HRK - International Conference on Recognition

Enhancing student mobility across educational boundaries through recognition

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Keynote on
Recognition of Prior Learning Outcomes for Promoting Lifelong Learning

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(The views expressed in this presentation are those of the author alone)

Agenda for Today

1. Conceptual clarification: recognition

2. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) and lifelong learning (LLL)

3. RPL: definition.s

4. Key ideas about recognition of prior learning (RPL)

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Recognition as in RPL

- Recognition applied to the case of prior learning (RPL), or…

…Recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes ☹ ☺

- Even if this context reduced in scope: recognition has two meanings:

  - Recognition of learning outcomes (technical, easy)
  - Recognition of qualifications (societal, complex, essential)

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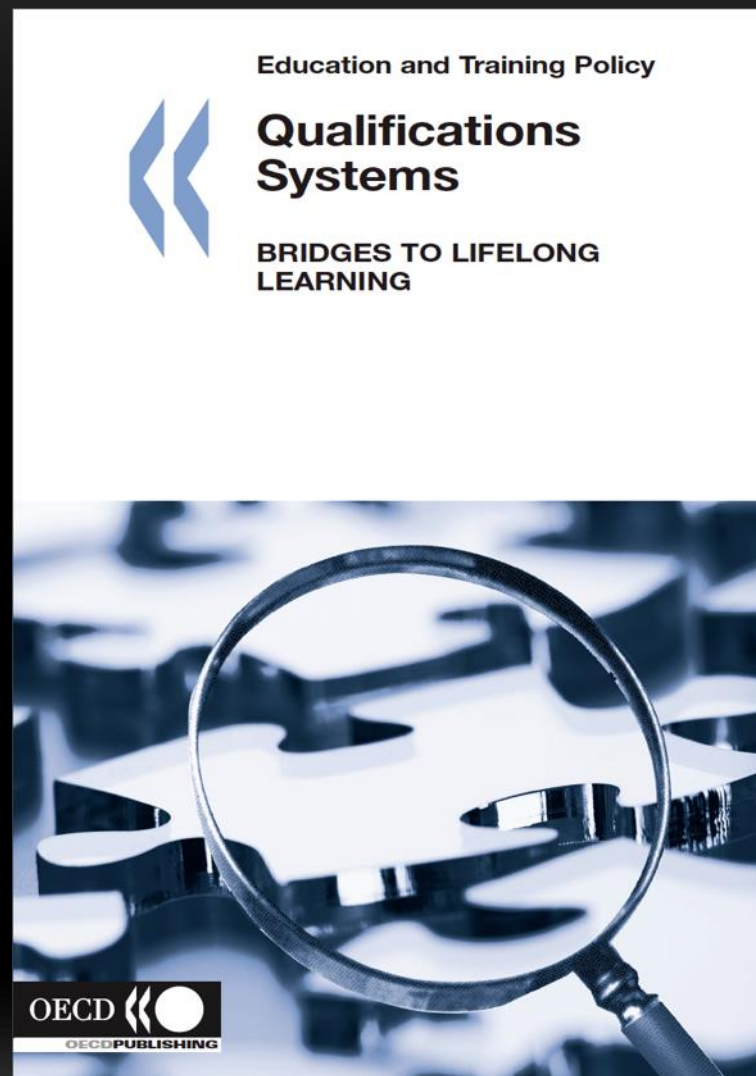4. Key ideas about recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Some Evidence

- Individuals without upper secondary education qualification (Abitur) oftentimes do not become adult/lifelong learners

- Most of the adult learning activities are not visible because they don't lead to a certificate, even less so to a qualification (hence the development of the microcredentials)

- Most of the qualifications individuals have when they retire were awarded to them at the end of initial education and training (there is no LL access to qualifications)

RPL and LLL

- Together with other components of a qualifications system (e.g., credit system, qualifications framework, financial ressurces, involving stakeholders)…

… RPL is a potential mechanism to promote lifelong learning

For details, please see Coles and Werquin (OECD, 2007): https://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/qualificationssystemsbridgestolifelonglearning.htm

Education and Training Policy

Qualifications Systems

BRIDGES TO LIFELONG LEARNING

OECD
OECDPUBLISHING

Why RPL does RPL trigger LLL?

