

**RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR DESIGNATED
EMPLOYEES AT THE WORKPLACE: A CASE STUDY OF
ESKOM DISTRIBUTION EMPLOYEES IN THE
NORTHERN REGION, SOUTH AFRICA.**

MARY-JANE SELOKELA MAKEKETA

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IN THE NORTHERN REGION, SOUTH AFRICA.**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Mary-Jane Selokela Makeketa declare that:

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR DESIGNATED EMPLOYEES AT THE WORKPLACE: A CASE STUDY OF ESKOM DISTRIBUTION EMPLOYEES IN THE NORTHERN REGION, SOUTH AFRICA is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

MAKEKETA M.S. (Mrs)

DATE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my lovely daughter and loving son, Segoo and Tshego.

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I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following people for their assistance in making this research project possible:

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To my Father and Lord, all glory and honour! I wouldn't have made it if it wasn't for the strength and ability He gave me every step of the way. Ebenezer!

ABSTRACT

The present study examines whether recognition of prior learning (RPL) is being implemented in the workplace, its effectiveness and impact on improving the lives of the previously disadvantaged groups and its contribution towards enhancing a culture of lifelong learning in South Africa. The main aim of this research is to explore the implementation of RPL and the extent of its effectiveness in the workplace, with particular focus on Northern Region of the *Eskom* Distribution. This was hoped to be addressed through the following objectives: The first objective was to determine the extent to which *Eskom* employees are aware of the RPL practices and to ascertain the level of awareness among employees. The second objective was to explore the current trends and practices on RPL at the workplace. The third objective was to determine and identify if there are any gaps. The last objective was to suggest ways that can be used to strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace. To this end, a questionnaire was administered to a randomly selected sample of 242 employees. In addition, interviews were conducted with three purposively selected (information rich) participants. The findings reveal that *Eskom* has policies and guidelines on RPL and a clearly stipulated purpose which is in line with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), however, the current RPL policies and procedures have not been piloted within the Northern Region, the information has not yet reached everyone in the business, and employees' level of awareness is still low. Findings also reveal that RPL does exist in Distribution and efforts to implement it are visible/traceable. A number of milestones and achievements are noted in the business as a whole as well as in the region, although a lot still needs to be done to ensure full and effective implementation. The last finding shows that there are a number of gaps and challenges impeding the success of RPL. These range from capacity building to quality assurance. On the basis of the findings, a number of recommendations to strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace are proposed and suggested.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APCL	Accreditation of Prior Learning and Accreditation of Prior Certificate Learning
APL	Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning
APL	Assessment of Prior Learning
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CHIETA	Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
Dx	Distribution
ET&D	Education, Training and Development
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance
EU	European Union
GX	Generation
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Development
LiW	Learning in the Workplace
NGOs	Nongovernmental Organisations
NLRD	National Learner's Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLA	Prior Learning Assessment
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
QMS	Quality Management System
RCC	Recognition of Current Competencies

RNFIL	Recognition of non-formal and informal learning
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
TX:	Transmission
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WiL	Work-based/work-integrate Learning
WPSP	Workplace Skill Plan

CHAPTER ONE ORIENTATION

1.1 Motivation for the study

The purpose of this research is to look at how well recognition of prior learning (RPL) is being implemented in the workplace, its effectiveness and impact in improving the lives of the previously disadvantaged groups and its contribution towards enhancing a culture of lifelong learning in South Africa. RPL has been identified as one of the possible topics “which in the short and long term will help to develop a better understanding of RPL implementation within the context of the South African National Qualifications Framework” (SAQA, 2002:70). Furthermore, it is recorded by SAQA (2009) that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning was identified as an important issue that required further study in an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) activity that investigated the role of national qualifications systems in promoting lifelong learning.

The researcher first came across this RPL phenomenon in passing, whilst on a short course in 2004, followed five years later when working for a national electricity generating company (*Eskom*) as an officer in Human Resource Development (HRD), formerly known as Education, Training and Development (ET&D). Few colleagues had heard about it, motivating the researcher to explore this phenomenon further. The question arises as to what is RPL, with different authors and nations having used a wide range of acronyms and definitions. For instance, in the United States of America it is referred to as Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), in the Netherlands as Assessment of Prior Learning (APL), in the United Kingdom as the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (APEL) or APL. However, in Britain, APL includes Accreditation of Prior Learning and Accreditation of Prior Certificate Learning (APCL) (Heyns, 2004). Other terms include Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC), Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), recognition of current skills and/or skills recognition.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Prior Learning Centre of South Africa defines RPL as:

... “a process that allows candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Candidates undergo a series of assessments specifically designed to assist them to display their competence. At the end of the assessment process each candidate is issued with credits for the learning that they have been able to display. These credits are linked to SAQA-registered qualifications. Through RPL, a candidate could earn credit for a few unit standards or a full qualification. RPL recognises any learning that the candidate has acquired, whether it was from formal training, workplace experience, or general life experience” (Prior Learning Centre. <http://rpl.exousia-projects.co.za>).

Victoria University cited by SAQA defines it as:

“the acknowledgement of skills and knowledge already acquired by a person from work and/or life experiences or from previous study. This prior learning may include: courses provided by professional bodies, voluntary associations, enterprises, private educational institutions, trade unions, government agencies and/or other providers” (SAQA, 2004: 23).

In South Africa, the term is used for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (RNFIL) and is defined as: “the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner, howsoever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements” (Blom *et al.*, 2007:viii). On the other hand, The Department of Education defines it as: “the granting of credit for a unit of learning on the basis of an assessment of formal and non-formal learning and/or experience to establish whether the learner possesses the capabilities specified in the outcome statement” (Department of Education, 1998b:91).

The research aligns itself with the Council of Higher Education (CHE) and its comprehensive description:

“RPL is a way of recognising what individuals already know and can do. RPL is based on the premise that people learn both inside and outside

formal learning structures (including learning from work and life experience) and this learning can be worthy of recognition and credit ...RPL is used extensively by those seeking: admission to a course, advanced standing for a course; or credits towards a qualification. It can also be used by those seeking entry to a particular field of employment; promotion of self-development” (Heyns, 2004:77).

From these definitions it is evident that people learn in many different settings in life and RPL acknowledges that they do not stop learning. Although the emphasis is on credit and access it is worth noting that full personal as well as social and economic development forms its core of RPL. In addition, it builds onto the basic notion that the individual should have an opportunity to use and build on all his or her acquired competences, rather than learn the same thing again. It comprises an individual's overall knowledge, skills and competences, which can be acquired in life, work, social experiences and activities in civil society, such as membership of nongovernmental organisation (NGOs) and sports clubs. The Danish policy paper (2005) notes that participants gain many personal and social skills through liberal adult education activities, such as a folk high school or an evening class computer course. Again, other settings include participation in civil society activities such voluntary charity work. Apart from credit or certification, RPL can also be used to establish whether people meet minimum requirements for entry to a job, i.e., as assessment of whether they qualify for a particular position.

In support of the above definitions and notions, SAQA outlines the purposes of RPL as follows:

- Personal development and/or certification of current skills without progression into a learning programme, if the candidate so chooses;
- Progression into a learning programme, using RPL to fast-track progression through the learning programme;
- Promotion; and
- Career or job change (SAQA, 2002a:13).

For Harris (2000), it is about “rectifying the social and economic divisions of the past; integration of education and training; and the need to foster life-long

learning. [and) ... globalisation and marketisation are the motifs” (Harris, 2000:9). SAQA, on the other hand, confirms that the purpose of RPL initiatives are sector-specific and range from employability, advanced standing, admission, access, the awarding of credits, to job promotion (SAQA, 2004). It is clear that RPL goes far beyond credits.

The general understanding of what RPL is, as well as the purposes as outlined above, form the point of departure of this research since focus is particularly on individuals at the workplace, while at the same time exploring the second point of promoting a culture of lifelong learning within the society. All of these, if achieved, will impact on and contribute to the economic development of our country.

SAQA documents and various acts serve as proof that the government has already addressed the issue of furthering the recognition of prior learning within the education system, however, there is a definite need to go much further in the labour force, market, industry or workplace. This is evident from Blom, Parker, and Keevy (2007) who argue that while all education and training quality assurance bodies (ETQAs) have developed recognition of prior learning (RPL) policies in order to comply with SAQA requirements, implementation plans and projects have been developed in only a few sectors. The research agrees with the Danish Policy Paper (2005), that it is time for individuals to continue acquiring new skills throughout their lives, and to have those skills recognised and credited wherever and whenever possible. Again, as Groenewald (2007) has observed, learning from experience happens in everyday life but it is taken for granted. The challenge is for both individuals and companies, and requires increased focus on adult education and vocational training in the labour market.

The Skills Development Act Number 97 of 1998 provides for an institutional framework for the implementation of national, sector and workplace strategies to improve the skills of the workforce. Much of the drive behind the development of processes for RPL emanated from the needs of the labour force to achieve recognition of learning and skills attained through work and life experiences, particularly as they were prevented from accessing education and training by unjust educational policies of the past. The Act is explicit on the need for redress, with one of its purposes being “to improve the employment prospects of persons

previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination and to redress those disadvantages through training and education” (Republic of South Africa,1998:4).

The researcher wishes to explore whether the above highlighted points are being attained through RPL in the workplace. From observation and a literature review it is evident that the government has already taken steps to promote RPL, however, the work is far from done, especially in the workforce. The researcher will, with the help of the data obtained, identify problem areas and make recommendations for their solution, drawing on the Danish paper’s observation that the development of the labour market, continuous readjustment to the knowledge society and new global trends continuously make new demands on competences. It is necessary to develop these if the country is to compete and maintain a high standard of living, as had been achieved in other countries, such as France and Norway (The Danish Ministry of Education, 2005).

To a certain extent, competence assessment and RPL within the education system already exist, however, there is little or slow progress towards its implementation, particularly in the labour market.

