is also recommended using the self-audit tool which is the systematic collection of administrative data, the questioning of students and graduates, and holding moderated interviews with lecturers and students, resulting in a self-study report. Self-study evaluation is basically a collective institutional reflection and an opportunity for quality enhancement. The resulting report further serves as a provider of information for the review team in charge of the external evaluation. Table 10.1 below present a self-audit tool.

Table 10.1: Self Audit Tool

Tick the appropriate column	Yes	No
Quality management systems are designed, documented and implemented in accordance with agreed criteria and specifications.		
Quality management systems ensure refining of assessments policies, procedures and services at all levels and inform planning for further development aimed at meeting agreed targets.		
Quality management system provide for input from all stakeholders including representatives from the candidate community.		
Quality management system provides for support in meeting developments targets including diagnostic, formative and summative activities.		
Evaluation and monitoring activities ensure consistency within a sector.		
Assessment documentation, reports and sources of evidence are maintained in accordance with agreed criteria and specifications.		
PRL results are recorded in accordance with requirements of SAQA NLRD		
Information on RPL outcomes, including unsuccessful and successful applications are maintained.		
The QMS provides for system to monitor the process of candidates who enter learning programmes post-RPL.		
The QMS provides for analyses and reporting of services and results.		
Review and evaluation is done on an on-going process.		

10.5.8 Further research

Areas of future research should focus on the integrity and quality in the implementation of RPL, including availability of an RPL database. The database will assist with tracking growth in RPL implementation as well as registration of qualified RPL assessors and moderators.

10.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The current study contributed to useful insights into the nature of RPL implementation in the FOHS at DUT. It also provided a clear understanding of the RPL application process and approval process in the FOHS in DUT. The findings of the study informed the development of a practice framework to guide and enhance implementation of RPL in the FOHS.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: University Ethics clearance

Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lawshad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research/_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

3 September 2019

Mrs T N V Shelembe
8 Glendale Avenue
Berea West
Westville
3631

Dear Mrs Shelembe

A practice framework to enhance the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A case study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology
Ethical Clearance number IREC 100/19

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your final data collection tools for review.

We are pleased to inform you that the data collection tools have been approved. Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC

Appendix 2a: Letter of request for permission to the Gatekeeper Permission Committee

No.8 Glendale Avenue
Westville
3631
[Date]

The Gatekeeper Permission Committee
Durban University of Technology
P.O Box 1334
Durban
4000

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Madam

My name is Mrs Thobile Shelembe and I am a registered candidate for a PhD in Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. The proposed title of my study is '*A practice framework to enhance the implementation of recognition of prior learning: A case study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at a Durban University of Technology*'.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct the research study in the academic departments in the Faculty of Health Sciences. I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 073 128 9354, email: zimeleni@telkomsa.net or my supervisor Prof Sibiya on 031-373 2704, email: nokuthulas@dut.ac.za

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

……..
Mrs Thobile Shelembe
PhD: Health Sciences Candidate

Appendix 2b: Approval letter from the Gatekeeper Permission Committee

Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Tramso Annexe, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946

12th August 2019

Mrs Thobile Shelembe
c/o Department of Nursing
Faculty of Health Sciences
Durban University of Technology

Dear Mrs Shelembe

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) has granted full permission for you to conduct your research "A practice framework to enhance the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A case study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology" at the Durban University of Technology.

The DUT may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstances having regard to nature and extent of access to and use of information requested.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings can be submitted to the IRIC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely

PROF KEVIN DUFFY
ACTING DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECORATE

Appendix 3a: Letter of request for permission to the Heads of Departments

No.8 Glendale Avenue
Westville
3631
[Date]

The Head of Departments
Durban University of Technology
P.O Box 1334
Durban
4000

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Madam

My name is Mrs Thobile Shelembe and I am a registered candidate for a PhD in Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. The proposed title of my study is '*A practice framework to enhance the implementation of recognition of prior learning: A case study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at a Durban University of Technology*'.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct the research study in the academic departments in your department. I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 073128 9354, email: zimeleni@telkomsa.net or my supervisor Prof Sibiya on 031-373 2704, email: nokuthulas@dut.ac.za

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

……..
Mrs Thobile Shelembe
PhD: Health Sciences Candidate

Appendix 3b: Approval letters from the HOD: Biomedical and Clinical Technology

2 March 2020

Mrs T. N. V. Shelembe

Dear Mrs Shelembe

Re: Request for permission to conduct research

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Biomedical and Clinical Technology for the tittle below has been reviewed and granted:

"A practice framework to enhance the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A Case Study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology".