- Motivation to learn through improved self-esteem, confidence etc.
  Because RPL is a <u>positive</u> approach because it focuses on what people already know or can do

- Motivation also because a qualification is a stepping stone (some evidence in France: "I'm good at that")

- RPL for positioning potential students upon entry in HE (no need to start from scratch and to learn what you know)

- Sometimes no choice: RPL applicants do not meet al the criteria defined in the qualifications standards, and they need top-up education and training

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More than a method: a philosophy

- RPL is about one simple idea (it's a <u>philosophy</u>):

- We all learn everywhere and all the time and the corresponding learning outcomes…

  … should be given <u>currency</u>, and

  … should be widely <u>recognised</u> (e.g. through a qualification), and this demands sound assessment and validation (with quality assurance)

- RPL it has <u>many</u> applications (a policy tool)

- RPL has <u>many</u> names

- There is some confusion and misconception

STOP: there is no consensus all the way

- We are all learning everywhere and all the time: consensus

- There are systematic learning outcomes: less consensus

- Awarding a qualification on the sole basis of an assessment (i.e., without formal learning at all): No consensus

RPL: Abridged Definition

- RPL is a <u>process</u> relying on an <u>assessment</u> of <u>learning</u> <u>outcomes</u> in order to make learning outcomes (and potential competences) <u>visible</u>

- And a process means <u>guidance</u>

- And therefore <u>capacity</u> building (guidance officers, assessors)

RPL: Full Definition

- RPL is a <u>process</u> by which any set of consistent learning outcomes, however acquired (i.e. formally, non-formally and/or informally), are given currency through the awarding of an officially recognised <u>document</u> clearly stating what the applicant knows and is able to do (a qualification typically, but not necessarily), and the extent to which they are mastered by the applicant (level); after a thorough <u>assessment</u> process against predefined [preferably widely agreed] <u>standards</u> that provide a set of criteria, and a norm, for assessing these learning outcomes

STOP Again: Just to Insist

- The heart of RPL is assessment

- RPL is not about education and training (not at the first stage)

- It's about assessing competences candidate already have

Many Possible Outcomes of RPL

- Full <u>qualification</u>

- <u>Partial</u> qualification (block of competences)

- <u>Credits</u> toward a qualification

- <u>Exemption</u> of academic prerequisite to enter the formal education and training system

- <u>Positioning</u> potential learners on formal learning pathways (e.g. before resuming/continuing studies)

- Exemption of all or part of the curriculum (shortening)

- <u>Certificate</u> of labour market competences

RPL is higher education (HE) friendly

- Full <u>qualification</u> (HE)

- <u>Partial</u> qualification (block of competences) (HE)

- <u>Credits</u> toward a qualification (HE)

- <u>Exemption</u> of academic prerequisite to enter the formal education and training system (HE)

- <u>Positioning</u> potential learners on formal learning pathways (e.g. before resuming/continuing studies) (HE)

- Exemption of all or part of the curriculum (HE)

- <u>Certificate</u> of labour market competences

More than a method: a policy tool

- Many possible outcomes

- Many possible assessment methods

- Many possible objectives

- …

Recognition of What: NFILO

- Many definitions of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (NFILO) ☹

- Not consensual ☹☹☹

- Formal learning: structured in terms of content, scheduling, organisation and financing

- Informal learning: not structured, never intentional

- Non-formal learning: varies a lot (no consensus): in between formal and informal, with variations to allow for national/regional/local or sectoral specificities

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Key Idea 1

- Target group:

RPL/RNFILO is for people with competences…

… <u>but</u> without the corresponding qualification

Key Idea 2

- It is the learning <u>outcomes</u> that are assessed, and potentially validated, <u>not</u> the learning

Key Idea 3

- Assessment is the heart of the system; for
  - Trust
  - Parity of esteem

- With quality assurance…

… because the <u>input</u> process is unknown

Key Idea 4

- Double currency:

  - In the education and training formal system

  - In the labour market

Key Idea 5

- RPL is relevant in all education and training sectors:
  - Adult learning,
  - TVET,
  - Higher education

- More relevant for <u>adults</u>, because applicants need to prove they have experiential learning outcomes, and therefore experience

- Very relevant in the HE sector:
  - Increase the pool of potential learners (demography, Austria)
  - Multi entry/exit higher education system (new boundaries)

Key Idea 6

- There is no such a thing as a good RPL system

- But there are systems that better fit the needs of such and such countries

Key Idea 7

- RPL is about <u>visibility</u> of competences

Key Idea 8

- RPL is offering a <u>new</u> <u>route</u> <u>to</u> <u>qualifications</u>

Key Idea 9

- RPL is about <u>equity</u>

- One of the most <u>inclusive</u> approaches in the field of LLL

Key Idea 10

- RPL is <u>not</u> a competitor to the formal LLL system

- It's a companion ☺

- An issue in Germany in the TVET sector

Many Barriers – Mostly Psychological

- Many stakeholders are against RPL:
  - E.g. university professors ☹
  - RPL not understood
- You will heard RPL:
  - "… award qualifications to everybody"
  - "… award undeserved qualifications"
  - "… create a competitor to the formal education and training system"
- Recommendation: explain, explain, explain

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