1.3 Research questions

The following research questions were formulated based on the aims:

- I. What is the level of awareness about RPL among employees in *Eskom Distribution (Dx) Northern Region*?
- II. What are the current trends and practices in the implementation of RPL in *Eskom Dx Northern Region*?
- III. What are the gaps in the implementation of RPL in *Dx Northern Region*?
- IV. How can the RPL processes and practices be strengthened?

1.4 Aims and significance of the study

A number of *Eskom* employees are still not yet aware of RPL or how it can benefit them. Organisations require not only awareness and promotions on RPL but also maximum utilisation, practice and implementation of the process.

The main aim of this research is to explore the implementation of RPL and the extent of its effectiveness in the workplace, with particular focus on the northern region of *Eskom Dx*. This has the following objectives:

- I. To determine the extent to which *Eskom* employees in Dx Northern Region are aware of RPL practices in their workplace.
- II. To explore the current trends and practices in the implementation of RPL in Dx Northern Region workplace.
- III. To determine and identify if there are any gaps
- IV. To suggest ways in which RPL processes and practices may be strengthened in the workplace.

Coupled to the above-mentioned challenges from global competition is that of the country's unemployment figures. If the labour force can utilise RPL effectively, opportunities for individuals to acquire qualifications and competences that are in demand on a changeable labour market will improve. Thus, the hypothesis in this study is: the more the information on ground level, the better the use of the opportunities and the more qualified and competent the labour force will be.

The significance and the contribution of this study is as follows:

- To reveal the current trends and practices on RPL in the workplace.
- To identify gaps and propose ways to close them.
- To report on ways that can ensure effective and full utilisation, particularly in the workplace.
- To address and eradicate lack of knowledge among employees.
- To affirm that RPL can improve opportunities for individuals to acquire qualifications and competences that are in demand on a changeable labour market, if awareness can be promoted at ground level.

1.5 Definition of terms

It is necessary to clarify key concepts and terms as they are used and understood in this study.

Formal learning refers to "learning that takes place through a structured programme of learning and assessment that leads to the full or partial attainment

of a recognised diploma or qualification” (Credit Recognition Policy 2010: 2). It takes place within a teacher-student relationship, such as in a school system.

Informal learning refers to “learning gained through work-related, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike ‘formal’ and ‘non-formal’ learning, ‘informal learning’ is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support” (Credit Recognition Policy, 2010: 2).

Non-formal learning refers to “learning that takes place through a structured programme but does not lead to a formally recognised qualification” (Credit Recognition Policy, 2010: 2).

Lifelong learning refers to “on-going learning through a continuously supportive process that stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire and apply the knowledge, values, skills and critical understanding required to confidently and creatively respond and rise to the challenges of a changing social, political and economic environment” (Department of Education, 1998a:50).

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is “the granting of credit for a unit of learning on the basis of an assessment of formal and non-formal learning/experience to establish whether the learner possesses the capabilities specified in the outcome statement” (Department of Education, 1998a:51).

1.6 Summary of research methodology

Due to the nature of the topic, in order to gather more reliable and valid data, and to draw a clearer picture, a combination of a questionnaire, interviews and document analysis will be used to record the researcher’s observations consistently.

Questionnaires:- Due to the geographical distribution of the study population, a questionnaire will be needed to cover employees in other provinces like Limpopo, Gauteng and Mpumalanga. The questions will be easy to read. and will be developed in an interactive style. For those participants who cannot be reached collectively, the questionnaire will be posted on the Internet or sent via email with a covering letter across the business, requesting their participation. The

questionnaire will be administered to employees randomly, to determine who knows about RPL at the workplace and who does not.

Interviews:- The questionnaire will be followed by semi-structured interviews. Interview participants will be selected from questionnaire respondents who will indicate that they have been RPLed in the past. These 'information-rich' participants will be selected from both managerial and employee points of view. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face.

Literature review:- Existing data or document analysis of available policies, reports and records at workplaces will be used to trace the origin of RPL and its historical developments within *Eskom*.

1.7 Plan of the study

The structure of this dissertation will be as follows:

Chapter 1 presented the background of the investigation, with definitions of the main concept, problem statement, research questions and aims, followed by a brief description of the methods to be employed.

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature and provides the theoretical background for RPL in South Africa as recorded and reported in various government and education sources, and by various researchers.

Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methods for collecting data on RPL.

Chapter 4 presents the results, with an analysis and discussion of them.

Chapter 5 draws the study to a conclusion, with recommendations and suggestions deduced from the data and findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a review of the literature and provides the theoretical background for recognition of prior learning (RPL). The knowledge gained will aid in exploring the significance of the problem and developing the research design. This section begins with a terminological discussion of RPL then explains the theoretical frameworks underpinning it, with an international comparative perspective of RPL process and assessment in several contexts. Focus is on the clarification of important concepts relating to RPL, including its history and origin, approaches, models, methods and types of assessment processes. The main challenges of implementing RPL are highlighted in the last section.

Although most of the literature reviewed has concentrated on Higher Education (HE), it is the aim of the researcher to challenge and bring the practices to the workplace or the labour market because this is the area where effective learning occurs. Adult learning principles and practices also form the core of this section, as the needs of learners or candidates are the point of departure in RPL. All concepts will be discussed with the employee in his or her workplace in mind.

2.2 Background

Recognition of prior learning has been used in vocational and non-formal education for a long time and is common practice in higher education in many countries. The shift in this research is from a 'higher education mentality' to the workplace, where most adult learning takes place. Learner-centred practices are grounded in a humanistic approach to adult education that sees adults as "autonomous, holistic beings, whose accumulated life experience provides a foundation for their learning" (Cretchley & Castle, 2001:487). Adult learning covers all types of learning by adults who have left initial education and training, however far that process went and for whatever reasons; and includes learning for personal, civic and social purposes, as well as for employment-related purposes. Breier and Ralphs (2009) refer to 'practical sense', 'practical wisdom', 'moral knowledge' and 'practical knowledge', which are

dependent on experience. Hence, one cannot divorce adult learning and experience from RPL. Chappell (cited by Keating, 2006) comments that working knowledge is “rarely codified in text books, formal training programs, competency standards or procedures manuals” and is more likely to be developed within the context and environment of the immediate workplace. It is this ‘working knowledge’ that academic institutions are seeking through programmes such as Learning in the Workplace (LiW), work-based/work-integrate learning (WiL), internships, work experience, in-service training , learnerships, apprenticeship, and other forms of learning in which learners or students are given time in their study programmes to engage in the workplace. Groenewald and Thulukanam (2005) acknowledge that certain learning outcomes or competencies are best (or could ‘only’ be) acquired through real-life workplace experiences, and that this learning requires facilitation, direction and guidance through mentoring.

During these work-based programmes for learners it is the employees at the workplace who play the mentoring role, teaching them the techniques and skills required by the specific profession or occupation for their qualifications. This study aims to determine whether these employees can impart knowledge to the academics for them to be competent and be awarded a qualification. The employees’ work knowledge can be considered academic as they enrol with institutions and gain qualifications, thus establishing reciprocity between the work and academic sectors. Workers are often disadvantaged and denied access to promotion opportunities in favour of others who have formal academic qualifications, including students who join the workforce soon as they graduate.

Many South Africans may not have formal qualifications, however, they have the necessary skills to perform their jobs competently. RPL, acknowledged by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), provides such individuals with the means to obtain formal recognition for the experience and skills gained outside formal education. According to the South African College for Open Learning, RPL or the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is an acceptable method of certification or exemption:

“APL is a process that enables people of all ages, backgrounds, and attitudes to receive credit for achievements they have acquired outside the classroom.

The basic premise of APL is that individuals can and do learn through their

lives in a variety of settings and that often the ensuing skills, knowledge and abilities are equal and frequently superior to those obtained by students following traditional routes through formal education” (Moore & van Rooyen, 2002:294).

Through the process known as RPL an individual can potentially have his or her workplace and personal life learning assessed and matched to the requirements of a qualification. If the assessor judges that they do then the registered assessor and accredited provider may award the individual the full or partial qualification. However, the process is far from simple, as Deller (2004) cautions.

There is a definite need to form a link between knowledge, experience, learning and qualifications. This link should benefit everyone involved equally. The workplace needs to pay attention to employees with extensive practical experience but limited or no formal qualifications. In its declaration in the Congress of South African Trade Unions Education and Skills Conference (COSATU, 2009), the union group maintains that citizens must overcome the divide between mental and manual labour and address the imbalances of the past through Early Childhood Development (ECD), RPL, adult basic education and training (ABET), career-pathing and related strategies. The question is ‘is RPL being utilised at the workplace to this effect, or can it be utilised? should be born in mind throughout the discussions in this section.

In order to have a better understanding of this concept, the next session expands on why the focus is at the workplace.

2.2.1 The workplace

The workplace is increasingly seen as a legitimate site for learning in formal education programmes, with changes in the economy stimulating a “greater focus on work and workplaces as significant sites for learning” (Keating, 2006:2), in all educational sectors. A number of drivers for this increased emphasis include concern across the sectors to improve the preparation of students for the world of work, an ongoing concern with bridging the gap between theory and practice, and a related increase in emphasis on generic capabilities and lifelong learning capabilities. These changes affect not only school leavers but also existing workers and adult learners. The need for all workers to maintain their employability in a

climate of increasing change is well documented, with Keating (2006) reporting that South Africans, like Australia's workforce, are aging, thus there is an increasing need to keep skills current and relevant while they continue working.

The labour market is central because it is a place for the production of non-formal and informal learning situations. Employers in all countries are quick to point out that the most important non-formal and informal learning probably takes place at work. This is crucial in explaining why they logically often demand more direct involvement in devising the standards used in a recognition process, especially if it leads to certified qualifications. As far back as 1997, a Norwegian report concluded that the workplace was the location in which most learning occurred. The committee responsible for this report drew up recommendations and, in 1998, proposed that each employee should be entitled to study and be awarded a special recognised status. According to Werquin (2010) a national system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, including the documentation of these outcomes, was proposed.