All the best with your research.

Sincerely

Dr Prakaschandra
Head: Department of Biomedical and Clinical Technology

Appendix 3c: Approval letters from the HOD: Chiropractic

12 February 2020

RE: Request for permission to conduct research

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Chiropractic for the research titled: A practice framework to enhance implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A case study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology is granted.

All the best with your research.

Regards

Dr L. O'Connor

Acting HOD Chiropractic
M. Tech Chiropractic
Senior Lecturer
Chiropractic Programme
Faculty of Heath Sciences
Durban University of Technology
Tel 031 373 2923
e-mail: lauraw@dut.ac.za

Appendix 3d: Approval letters from the HOD: Community Health Studies

2 March 2020

Mrs T. N. V. Shelembe

Dear Mrs Shelembe

Re: Request for permission to conduct research

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Community Health Studies for the tittle below has been reviewed and granted:

"A practice framework to enhance the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A Case Study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology".

All the best with your research.

Sincerely

Ms Kistnasamy
Head: Department of Community Health Studies

Appendix 3e: Approval letters from the HOD: Dental Sciences

20 January 2020

Mrs T. N. V. Shelembe

Dear Mrs Shelembe

Re: Request for permission to conduct research

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Dental Sciences for the tittle below has been reviewed and granted:

"A practice framework to enhance the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A Case Study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology".

All the best with your research.

Sincerely

Mr Gumbi
Head: Department of Dental Sciences

Appendix 3f: Approval letters from the HOD: Emergency Medical Care & Rescue

13 February 2020

Mrs T.N.V. Shelembe

Dear Mrs Shelembe,

Re: Request for permission to conduct research

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Emergency Medical Care and Rescue for the title below has been reviewed and granted:

"A practice framework to enhance implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A Case Study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology."

All the best with your research.

Sincerely

Dr Sinpiwe Sobuwa
Head: Department of Emergency Medical Care and Rescue

Appendix 3g: Approval letters from the HOD: Homoeopathy

DUT DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF HOMOEOPATHY

10 September 2019

Re: Request for permission to conduct research

Dear Mrs T.N.V Shelembe

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Homoeopathy for the title below has been reviewed and granted:

"A practice framework to enhance implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A Case study of the Faculty Of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology.

All the best with your research.

Sincerely,

Dr Madhu Maharaj

Head of Department: Department of Homoeopathy

Faculty of Health Sciences

Durban University of Technology

TEL: 0313732514 or 0313732481

Email: madhum@dut.ac.za

DUT DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: HOMOEOPATHY
P O BOX 1334, DURBAN, 4000, SOUTH AFRICA

Appendix 3h: Approval letters from the HOD: Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics

20 August 2019

Mrs T. N. V. Shelembe

Dear Mrs Shelembe

Re: Request for permission to conduct research

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Medical Orthotics & Prosthetics for the title below has been reviewed and granted:

"A practice framework to enhance the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A Case Study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology".

All the best with your research.

Sincerely

Mr Nothing
Head: Department of Medical Orthotics & Prosthetics

Appendix 3i: Approval letters from the HOD: Nursing

2 March 2020

Mrs T. N. V. Shelembe

Dear Mrs Shelembe

Re: Request for permission to conduct research

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Nursing for the tittle below has been reviewed and granted:

"A practice framework to enhance the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A Case Study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology".

All the best with your research.

Sincerely

Dr T. Ngxongo
Head: Department of Nursing

Appendix 3j: Approval letters from the HOD: Radiography

26 August 2019

Mrs T. N. V. Shelembe

Dear Mrs Shelembe

Re: Request for permission to conduct research

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Radiography for the tittle below has been reviewed and granted:

"A practice framework to enhance the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A Case Study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology".

All the best with your research.

Sincerely

Mr Motaung
Head: Department of Radiography

Appendix 3k: Approval letters from the HOD: Somatology

2 March 2020

Mrs T.N.V. Shelembe

Dear Mrs Shelembe

Re: Request for permission to conduct research

Your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Somatology for the tittle below has been reviewed and granted:

"A practice framework to enhance the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning: A Case Study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of Technology".

All the best with your research.

Sincerely

(permission given)

Ms Bong
Head: Department of Somatology

Appendix 4: Letter of information for participants

Dear Participant,

I would like to welcome you to my research study and thank you for your interest and participation.