Another point linking the labour market to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is the need to deal with the skills shortages that occur when the demand for knowledge, skills and competences exceeds supply. In general, this results in large numbers of job vacancies going unfilled, even though the general unemployment rate may often be high. The link between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and skills shortages is apparent in most countries, and the reason is that knowledge, skills and competences are often present but not visible because they are not recognised. Furthermore, entry to certain regulated professions depends on possession of a certified qualification. By means of recognition it is possible to certify the learning outcomes of those keen to practice such a profession without necessarily having to undertake a potentially long and costly period of training for the qualification required.

Deller (2004) maintains that for RPL to be effective it must be implemented in the workplace, where approximately 11 million people are based, and for this to happen business managers and owners will need to understand the business value that it can add. RPL is not only about a learner's interests but about the values it can add to the business or workplace, the economy and the country at large.

2.2.2 Definitions of Recognition of Prior Learning

The concept Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is understood by most in the area of adult education to be the method of assessing relevant competences gained by adults through work and life experiences, which can then be counted towards qualifications or for promotion in the workplace by using a systematic set of procedures. Moore and Rooyen define RPL as:

... “a process which attempts to put a value on all learning: what people know and can do, irrespective of how achieved, for example through study, community work, on-the-job training, or other life experiences and which has not been formally recognised through the transfer of credit mechanisms. It allows an individual to get some form of recognition for the skills and knowledge he or she has, as well as the evaluation of past learning against established academic standards through an open and transparent approach to assessment. RPL is thus not separate from assessment, rather it is a specialised sub-set of assessment” (Moore & van Rooyen, 2002:293).

The South African Ministry of Education defines it as “A process including structured assessment, valuing, documentation and recognition of knowledge and competence that a person has, irrespective of how they have been acquired” (2003:19).

Van Rooy sums up above definitions as follows:

... “learning and skills acquired through experience and on-site training or self-education could be formally assessed and credited towards certificates in order to enable people to qualify for entry to additional education and/or training. Applying this principle means that people will be assessed on *what* they have learned, irrespective of where, when and how, to establish and verify their knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes against clearly defined standards of performance and then be placed at the appropriate level of education and training including higher education” (van Rooy, 2002:75).

The recognition of prior learning reflects a belief that adults learn in a variety of contexts outside educational institutions, such as paid or unpaid work, politics and civil society, and that this learning may be broadly equivalent to that gained in formal education. In South Africa, RPL is bound up with moral and political imperatives to broaden participation in higher education by black South Africans. Thus, RPL is

associated not only with issues of individual and social justice but also with issues of redress.

Educators, trainers and other HRD specialists are concerned that too much valuable time and effort is lost teaching people what they already know, and RPL will avoid unnecessary duplication of learning, encourage self-assessment, assist learners to make judgements concerning their own knowledge and skills, reduce the time learners need to spend in training and help build learner confidence (Moore & van Rooyen, 2002).

Eskom is currently restructuring and reviewing its RPL policies, standards and directives, however, its process of Managing Recognition of Prior Learning relates to “the comparison of the previous learning and experience obtained by an employee against the learning outcomes required for a specific qualification, and the acceptance of that which meets the requirements for the purposes of qualification” (Eskom Academy of Learning, 2011:26). It is important to note that RPL is neither an interview selection process, a performance appraisal, a salary grading process or a baseline assessment. Again, it is not simply an assessment process, but rather “a series of activities involving teaching, learning, and working towards the creation of suitable portfolios of evidence or performances of the requisite kind” (SAQA, 2011:2).

2.2.3 The aims of recognition

According to Motaung, Frazer and Howie (2008), RPL was conceptualised by the South African government as a strategy for achieving the key objectives of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), namely, access and redress. Frick and Albertyn (2011) maintain that the national discourse on equity and redress, together with the prominence of the current global spotlight on the knowledge economy, increases the urgency of RPL. Osman (2004) maintains that RPL is also driven by moral and political imperatives to broaden the participation in higher education of adults who were excluded from it and disadvantaged by apartheid, as well as by economic imperatives to enable adults to compete in the global economy.

The workplace aims include better employment opportunities through promotion and greater work mobility. According to Breier (2005), RPL is seen as a means whereby

subjugated or marginalised groups with certain forms of knowledge can gain access to the academy and challenge the hegemony. It is the view of the researcher that this should not stop at access to the academy but should also open opportunities for workforce empowerment and transformation, while addressing the skills shortages. This is supported in one of the principles underlying the study by Buchler *et al* (2011) which is to address the critical need to achieve a more highly skilled and flexible workforce by means of RPL and use it as an important mechanism in support of equity and redress. Knowles (cited by Breier, 2005) describes adults' experience as the richest source of learning which should not be ignored or devalued.

2.3 Historical background of the recognition of prior learning

This section examines the history of RPL internationally and nationally.

2.3.1 RPL in other countries

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) has been a part of adult education policy and practice for many years, but in varying ways in different times and places. Various concepts are used around the world and the idea was present long before a specific concept was introduced. Although its origins are commonly traced to post-World War Two United States of America (USA) when returning veterans wanted their skills recognised by universities (Weil & McGill: 1989). RPL is not a new phenomenon, but rather it is "the formalisation and (re)naming of pre-existing practices concerning alternative access, admissions and mature age entry" (Andersson & Hellberg, 2009:1).

Valk (2009) reports that some initiatives regarding recognition of prior and experiential learning, also known as assessment and accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL), were introduced in France as early as the 1930s. More mainstream development began in the United Kingdom (UK) and in France in the 1980s, in parallel with similar developments in the USA and Canada). However, it was not until 1996 that the French concept *validation* (*validering* in Swedish) was introduced in Sweden (Andersson, 2008). Today 'validation' is also used in English, particularly in the European Union (EU) context, synonymously with the concepts of

recognition, accreditation or assessment of prior learning. It should be noted that validation in English often means a form of audit or appraisal of courses or programmes, but the concept is also used synonymously with recognition and accreditation of prior learning, referring to the French “*validation des acquis de l’expérience*” (Andersson, 2008:516).

Queensland and Western Australia have used RPL as a means of dealing with skills shortages (Werquin, 2010), and countries around Europe are reported to be increasingly emphasising the need to take into account the full range of an individual’s knowledge, skills and competence. All forms of learning recognising need to be a priority for all nations.

2.3.2 Recognition of Prior Learning in South Africa

Various reports (Deller (2004); Kizito (2006); Maboye (2011) and Cretchley & Castle (2001)) have found that RPL entered the consciousness of most South African educators in the 1990s, with COSATU playing a critical role in the promotion of the concept. This led to policymakers, in response to economic and political imperatives, developing a more skilled and flexible workforce, turning to overseas models of integrated education and training systems.

RPL emerged or evolved in different contexts or differing historical moments in different countries. In South Africa it originated through social, economic and political influences, which included political transformation, globalisation and liberalisation of markets. COSATU fought for the rights of workers to have increased access to higher education opportunities, and hence improved employment and promotional opportunities, in the face of increasing retrenchments and capital-intensive investment (Kizito, 2006). The focus in any context was to deal with a societal situation in which people required some form of fast-tracking or, alternately, to give people who would otherwise not have access to institutions of learning the opportunity to study and attain qualifications. This was the rationale behind Eskom’s move to work on identification by means of the following criteria for selection

1. Previous disadvantaged employees
2. Employees at a TASK Grade of Level 08 and below
3. Employees needed to close the skills gap (mainly CCS Skills)

4. Employees with no (less than an NQF Level 04) formal qualification
5. All employees (above the age of 35 years) (du Plessis, 2009).

RPL is one of the key principles of the NQF, originally designed as a form of educational redress for those who had been prevented from obtaining a formal education under apartheid. It recognised that many of them nevertheless advanced their knowledge, performed important and responsible jobs, and played leading roles in their communities, in trade unions and in politics. This needed to be recognised in the workplace, in the form of promotion, for example, or in formal education contexts, for the purposes of access, credit or advanced standing, in part through RPL (Breier & Ralphs (2009).

In post-apartheid South Africa, increasing numbers of adult learners are seeking access to postgraduate, professional degree programs and job promotion. Given the racially exclusive legacy of apartheid, however, many do not have the requisite undergraduate degrees and are only able to gain access through RPL. The question is then posed: “Do the prior professional and life experiences of these adults act as a resource for their writing of research, or could such experiences act as a barrier to their acquisition of the literacies necessary to successfully complete a postgraduate degree”? (Cooper, 2011: 40). That remains to be seen in the next chapters.

2.4 Official national policies and legal framework

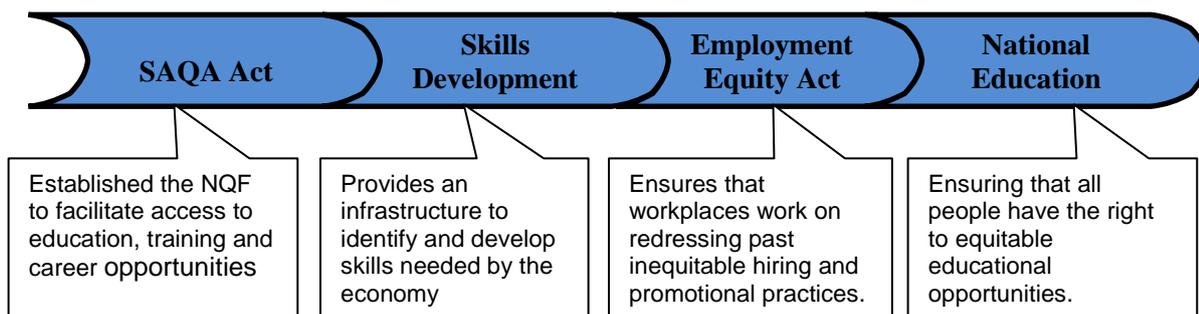
Few governments offer their citizens a declared and persuasive policy position on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, which seems consistent with other essential messages such as those concerned with lifelong learning, skills or employability. Many countries do adopt an official strategy for lifelong learning with official statements regarding its benefits, but few make similar pronouncements specifically about recognition itself. On the other hand, recognition is often one of the mechanisms activated, or meant to be activated, in promoting lifelong learning.