Title of research study: A practice framework to enhance implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning. A case study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at a Durban University of Technology.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Ms Thobile Namsile Vina Shelembe, PhD: Health Sciences Candidate.

Co-Investigator/s/Supervisor/s: Prof M.N. Sibiya D Tech Nursing (Supervisor); Dr. P.B. Nkosi, PHD in Health Sciences (Co-supervisor).

Brief introduction and Purpose of the study: Access into higher education through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is limited in South Africa; therefore, RPL has failed to deliver on its promise. An inconsistency in RPL assessments is also a problem. This study aims to explore and audit the extent of RPL implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FOHS) and ultimately develop a practice framework to enhance the RPL implementation in the FOHS at DUT.

Outline of the procedures: You are kindly requested to participate in the interview session that will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Data collection will take place at the venue and time that is convenient for you. For record purposes, permission is also sought from you to voice record the interview discussions.

Risks or discomforts to the participant: There are no risks/discomforts involved from your participation in this study.

Benefits: This study will enhance the quality of recognition of prior learning implementation in DUT faculties thus opening up for access into higher education for those who were previously denied access to higher education and therefore lifelong learning will be promoted.

Remuneration: Participation in this research study is voluntary and no remuneration will be awarded.

Costs of study: You will not incur any costs by participating in the research study.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be written on any of the data collection tools except on the consent form which will be kept in strict privacy all the time with your responses.

Research-related Injury: None.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: Please contact the researcher Ms. T.N.V. Shelembe (Tel.no. 0731289354), E-mail zimeleni@telkomsa.net OR my supervisor, Prof M.N. Sibiya (Tel. no. 031-373 2704) E-mail nokuthulas@dut.ac.za or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031-373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the DVC: Research, Innovation and Engagement, Prof S. Moyoon031-3732577 or moyos@dut.ac.za

Appendix 5: Consent

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Mrs Thobile Namsile Vina Shelembe about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant	**Date**	**Time**	**Signature / Right Thumbprint**

I, Thobile Shelembe herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Thobile Shelembe	_____	_____
Full Name of Researcher	**Date**	**Signature**

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	**Date**	**Signature**

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	**Date**	**Signature**

Appendix 6a: Interview Guide: Director CELT

Date of Interview----------

1. What is your experience in relation to correlation between the learners profile and characteristics of the RPL selection criteria in the Health Sciences Faculty at DUT?
2. What are the limitations or gaps in the RPL Policy implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT?
3. What are your perceptions as Director CELT with regard to RPL Policy implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT?
4. How can the RPL Policy be implemented efficiently and effectively to enhance access to higher education in the Faculty of Health Sciences Departments at DUT?
5. What are the training practices available for RPL involved staff in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT?
6. Which system is available to keep data of all RPL candidates in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT?

Appendix 6b: Interview Guide: Heads of Departments

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Department ----------

Name ----------

Date of interview----------

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your experience in regard to the correlation between the learners profile and characteristics of the RPL selection criteria in the Health Sciences Faculty at DUT?
2. What are the limitations or gaps in the RPL Policy implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT?
3. What are your perceptions as Head of Department with regard to RPL Policy implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT?
4. How can the RPL Policy be implemented efficiently and effectively to enhance access to higher education in the Faculty of Health Sciences Departments at DUT?
5. What are the training practices available for RPL involved staff in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT?
6. Which system is available to keep data of all RPL candidates in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT?

Appendix 6c: Interview Guide: RPL Assessors

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Department----------

Name----------

Date of interview----------

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Grand Tour Question

Describe in your own words the alignment of the learner Portfolio of Evidence to the RPL selection criteria.

Guided tour questions

1. Describe your experiences on the implementation of RPL in your department in the Faculty of Health Science at DUT.
2. In your opinion, do the selection criteria meet the needs of RPL candidates?
3. Describe your involvement in the RPL process in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT.
4. What is your opinion regarding guidance of RPL candidates before RPL assessment?
5. Based on your opinion, what could be done differently in the RPL process?

Appendix 6d: Interview Guide: RPL Moderators

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Department:----------

Name: ----------

Date of interview:----------

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Grand Tour Question

Describe in your own words your experiences of the RPL process in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT.

Guided tour questions

1. Describe your role as an RPL moderator in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT.
2. In your opinion, what information can be added in the portfolio of evidence?
3. What is your opinion regarding candidates support before submitting the Portfolio of Evidence?
4. What is your opinion regarding your development as RPL moderator in the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT?