South Africa (RSA, 2008a) has a clearly formulated set of policies and principles for RPL that formed part of its development of the NQF and which were designed, inter alia, to open second chance opportunities for those who had been left out under the apartheid regime (Werquin, 2010). For instances, the DoE stipulates:

"Institutions will continue to have the right to determine entry requirements as appropriate beyond the statutory minimum. However, in exercising this right, they should ensure that selection criteria are sensitive to the educational backgrounds of potential learners, and incorporate the recognition of prior learning which is an essential concept in the elaboration of the NQF" (Department of Education, 1997:24).

The establishment and promotion of the culture of learning towards the maintenance of high academic standards has been promoted and encouraged through different policies and acts, i.e., the South African Qualifications Act (no. 58 of 1995), the Skills Development Act (no. 97 of 1998), the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998) and the National Education Policy Act (no. 27 of 1996).

The flowchart below has been derived from Deller (2004), Werquin (2010) and Heyns (2004) to show how the four pieces of legislation link and support RPL.



Model 1: National Policies and Legal Framework Flowchart

With democracy, the new laws sought to make education inclusive of all learners, thus RPL is viewed as an important mechanism for offering access to those who were refused it for decades. In protecting integrity and recognising diversity, the emphasis is on what they know and not what they do not know. The plan or goal is to try and accept and accommodate all candidates at all levels and "to establish interconnections between all qualifications, irrespective of whether they are derived from formal or informal learning of an academic or vocational nature" (Werquin, 2010:44).

In South Africa RPL has been undertaken in the vocational as well as the education and training sectors. According to the Skills Development Levies Act (RSA, 1999), "every employer must pay a skills development levy from 1 April 2000 at a rate of

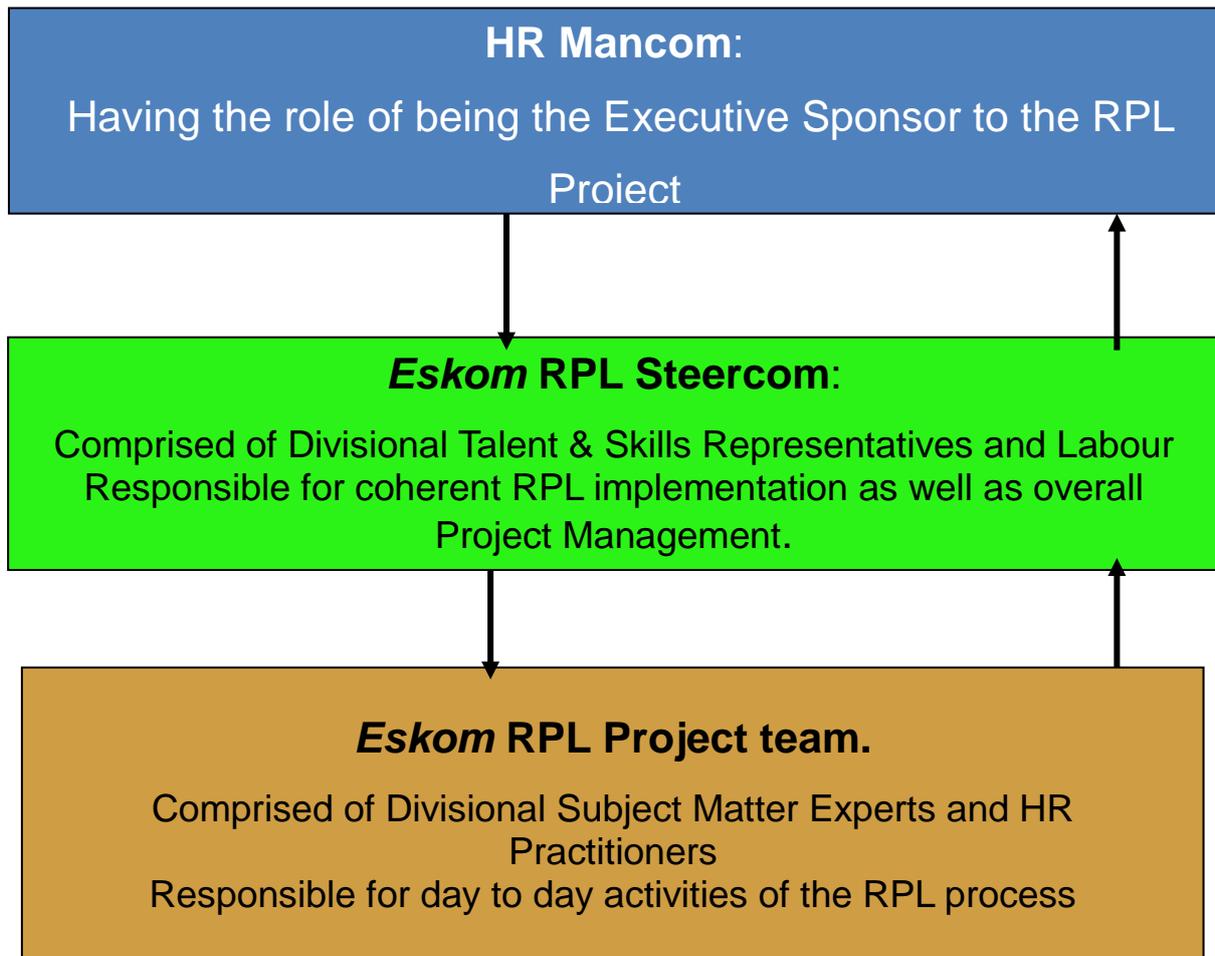
0.5% of the leviable amount and, from 1 April 2001, at a rate of 1% of the leviable amount" (Moore & van Rooyen, 2002:295). Employers are therefore responsible for upgrading staff skills and qualifications so that they can qualify for subsidies from the Department of Labour. The observation is that, to a certain extent, although competence assessment and recognition of prior learning within the education system already exists there is little or slow progress towards implementation, particularly in the labour market. SAQA supports this observation:

“As seen from the acts and regulations and other formal publications, it seems that RPL has become an integral part of the psyche of South African education and training. In the Ministerial Review (known as the Study Team) of the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (2002), the slow progress towards the systemic implementation of RPL is mentioned as one of the current disappointments in the NQF” (SAQA, 2004:75).

As SAQA (2011) noted, much work has already been done in terms of developing RPL policies and researching and implementing them. Most public and private education and training organisations have RPL policies, however implementation of these policies has not always been easy or straightforward (SAQA, 2011:2). The idea of lifelong learning needs to permeate learning environments and ideas about learning in the country.

Maboye (2011) points out that SAQA policies give no national implementation plan to guide RPL implementation specifically in the workplace, whilst Deller (2004) sees this as one reason there has been little implementation of RPL in the workplace. It is desired that all principal sectoral and national programmes adhere to the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III), First Draft (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2010) and must include RPL access routes by 2016 according to SAQA (2011). *Eskom* has adhered to the above appeal, with documents showing it to be one of the few organisations that have heeded the national call for RPL and have developed policies, procedures and guidelines governing its implementation from national level to regional and operational levels.

In *Eskom*, governance is ensured and legal frameworks are adhered to (Eskom:2007; Eskom 2010) and monitored through respective bodies and structures, as outlined in Model 2:



Model 2: Eskom governance Derived from HR Exco presentation

2.5 Theory and practice of recognition of prior learning

There have been many signs of progress since the end of the 1990s in South Africa, the main target consisting of those who were excluded from access to education and training opportunities under apartheid and those whose knowledge and skills were developed experientially and through political struggle but not recognised in the formal system. The RPL policy is also aimed at different segments of the labour market, for example, teachers, nurses and construction workers who were excluded from professional and technical qualifications and who now require these qualifications to be employed and registered. In addition, the government is considering strategies to award 'advanced standing' qualifications, or admit people to extended curricula so as "to prevent renewed mistreatment of those who have already suffered injustice" (Werquin, 2010:13). This might affect under-skilled adults such as nurses or teachers, and a natural target for action also comprises all

persons who do not satisfy the preconditions for entering the formal system of education and training.

In principle, all education and training institutions are meant to establish programmes and procedures for recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes but only a limited number of institutions have done so. Co-operative governance accounts for the idea of shared management, and Werquin (2010) maintains that the role of the SAQA is thus essential in furthering access, mobility and the progression of learners within the education and training system and their careers.

2.6 RPL Approaches

Andersson and Fejes (2005) differentiate between 'selection' and 'transformation' as the main functions of RPL, with the focus on either the individual or knowledge. RPL can be aimed at the selection of individuals and the recognition of existing knowledge, or the transformation of individuals or knowledge in the process of assessing prior learning. This differentiation provides a useful distinction between the various functions that RPL can fulfil.

Authors such as Breier (2005), Harris (1999, 2000) and Osman and Castle (2004) emphasise the transformative value of RPL as a tool to redress of social inequality and facilitate social inclusion. However, it has to be noted that other authors (Castle & Atwood 2001; Osman & Castle 2002) also focus on broader instrumental issues, such as the accessibility of education systems in general, which does not necessarily focus on the role of RPL in social redress and inclusion.

Most institutions have a complicated mix of different approaches to RPL (Breier 2005), which may therefore challenge the philosophical and epistemic status quo in a variety of ways. Harris (1999) refers to the Procrustean, Learning and Development, Radical and Trojan-horse approaches as possible ways of looking at RPL practice. A brief discussion of each follows below:

2.6.1 The *Procrustean* approach

The *Procrustean* approach to RPL assesses individual competence according to prescribed outcomes and standards, with a focus on the future development of

specific knowledge and skills. Knowledge is viewed as a measurable commodity with an exchangeable market value (Harris,1999), and seems has a strong selective function in terms of both the individual and knowledge, but limited transformative potential compared to Kvale's (1996), in Andersson, 2008) distinctions in educational assessment. It allows institutions to make judgments about learners' preparedness for study and/or eligibility for credit (Osman & Castle, 2004) based on existing and accepted notions of academic knowledge.

2.6.2 The *Learning and Development* approach

Individual advancement and the democratising of education underpin the *Learning and Development* approach. The transformative potential for the individual and knowledge construction is greater than in the case of the Procrustean approach, however, knowledge is still stratified, with disciplinary knowledge more highly valued than that gained from experience. Individuals' prior learning therefore has to be moulded to conform to and fit in with dominant academic discourses and existing disciplinary bodies of knowledge. RPL functions as the acculturation process in the elite academic system of formal knowledge structures that are not challenged (Harris, 1999). The transformative value in terms of knowledge assessment is therefore limited.

2.6.3 The Radical approach

Harris (1999) describes the *Radical* approach to RPL as a move towards social change, with a closer link between experience, learning and knowledge as socially constructed entities. Radicalism has a strong transformational focus in both the assessment of the individual and of knowledge. However, this approach risks idealising experiential knowledge and thereby excluding and alienating more formalised discourses.

2.6.4 Trojan-horse approach

Harris (1999) presents the *Trojan-horse* approach as a conceptualisation of RPL in which more permeable knowledge boundaries, curriculum flexibility and practice

based learning programmes are evident, changes that are notable in some contexts in South African higher education. This approach has a transformational function for both the individual and knowledge systems, and a critical element that aims to align experiential knowledge (as obtained in practice) with disciplinary knowledge (as promoted in theory), neither of which are deemed beyond contestation. RPL therefore becomes part of the construction of knowledge and curricula, transforming both the individual and the knowledge. This more transformative approach to RPL facilitates equity and redress through the progression from one NQF level to another (Harris, 2000).

The different understandings of RPL discussed above, have led to the development of the three main models discussed in the next session.

2.7 RPL Models

The literature on RPL reveals that three broad models or perspectives of RPL emerge: the credit exchange model, the developmental model, and the transformational model, each with different views of knowledge, learning and experience. Researchers who have used aspects of this typology in South Africa include Harris (1999, 2000), Frick and Albertyn (2011), Osman (2003, 2004) and Breier (2005). Below table was adapted from Frick & Albertyn (2011) Osman (2004) and Volbrecht (2009).

The three models are briefly summarised and compared below.

The credit exchange model	The developmental model	The transformational model
exchange model provides the basis for contestation related to the valuing of experientially and formally acquired knowledge	students are required to assess and evaluate prior learning acquired through experience	foregrounds the politics of difference and the struggle over legitimate knowledge
instrumental and assessment based		
the relationship between knowledge,	acknowledges that RPL candidates' knowledge	Knowledge, power and inequality are firmly on the

power and inequality is not on the agenda	may be distinct from academic habits and ways of knowing	agenda
Knowledge is regarded as universal, neutral and uncontested, and experience is considered to be "asocial, and apolitical"	efficacious knowledge" that is both "participative and performative".	Non-formal and experiential learning are recognised on their own terms as valid academic knowledge
emphasis is on method and efficiency rather than on purpose	The learners have more power and say in the evaluation of their learning.	creates opportunity and space to talk about and include other collective knowledge generated outside the academic institution
the approach is limited to "how to" instead of "why should"	It encourages "separate knowing"	academy is not also a site which examines and engages with knowledge created in other sites of practice
the RPL process is seen as a set of unfolding steps that are controllable and measurable	The emphasis, in this model, on individual well-being, respect for experience and individual empowerment through education	to broaden the boundaries that define valid knowledge and procedures and recognise the methods used in such legitimation
The format usually consists of writing a letter of application, submitting testimonials and transcripts, and collating evidence of previous qualifications and achievements		proposes curricula that are sensitive to the experiential world in which students' knowledge is constructed
Assessment methods used in this model of RPL include standardised tests, examinations and performance-based testing	learning can occur in a variety of contexts	Various methods are used and include focus group discussions, collages, dialogue, narrative, life histories and other forms of self-expression such as music and dance.
serve a diagnostic purpose for both the institution and the student alike	gives back to learners "cognitive justice" ("social inclusion")	Teaching and assessment practices are selected

Table 1 Model of RPL:

The models have critics who looked at both pros and cons of each, however these are not within the ambit of this study. The typology set out above demonstrates that RPL presents complexities and challenges that inscribe contradictory and varied positions, and all three models and the discourses that underpin them need to be engaged within the face of the broad promises and claims made for RPL in government policy. Maboye (2011) recommends that they attempt to reconcile learner-centredness, negotiated procedures, and flexible assessment with rigorous standards and quality assurance systems for recognition.

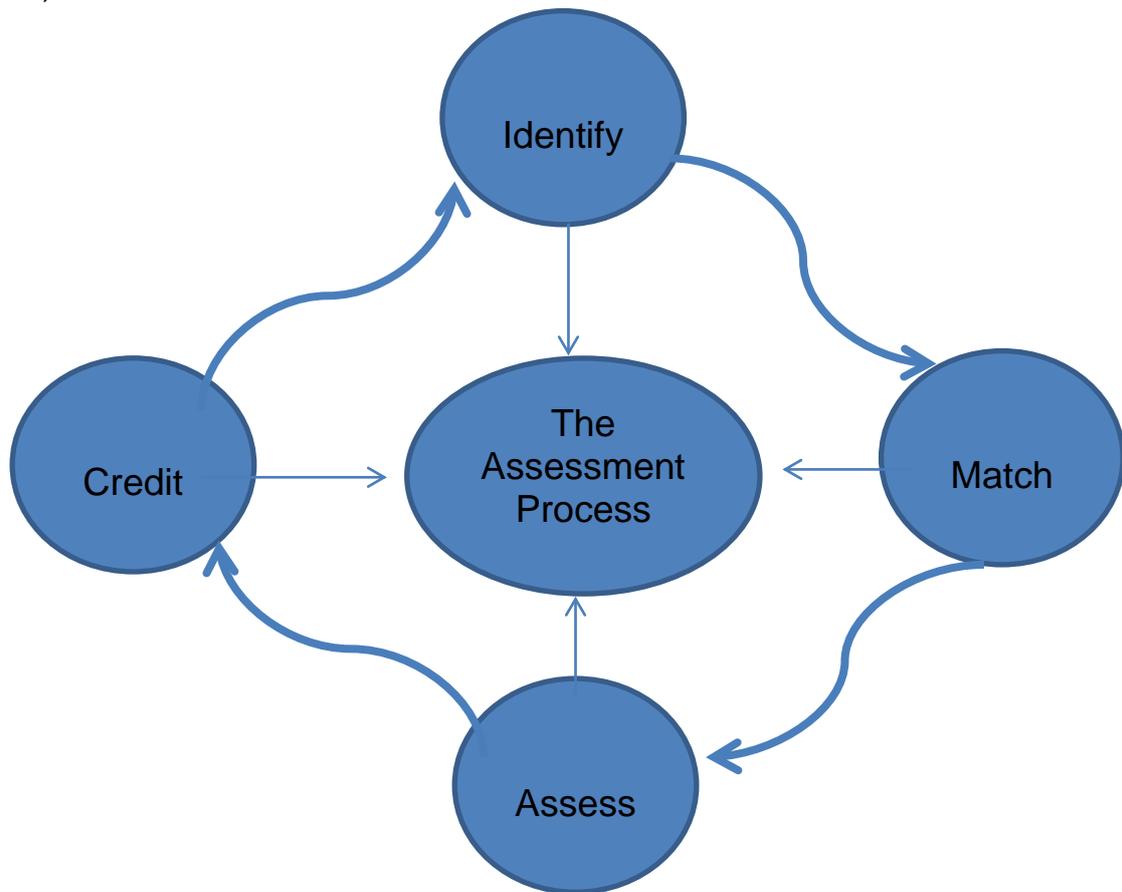
2.8 RPL Assessment Process

“RPL usually refers to the processes of reflection and assessment of experiential learning – a process that attempts to establish the value and equivalence of prior learning in relation to formal qualifications” Buchler *et al* (undated :132) . On the other hand, assessment according to the SAQA RPL documentation and SABPP ETQA policy document (undated) is defined as the process of gathering and weighing evidence in order to determine whether learners have demonstrated outcomes specified in unit standards and/or qualifications registered on the NQF. Andersson and Fejes (2005) see assessment as a technique that colonises the human as a knowledgeable subject. From above notions, it is clear that for learning to be recognised, it must be assessed.

RPL comprises varying processes of assessing, documenting and giving recognition to prior learning, irrespective of when, where and how learning has taken place. For example, much as informal learning is given a formal value in terms of grades or qualifications, adult learning and experiential learning can be recognised and valued in other forms, such as upgrading low-skilled workers and thus reducing labour shortages and raising skill levels in the workforce.

Assessment is made through identifying what the candidate knows and can do; matching candidate’s skills, knowledge and experience to specific occupational or qualification standards; assessing these in terms of such standards; crediting the individuals for their skills, knowledge and experience; and recording their achievements as well as further training and development needs. Below model was adapted from SAQA (2002) Policy Guidelines, SAQA (2003), Ralphs *et al.*, (2011),

Bessick (2005) and SABPP ETQA Policy Document. Eskom Academy of Learning (2011).



Model 3: The assessment Process

How these four are implemented during the RPL process differs from institution to institution, but regardless of the actual steps the four aspects are covered and culminating in the RPL processes for different institutions as evident in below table.

Step-by-step procedures of four of the many studies covered in this research are tabulated below as adapted from Kizito (2006), Eskom (2011), Andersson (2008), and Bessick (2005).