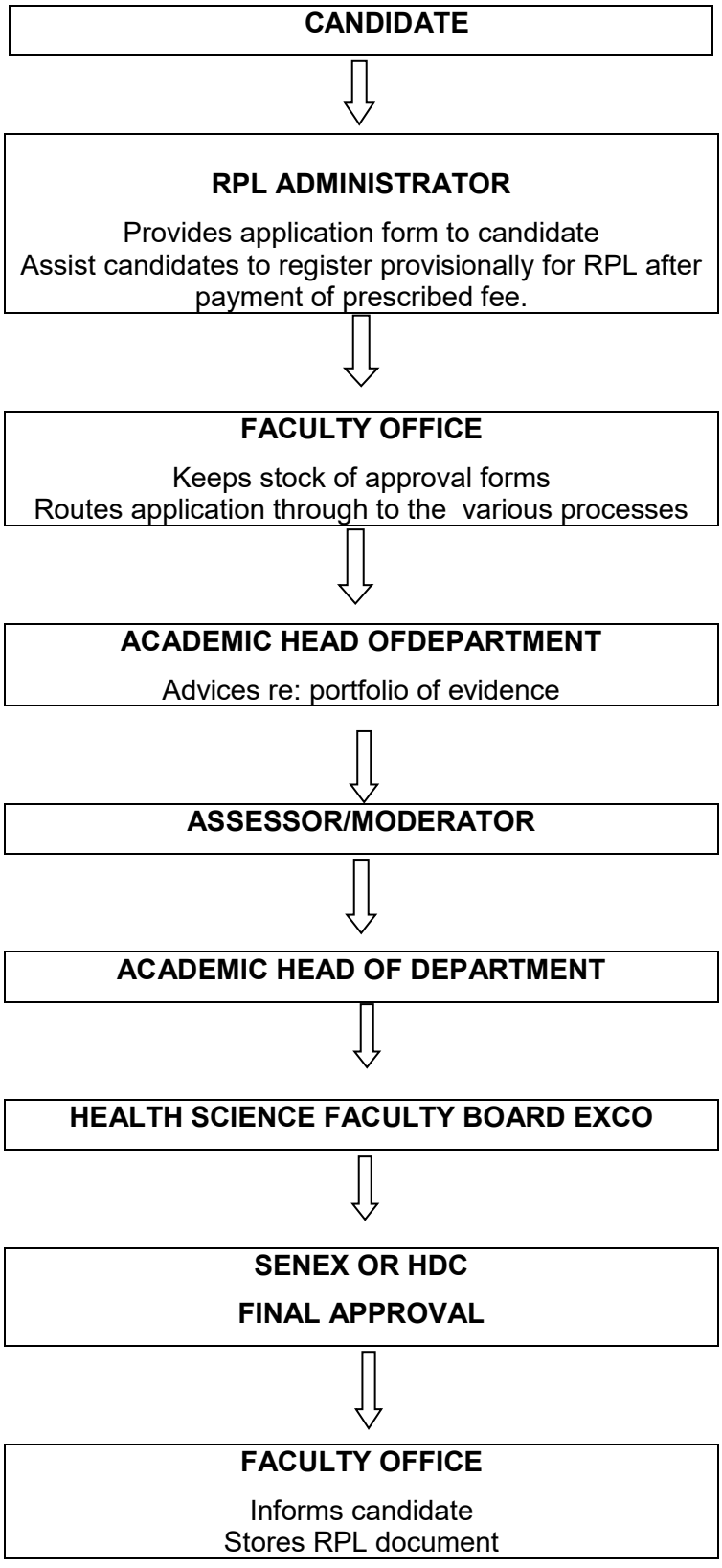
Appendix 7: Data collection tool for portfolio of evidence

Instructions

- An RPL application will need to be submitted personally or by courier as a hard copy, well bound portfolio of evidence detailed as follows:
- Researcher to indicate findings with a tick (✓) in an appropriate column.

	Yes	No
• Cover page		
• Table of contents		
• Covering letter of why the candidate is applying		
• RPL Application Form 1A, ticking as it may be applicable, option (1) for undergraduate qualifications, or (2) for RPL exemptions of subjects / s and / or (3) for Advanced standing, • Signing dates.		
• Proof of payments (non-refundable application fee)		
• Detailed curriculum vitae		
• Human Resource Job Profile where applicable with key performance area/indicators and level / scope of candidates expertise.		
• Sections of samples of portfolio of evidence aligning and matching against the outcomes of the requisite qualification		
• Letters of support AND /OR awards are admissible. • Testimonials.		
• Certified identity document and matric certificate or / and equivalent.		
• Annexures of professional skills development training, continuous professional development activities and transcripts of any qualifications attained that you may find suitable to support your application. • Reflective diary.		