PROCESS	UNISA	ESKOM	SABPP ETQA	CHIETA
Step 1	Profiling Selection The candidate:	1.Complete RPL application 2.Approve RPL application 3.Receive approved RPL application	RPL evidence facilitator meets candidate to conduct pre-screening and assistance if application was not viable	Preparing a candidate for RPL assessment
Step 2	Preparation for Assessment	4.Arrange Pre-Assessment 5.Conduct Pre-Assessment	Pre-assessment stage evidence (Preparation of candidate for assessment and development of plan)	Developing individual RPL assessment plans
Step 3	Assessment The lecturers (academic tutors) responsible for	6.Gathering and documenting evidence 7.Conducting assessment 8.Evaluating assessment outcome	Assessment stage evidence (Practical assessment and tests, interviews, etc.)	Completing a portfolio of assessment or undertaking a challenge test
Step 4	Accreditation/Appeal	9.Moderate Assessment Outcome 10.Inform Applicant Employee of the Outcome	Judgement stage evidence	Authenticating the evidence and making the assessment judgement
Step 5	Moderation and verification		Moderation stage evidence	Feedback to the candidate: results to the CHIETA or appeals process
Step 6	Record keeping Records of all the awarded credits are entered on the UNISA student database. Stages Process	11.Submit Info for external endorsement and certification 12.Distribute 13.Submit Certified copy	Feedback stage evidence	Monitoring and Evaluation

Step 7	Post RPL Counselling The review of the RPL experience is recommendable for future RPL implementation	14. Conduct RPL assessment outcome discussion	7. Credits awarded/ not awarded evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review the assessment guides • review the standards and qualifications • ensure that the learning from the RPL initiative is feeding into future RPL initiatives
			8. Post-assessment support evidence	
			9. Appeal process evidence	

Table 2: RPL Process

Candidates who seek RPL are invited to demonstrate their prior learning (usually in relation to the exit outcomes of a course or qualification, set by the receiving institution) by any means (as in Model 4 below). If their performance is satisfactory they are given recognition in the form of access to a course of study, or credit. RPL thus provides individually tailored routes into and through the education and training system for mature adults, based on an assessment of their capacities and learning needs, hence the adult learner must be able to transcribe the personal contextual knowledge gained from experience into the more abstract and generalised forms of knowledge recognised by assessors and disciplinary experts.

Motaung (2009) maintains that the concept of prior learning assessment recognises that learning is a lifelong activity, since it occurs throughout an individual's life. It therefore implies that no individual is too old to stop learning/studying. Because assessment results in a decision, some countries have established an appeals procedure for candidates to challenge it in the event of failure. The SABPP ETQA policy (udated) emphasises that an appeals procedure for learners is a necessary part of any RPL system, and the legitimacy of the process is assured by establishing a mechanism to allow learners to revoke their rights in the event of a dispute.

Deller (2004) maintains that RPL candidates need more support than traditional learners, since they do not have a learning mindset. Coetzee and Stone (2004) emphasise that candidates must be given support before, during and after the assessment process, and must be assisted in identifying future training and development needs. Maboye (2011), in support of this view, recommends that

workers receive support and guidance throughout the RPL process and beyond, and that assessment should be flexible.

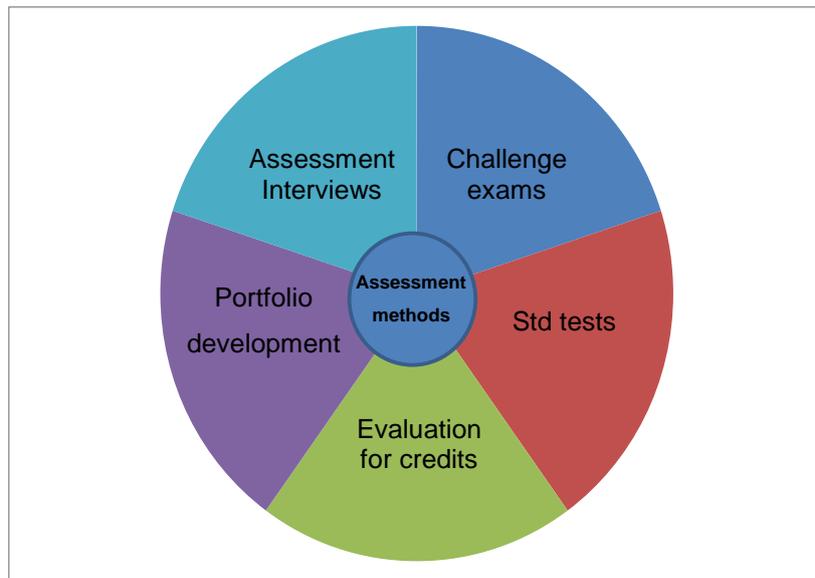
Sound assessments are critical to the development of a credible RPL assessment practice, according to Motaung *et al.*, (2008), who maintain that assessors should adhere to a range of standards, principles, and procedures of good practice in prior learning assessment and validation (2008:1251). Valk (2009) argues that the process of assessment should be impartial and avoid conflict of interest. The professional competence of those who carry it out should be assured.

The COSATU RPL 2000 document as quoted by King (2003), for example, states that “For RPL to effectively lead to opportunities for workers, it is important that at the end of the RPL process the learning gaps are linked to actual courses or learning opportunities”, whilst for King (2003:9), “RPL should be linked to the process of restructuring the workplace, so that workers are able to utilize their skills and be rewarded for this”.

Regardless of what RPL is called and how it is defined, there is no basic difference in the principles each process follows. The basic concept remains the same: that through a systematic and valid assessment process an individual's skills and knowledge can be formally recognised and credited, regardless of how, when or why they were obtained. Moore and van Rooyen, (2002) maintain that unless firm policies are put in place and structures and resources are allocated to the assessment process, RPL provisioning can easily become an area of contest and conflict.

2.9 Methods of assessing candidates for recognition

To establish that a student possesses the necessary higher education level learning, the sources of the prior learning must be identified. The five major sets of assessment practices according to which a learner's prior learning can be recognised and accredited range from highly individualised to highly formalised, as graphically represented in the model below, adapted from van Rooy (2002), Bloom (2007), Keating (2006), Conrad (2010) and Harris (1997).



Model 4: Assessment Methods

A brief overview of the above sets or methods of assessment follows below:

2.9.1 Portfolio development

A portfolio is “a collection of work that can include a diverse record of an individual’s achievements, such as results from authentic tasks, performance assessments, conventional tests and work samples”(Keating, 2006:23). Klenowski cited by Keating (2006) stipulates that the development of a portfolio involves documentation of achievements, self-evaluations, process artefacts and analyses of learning experiences, strategies and dispositions. Conrad (2010) maintains that it is in practicing RPL through the assessment of prior learning using the portfolio-as-learning format that Athabasca University both excels and differentiates itself by Canadian standards.

2.9.2 Assessment interviews

Interactive questioning makes fewer literacy demands on candidates and is potentially less intimidating than other approaches. However, it has similar

disadvantages in terms of emphasis and reliance on assessor skill, time and the high costs involved.

2.9.3 Challenge examinations or tests

Challenge examinations or tests are useful in situations in which individuals have little documentary evidence for experience or learning. However, challenge examinations may relate too closely to course content, whilst their content, format and scoring standards may differ between institutions or even within the same institution.

2.9.4 Standardised testing or examinations

Standardised testing or examinations are particularly useful where there is a nationally uniform curriculum, and are more transferable between institutions than challenge examinations. However, they do not allow for assessment of behavioural and cross-field competencies.

2.9.5 Programme and course evaluation for credit transfer

Programme and course evaluation for credit transfer requires inter-institutional agreements on evaluation standards and also a national system of credit transfer between higher education institutions and other providers. This process may also be extended to provide for non-formal courses, such as on-the-job training, training within NGOs, adult education courses and in-house training, to be credited towards degrees. This generates closer networks between community, industry, labour and educational institutions (Harris & Saddington, 1995).

Even though the process of recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes does not necessarily call for fully formalised arrangements, the nature and method of assessing learning outcomes are central to all discussions in most countries. Most often, several methods are used, in conjunction. The learning portfolio appears to be the most widespread method used by many countries, although the Czech Republic is a notable exception. In most countries, the main assessment techniques that exist

alongside use of the portfolio are interviews, context-based observation, 360 degree assessment, simulation and questionnaires.

In South Africa the assessment resources are the portfolio, publications, references, and varied testimony and evidence, but in an extraordinarily open and dynamic system these methods are examples rather than being prescribed. There is no all-inclusive list of assessment methods, but of more importance is ensuring that assessments are fair, valid, reliable and workable. Gawe (in van Rooy, 2002) maintains that unless academics and employers work together and agree on the assessment criteria to be used to judge competence and the routes by which these competencies have been achieved, RPL may create more frustrations than solutions.

The DoE (1997) acknowledges that many able mature applicants for standard-entry and open learning programmes may not have had the chance to fulfil all the requirements for the FETC for instance, hence, the Ministry strongly supports developmental work and pilot projects which will help institutions to develop criteria to assess applicants' prior learning and experience, so that those with clear potential to succeed in higher education can be admitted.

2.10 Purposes and advantages of recognition of prior learning

Prior learning assessment and recognition can take various forms, and outcomes can be used for a large number of purposes relevant to the goals of individuals, the labour market partners and society at large. Blade Nzimande, the then SA minister of Education, in addressing the COSATU Education and Skills Conference of 2009, maintained that education and training that is provided must meet the demands of the economy, society and the individual. This is critical both to ensure that workers can progress in the economy, and to enable the unemployed and those young people who complete their studies to enter the economy. It is also vital to build the relatively new democracy.

A Danish Government policy paper on RPL (2005) also noted that better interplay between the different learning arenas would provide excellent prospects for the individual, companies and society in general. RPL can therefore be seen as "... an approach that seems to embody a number of key elements relevant to our current

economic, organisational and labour market realities” (Moore & van Rooyen, 2002: 294). For the purpose of this study, the researcher identified the government, labour force and the individual as the three main stakeholders of RPL. A summary of the purposes, advantages and benefits for each stakeholder is outlined below.

2.10.1 The government/nation through the national education system

Baloyi (2004) confirms that the state plays an important role in promoting or inhibiting the culture of learning and teaching in the society. The education system plays an essential role in society as a provider of qualifications and competences that are recognised and accepted within the labour market. A well-functioning education system characterised by high quality and flexibility is an essential precondition for promoting growth, wealth and welfare. The researcher has summed up, inter alia, a few of the objectives that the government and the nation can hope to achieve through RPL:

- Increased recognition of prior learning within the education system will support the government's initiatives to maintain high employment and standard of living
- A more targeted demand for and provision of education
- Realising the objectives of increased mobility and access to lifelong learning
- Promotion of a lifelong learning culture as encouraged by the National Education Policy Act (no. 27 of 1996)
- Social redress
- Greater, active and equal societal participation
- Increase in understanding of production, thus, increase in economy
- Improved participation in the global economy.