Appendix 8: Flowchart for RPL application and approval process



Appendix 9: Sample of interview transcript

Date of Interview: 5 September 2019

Time: 14H15

Venue: Participants office in Department Z

Present for the interview: Interviewer, Participant and Scribe.

Duration of interview: 45 minutes

Interviewer: Thank you once more, I would like to welcome you to my research study and thank you for your interest and participation.

The title of research study: A practice framework to enhance implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning. A case study of the Faculty of Health Sciences at a Durban University of Technology. The principal Investigator/researcher is Ms Thobile Namsile Vina Shelembe, PhD: Health Sciences Candidate.

The Supervisor is Prof M.N. Sibiya RN.RM. D Tech Nursing and the Co-supervisor is Dr P.B. Nkosi, PHD in Health Sciences.

Brief introduction and Purpose of the study: Access into higher education through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is limited in South Africa; therefore, RPL has failed to deliver on its promise. An inconsistency in RPL assessments is also a problem. This study aims to explore and audit the extent of RPL implementation in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FOHS) and ultimately develop a practice framework to enhance the RPL implementation in the FOHS at DUT.

The interview will be voice recorded no identifying information will be included when the interview is transcribed, there are no known risks associated with this study.

Participant: *"Ok, can I sign the consent? I will request my colleague to sign as a witness."*

Interviewer: I would like to start off by asking a few questions**,** but feel free to express your responses and freely ask questions. I hope you will not mind if I repeat what you have said and request a further explanation.

Interviewer: Can you briefly describe your experiences on the implementation of RPL in this Department.

Participant: *"Most students coming into us are school-leavers, so the majority are matric that come to us. So, obviously we then have to judge on their matric results. We do have other students that come to us that are older students, mature students older than 23. So, they will have some sort of work experience as well, and they should have some sort of portfolio for us. They might have been in a different industry in the workplace somewhere else before. So, we'll have a look at that and see what they've done. We also like or prefer students to have a sound knowledge of what we're doing in our profession. So, if they've gone to a private practice or a government institution, to then spend some time with them to actually be in or field. In other words, they've shown some interest in what they're doing. They'll know what orthotics and prosthetics is that counts better for us as well at the end of the day, because they've already been in the system and they know what's going on. Rather than someone that's just leaving school or leaving a different industry and not knowing anything about our field at all. So, that's the kind of criteria we look for, to see if we can pick up those types of students. Because it shows enthusiasm because then I know that they now want to come into this program. It's not just a case of this is a stepping-stone for medicine or something else, which a lot of them think that it is unfortunately."*

Interviewer: Thank you Sir for that good explanation Im also learning a lot. Do you perhaps have something more to add before move on to next question?

Participant: No mam we can carry on.

Interviewer: In your opinion does your selection criterion meet the needs of the RPL candidates?

Participant: "*Yes, I would say so"*.

Interviewer: For candidates that are coming straight from school?

Participant: *"Straight from school, yes, they need to have a knowledge of what this field is about. A lot of them come here and they don't even know what orthotics and prosthetics is. They've got a very, very vague idea, they haven't even looked it up on the internet. So, they need to have had looked up something and give us some sort of information as to what orthotics is and what prosthetics is. And there is a line between the two. So, they need to define what orthotics is and what prosthetics is for us. So, that's the criteria for us so that we know exactly where these guys are coming from because research is a big thing in university. If don't look up stuff you're not going to find any information and we can't tell you every single thing, you must go and do some work too*."

Interviewer: Here I am again Sir I am just thinking allowed while you are talking what you mean by, you must go and do some work too?

Participant: *"We are looking for people with prior knowledge and prior skills they can't be blank and yet looking for RPL."*

Interviewer: Thank you once more for that clarification. Let's move on to the next question. Can you describe your involvement in the RPL process?

Participant: *"Uhm, we have interviews every single year and we're all involved. So, all the staff members are involved in that process of checking PoEs."*

Interviewer: I hear you saying all the staff members are involved. The POE, the process of looking and scrutinizing the POE's; who does that?