2.10.2 Organisational (labour force/workplace) level

RPL is meant to benefit not only the government and the individual participants or candidates, but also the workplace or individual companies that implement it. At the workplace one cannot speak of RPL without touching on the key stakeholder, the employer. Below is a list of objectives that companies and organisations can achieve as employers.

- Organisational need/drive
- Opportunity to accelerate learning and employment equity
- A solid base for long-term HRD and improvements in morale, in quality service and viability
- Identifying and closing employee competency gaps, i.e., theory versus practice and experience versus qualification
- Capacity building and giving everybody the chance to utilise their potential to a much greater extent
- Undertaking a skills audit to determine the company's training priorities and objectives
- Complying with competency requirements or regulatory authorities,
- Re-grading for job advancement i.e. striking balances between staff grading levels and their positions, with experiences included
- Recruitment or promotion of staff and placing them in appropriate positions and skills classifications
- Better utilisation of financial resources, as unnecessary education is avoided and when students move more quickly through the education system
- Mobility within the labour market.
- Employee access to further education and training opportunities
- Identifying career path options for employees
- Transforming the workplace, which can include employment equity and democratisation
- Planning, including skills audit and skills development plans
- Access to a larger pool of qualified people, making equity planning, succession planning and talent management easier
- Real returns on training.

The workplace needs to effect vigorous cultural changes to enhance learning and development.

Deller (2004) citing the then Minister of Labour, Mdladlana, made it clear that if every business can become a learning centre, lowly qualified people who are stuck at entry level positions within organisations can be given recognition for their knowledge and skills, and this can assist them to move up the corporate ladder. Their movement can

free up entry-level positions for the unemployed and the learner on SETA learnerships. By so doing, SAQA's objectives of transforming society through access, redress, training and empowerment opportunities, as well as career paths, will be achieved through RPL. As Moore & van Rooyen (2002:295) sum it up: "... from an organizational perspective, RPL provides a solid base for long-term HRD and improvement in morale, in quality service and viability".

2.10.3 Individual level

The individual, candidate, or employee is the main object of focus in RPL. Adults are capable of taking charge of their own learning, and can draw on the resources of their experience and their social environment, hence they do not necessarily need teachers. According to Cretchley & Castle (2001), they need to know why they are learning something, and they are ready to learn when they perceive it will fill a need in their lives. They are more task- or problem-centred than subject-centred, perceiving themselves as self-directed and resisting being told what to do. They are more likely to be motivated by internal pressures such as self-esteem than by external pressures such as marks.

As the central focus of RPL, the individual can enjoy the following benefits:

- Awareness and understanding of the concept. It is motivating for the individual when the focus is on what he or she is capable of.
- Through RPL personal development is being enhanced:
 - Instilling a positive attitude and eagerness to participate - broadened access and increased participation;
 - Promoting a culture of lifelong learning,
- Participation in lifelong learning. New opportunities for having one's prior learning recognised will make an important contribution to furthering the individual's participation in lifelong learning.
- Employees can use RPL to receive promotion, career-pathing or job change.
- Better opportunities for individual to flexibly improve their qualifications and acquire the competences required in the labour market.
- It is also valuable in enabling each individual to take stock of his/her life and plan the way forward.

- People are encouraged to develop and improve their skills continuously to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.
- Contribute to development of a fuller and richer curriculum; confidence in making own voice heard.
- Validation of prior learning should be shorter and cheaper.
- A practical means to utilise past learning in order to pursue future objectives in a variety of ways.
- RPL will directly address the self-confidence factor that has been undermined by recent economic and employment trends in South Africa.
- Self-image, self-confidence, self-worth, motivation, reaffirmation, work performance can be boosted and aspirations can expand.

2.11 Emerging trends and challenges - South African perspective

Recognition of prior learning is about focusing on individuals' overall skills and competences, not just those for which they may have certificates. This makes new demands on the education system and presupposes that relevant methods are developed to ensure a reliable assessment of an individual's prior learning, including the competences gained at work, through participation in liberal adult education and civil society activities. Another precondition of enhanced recognition of prior learning is that the individual, companies, social partners and stakeholders within liberal adult education and civil society take on co-responsibility for rendering competences visible and documenting them.

2.11.1 Capacity building

The implementation of RPL will require the allocation of specific roles and duties and the development of expertise in this area of provisioning (SAQA, 2004: 44). According to SAQA, planning for staff development is critical for the success of RPL in an institution or workplace. The SAQA RPL policy is explicit on the need for training of evidence facilitators, assessors and moderators. Training for administrative staff who will be dealing with applications for RPL, and with the transcription of credits, is also important. Planning should therefore include the time

and cost requirements for the training of staff (SAQA, 2004). In terms of the SAQA regulations, all practitioners who will be responsible for the assessment of the achievement of learning outcomes leading to qualifications and standards registered on the NQF should be trained to become certificated assessors and registered constituent assessors for specified qualifications and/or standards with the appropriate ETQA. Qualified practitioners will be listed on the National Learner's Records Database (NLRD) as having achieved the minimum standard i.e. the generic assessor standard ASSMT01.

2.11.1. Information, counselling and guidance

As in many areas, the availability of easy-to-access information and guidance services that provide helpful good-quality information are essential. Some countries have set up special bodies, for example, the NUOV in the Czech Republic, which will be responsible for co-ordinating the development of specialist networks active in the country and ensuring overall consistency.

2.11.2 Funding, costs and registration fees

Cretchley & Castle (2001) maintain that RPL will not escape the difficulties which surround any educational innovation, particularly when the money and commitment to support innovations in higher education are not easily mobilised, and even current provision is being cut back. In many countries, a share of the costs is borne by candidates through registration fees, however, not all necessarily require candidates for recognition to pay these fees routinely, and the overall picture is very complex. In South Africa there is no regular funding, but rather institutions bear the costs arising specifically from recognition (RPL) or candidates/employers pay a nominal fee. However, the national principle that a recognition procedure should always be cheaper than the corresponding full-time formal programme is upheld (Werquin, 2010). At the workplace, as in *Eskom*, RPL funding is part of the workplace skills plan (WPSP).

2.11.3 Quality assurance

Quality Assurance involves “the determination of standards, appropriate methods, and quality requirements set by an expert external body, accompanied by a process of evaluation that examines the extent to which a practice meets the required standards” (Motaung *et al.*, 2008, 1251). According to Conrad (2010) establishing quality assurance is closely connected to issues of centralisation, communication, and transparency, the purpose of quality control being to prevent quality problems, not to detect them. Institutions can choose what model to base their quality on, for example, (Total Quality Management) TQM philosophy, the Business Excellence Model, the SA Excellence Model, or the ISO 9000 family of standards. Alternatively, it can be an integrated approach of any.

In South Africa, standards are approved by many bodies for auditing, accrediting and recording standards and forms of certification. Four of them in particular are responsible for quality assurance, namely the CHE, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), the vocational boards, and the agencies in Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA). The guarantors of quality assurance, however, depend on the systems that countries have established to recognise non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Where recognition is geared to employability and the labour market, stakeholders in the market are responsible for quality. Where it focuses on getting people to return to formal learning, the bodies responsible for quality in the formal system of education and initial training tend to be responsible. The one national requirement is that institutions should forward the necessary information to the NLRD of SAQA. The basic requirement is that recognition procedures and criteria be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms.

Eskom might also experience above challenges, however, from their documents review the following Project Risks and Issues were identified:

- Financial constraints and limitations on RPL implementation and affected employees’ unrealistic expectations for promotions and/or salary increases, leading to disgruntlement and possible industrial action
- Lack of line sponsorship and support
- Lack of capability to execute assess RPL candidates (du Plessis, 2009).

2.12 Critics' views

RPL has been challenged on a number of counts, including:

- Assessment procedures (especially portfolios of learning and experience) are unwieldy and time-consuming, for both candidates and assessors.
- Assessment forms such as reflective essays, which rely on high-level language and literacy skills, are inappropriate for a broad range of adults
- Its widespread use may undermine existing academic and professional standards, threatening disciplinary and institutional standing.
- Implementation has proved much more costly and complex than anticipated.
- Its value in validating claims of equivalence across different knowledge domains has come under critical review.
- The use of jargon in RPL is seen as one of the barriers
- Assessment tools and instruments are not user-friendly
- People may be affected by some degree of anxiety during assessment.
- It favours the already privileged.

The critics argue that very little has been done in the development of plans and structures to ensure that RPL benefits those who need it most, however, Ralphs *et al* (2011) maintain that it has value as a specialised set of practices for navigating access to new learning opportunities and for engaging with the complexities of knowledge, curriculum and assessment across different learning pathways and contexts.

Although RPL implementation to a large extent has challenges and a multitude of critics, the researcher is of the view that, in essence, it has greater potential for a powerful lasting legacy.

2.13 Summary

Knowledge is an essential factor in creating a good and competitive society, which puts responsibility for training on enterprises, and a value upon on-the-job workplace learning. A number of employees are still not aware or up to date with RPL or how it

can benefit them, so organisations need not only awareness and promotions on RPL but maximum utilisation, practice and implementation of the process. It can be conducted in a more focused way in a quest for real development pathways and real employment benefits to address the demand for skills development in the workplace. Employers can help themselves, employees and the nation as a whole by making the best use of RPL without waiting for government, education and regulatory bodies to take the lead. The missing link is getting RPL into the workplace and businesses.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN: RESEARCH APPROACHES AND RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, various aspects of RPL were explored according to existing literature on the phenomenon. The chapter presented a background and origins of RPL, legal framework, trends and processes, to aid in exploring its significance. In this chapter, the research design is outlined, together with the methodological processes chosen to generate, collect and analyse data. The techniques or tools of collecting data are explained in detail, with an exploration of both the advantages and disadvantages of using them.