Participant: *"We actually have a questionnaire. So, when we do our interviews, we've got a questionnaire, we've got questions that we ask the students when we interview them. So, we've collectively sat and put that together, uhm, so that we know what questions. And we will change the questions sometimes to suit as well, you know, so that we don't ask the same questions. Because what happens is, we find that some students now, let's just say they're in their first or second year, and they've got a friend or a relative or something that's coming into the program. They know exactly what questions we're going to ask, so we change it to actually make it suit ourselves as well. To keep it a little bit fresh and get a better student at the end of the day. So, we all in [pause], there's only three of us. So, that we're all involved in everything that we do here."*

Interviewer: Can you briefly explain your opinion regarding guidance of RPL candidates before RPL assessment?

Participant: *"I think that if they had to come to us, we could actually point them in the right direction. Like I said before, we would like them to actually go to a private practice or a government institution and see and spend some time. Maybe a few days. You know they normally do that uhm, what do they call it? When they're at school they go for one week and they go for careers guidance. So, if they go to that at least they'll have a better idea of what they want to do. And at least they'll have better input into the field and some more knowledge about what they're actually going to be studying. Of course, we also have handbooks as well, so the university give out handbooks and it gives them a good guideline of what we require."*

Interviewer: Based on your opinion, what could be done differently in the RPL process?

Participant: *"Uhm, [laughs], I don't actually know how we could fine tune it better. Uhm, because, you know, when they come for interviews, we have a set program that we follow. So, they have to do a written test, they have to do some practical as well. So, we don't change all the time, we change the format of that all the time as well."*

Interviewer: They do a theory assessment?

Participant: *"They do a theory assessment; they do a practical assessment and an interview. And then we change that, we change those things all the time so that it's slightly different. So, we don't keep using the same, you know, draw a circle, draw a circle, and draw a circle, no! They'll draw a square next time. So, we test them on their practical ability and their hands skills. So, for example, we have a piece of clay and we give them a model and they have to model it exactly out of that clay for us and then we will mark that. So, we use a rubric to mark, we have a set rubric that we use. Certain things we're looking for in that rubric. And then we will mark it off and they'll get a score and then judging by the scores at the end of the day, we'll then look at how we're going to do things."*

Interviewer: Thank you once more. We are now approaching the end of our interview. The last question now; are there any training opportunities for the staff regarding the RPL process?

Participant: *"I actually don't know to be honest. I've got no idea if there is training. If, you know, when the courses come up obviously, we get an email to say, 'would you like to do this course, that course'. I've never seen anything that has a whole bug handbook on, 'these are the course that you can do'. We normally get it on that pin board, we get those courses that they come and offer us."*

Interviewer: If I may ask, how do you get information related to RPL?

Participant: *“To be honest, we rely on CELT and they are so helpful.”*

Interviewer: Again, let me thank you for this wonderful opportunity, and thank you for your participation in this study.

Participant: *“You are most welcome mam anytime, if you need more information feel free to come. I’m also busy developing a proposal for my PhD next yea*r.*”*

Interviewer: Goodbye!

Participant: *“Goodbye, drive safely*.*”*

Interviewer: Thank you, Sir.

Appendix 10: Letter from the professional editor

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EDITING CERTIFICATE

A PRACTICE FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF THEFACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES AT THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY/ Thobile Namsile Vina Shelembe (21855881)

I am a freelance editor specialising in proofreading and editing academic documents. I confirm that I have edited this dissertation and the references for clarity, language and layout. I used the track changes/review option in Microsoft Word. I returned the document to the author:

- Ensuring that spelling, grammar, punctuation, line spacing, and font is consistent and correct.
- Checking the List of References for consistency and style and checking entries against online databases to check accuracy of spelling and reference detail.
- Ensuring that all references in the text appear in the List of References and vice versa.

Resolving and accepting the changes in the text and references is the responsibility of the author.

My Qualifications and Experience:

- 30 years' experience as a research librarian at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban University of Technology.
- 16 years' experience in editing theses, research reports, teaching materials, journal articles, newsletters.
- Scribing, recording and transcriptions for workshops, seminars, debates.
- Facilitating and lecturing at Workers' College and Durban University of Technology.
- Master's in Library & Information Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- B.Bibl.(Hons) in Library & Information Science, University of South Africa
- Higher Diploma in Education, University of South Africa.
- B.A. University of Durban-Westville

Thara Devi Shah (Director). 26 April 2020

Appendix 11: Turnitin report

Turnitin Originality Report

A practice framework to enhance implementation of RPL by Thobile Shelembe

From Thesis chapters 1-10 (Thobile Shelembe Thesis)

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