Research design refers to a plan for selecting respondents, research sites, and data collection procedures to answer research question(s), the goal being to provide results that are judged as credible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Creswell (2009b) defines research designs as plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. A research design is thus an overall, detailed plan that shows how the researcher intends to obtain, analyse, and interpret data.

The aim of this study is to explore and describe current practices in the implementation of RPL in *Eskom's* Northern Region Distribution. It explores the extent to which RPL has been effective in the workplace while examining the level of awareness among employees. During this exploratory process, the researcher explored if there were gaps in the RPL process and based on the findings the recommendations made in the last chapter. This chapter provides details of how these aims were achieved.

3.2 Research methodology

Research methodology can be defined as the analysis of methods chosen, of their limitations and resources, of clarifying their presuppositions and consequences (Naidoo, 2006). According to Henning *et al* (2004), these 'chosen' methods should complement one another and have the "goodness of fit" to deliver data and findings

that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose. There are three types of research designs, namely quantitative, qualitative, and the mixed-method. However, It has been observed that both qualitative and quantitative strategies are almost always involved to at least some degree in every research study (Newman & Benz, 1998). In this study the involvement of the two was intentional and hence, the mixed-method research approach was adopted.

3.2.1 Mixed-method research approach

Mixed-method research is the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and analyses in a single study. Creswell in Maree (2007:261) defines it as “a procedure for collecting, analysing and mixing both types of data at some stage of the research process within a single study, to understand a research problem more completely”. When compatible, the researcher can use the strength of one to overcome the weakness of the other (Christensen & Johnson, 2007). Creswell (2003) points out that the mixed-method design suits the researcher who enjoys both the structure of quantitative research and the flexibility of qualitative research. According to Newman and Benz (1998) qualitative and quantitative approaches represent different ends of a continuum and should therefore not be viewed as polar opposites or dichotomies.

It is noted that “The potential to develop the methodological design that is most appropriate to your particular context can expand if you systematically consider all the assumptions represented by the words ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’” (O’Leary, 2004:101). O’Leary (2004) further maintains that if a researcher removes him/herself from the assumptions of the quantitative and qualitative divide, the ability to develop eclectic yet logical methods that value all forms of data increases dramatically. The main objective of this research is to describe the variation while in addition using quantitative research to help quantify that variation. Kumar (1999) points out the increasing recognition by most disciplines in the social sciences that both types of research are important for a good research study and that to indiscriminately apply one approach to all the research problems can be misleading and inappropriate. The research thus does not rely on a positivist approach and any numerical information that will be used will be supplementary to the textual evidence.

Sequential mixed methods have been employed because the researcher elaborated or expanded on the findings of one method with another method (Creswell, 2009a). A quantitative approach was used when administering a questionnaire as a point of departure to determine the extent to which employees were familiar with the RPL phenomenon in their workplace, as well as to pick up trends within the organisation. From this, a qualitative follow up in the form of interviews was used to gather each respondent's understanding of the meaning of RPL (as discussed in the next section).

This study used triangulation, that is the crosschecking of different data sources and collection methods. This has certain advantages and allows the researcher to:

- move from seeking convergence to actually integrating and connecting the quantitative and qualitative data
- better understand a research problem by converging (or triangulating) broad numeric trends from quantitative research and the detail of qualitative research
- neutralise or cancel the biases of certain methods with others
- use the results side by side to reinforce each other
- use results from one method to help identify participation
- use results from one method to help to identify questions to ask for another method (Creswell, 2009a:14).

The research was conducted in a natural setting with the researcher as the key instrument in the process of data collection. Again, as highlighted in Chapter 1, it is evident that the RPL phenomenon is ill-defined and understanding of its nature and implementation limited, especially at the workplace. This study therefore sought to explore this phenomenon within the labour force, not to confirm the hypothesis, as would be the case with quantitative research. As a qualitative researcher, the researcher was interested in respondents' understandings of the of RPL, as a phenomenon deeply rooted within their personal knowledge and experience.

The researcher worked with stakeholders to generate knowledge because in qualitative research respondents are seen as experts from whom information is being collected. In this case, the input of employers (management) and employees

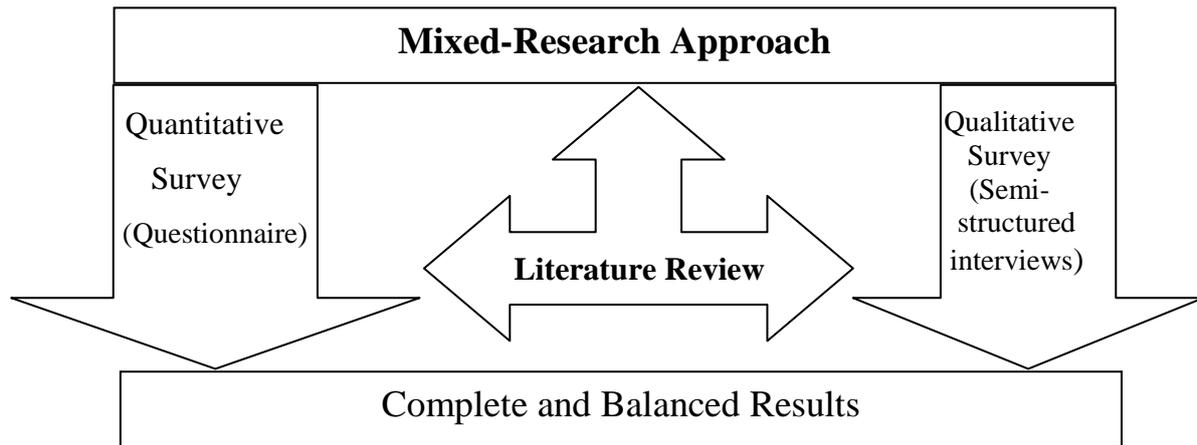
was thus vital. Most of the data collection methods in qualitative research involve a interacting and having conversation(s) with the respondents in order to explore their views, ideas, attitudes and experiences about the phenomenon. In this study, not only the data collecting tools/techniques were triangulated but also the data that was collected from the questionnaire and interviews was weaved into the discussions (themes) in the form of words, including quotes or descriptions of particular events as O'Leary (2004) suggests.

3.2.2 Quantitative and Qualitative research approaches

“Qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009b:4). Creswell (2009b) further argues that the process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants' settings. Data analysis inductively builds from particular to general themes, and the researcher makes interpretations of its meaning. According to Neuman, quantitative researchers are more concerned about issues of design, measurement, and sampling, whereas qualitative researchers are more concerned about issues of the richness, texture, and feeling of raw data, because “their inductive approach emphasises developing insights and generalisations from it” (Neuman, 2006:149).

Quantitative research, on the other hand, is “a means of testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables” (Creswell, 2009b:4). Burns and Grove (2005) define it as a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data is used to obtain information about the world. This research method is used to describe variables, examine relationships among variables and determine cause-and-effect interactions between variables.

Creswell and Clark maintain that in mixed methods research, the data needs to proceed along the two strands: qualitative and quantitative, and that each strand needs to be fully executed with “persuasive and rigorous approaches” (Creswell & Clarke, 2011:171). The researcher adapted below model to demonstrate how the two approaches fitted into each in this study.



Model 4: Mixed Research Approach Rationale

From the literature review, the researcher felt decided to use the questionnaire to collect initial data. The researcher then identified participants for the interviews from the questionnaire respondents. This was done so that both numerical and text data can be collected and analysed to address different aspects of RPL and provide a fuller understanding of the same general research problem. After the data was collected, analysis proceeded among the two strands to determine describe variables and determine cause-effect in quantitative research while building themes from the qualitative so that the two could complement each other in interpreting the results. This enabled the researcher to arrive to complete and balanced results. The research problem in this study could more easily be addressed using both, and neither methods on its own could answer the research questions.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The purpose of data collection, according to Teddlie & Yu (in Creswell & Clarke, 2011), is to develop answers to the research questions. Kumar (1999) describes a research tool or research instrument as anything that becomes a means of collecting information for your study. The techniques and tools in this research involved many interactions with people at different levels, constituting the study population. The tools used in this study were a questionnaire, which was followed by semi-structured interviews with only those managerial and employee respondents who proved to be

information-rich with regards to RPL. The aim for using both tools was to gather reliable and valid data and to draw a clear picture.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire is the most widely used technique for obtaining information from respondents. It is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Due to the geographical distribution of the study population the study needed to cover employees throughout the Northern Region. Because the researcher was not there to read and explain questionnaires the questions were made easy to read and developed in an interactive style. The most effective way of running the pilot was through collective administration since this was done with a selected group of the researcher's colleagues within the training section (HRD) in Dx Northern Region. However, for the rest of the survey respondents the questionnaire was sent to their email addresses across the region, together with a covering letter requesting their participation.

3.3.1.1 Construction of the questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 35 questions that each respondent had to answer in a set format. It was designed to determine the level of awareness among employees about RPL process in their workplace. In order to obtain information needed for the purpose of this study, the questionnaire was divided into three sections, A, B and C.

Section A consisted of 10 items on valuable demographic data or background information of the respondents, including race, age group, work experience, qualifications, task grading, work history and experience. These were used to correlate response sets between different groups, and to determine whether responses were consistent across groups (http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751_97_winter/Topics/quest-design). This section also consisted of a training and development statement scale to check how informed and active respondents were in the training programme. **Section B** consisted of 18 questions on respondents' experience of training, focusing on how

they generally viewed the implementation of RPL at their workplace and reflecting on their personal experiences. The section gauged the employees' understanding of RPL, its purpose and its impact on their personal lives. **Section C** consisted of two open-ended questions that afforded the respondents an opportunity to make inputs by sharing their opinions and recommendations. All sections of the questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions in which the respondent picked an answer from the provided options, except for questions 19 and 20.

3.3.1.2 Ratings scale of the questionnaire

A scale is a series of gradations, levels or values that describe various degrees of something, and they allow for fairly accurate assessments of beliefs or opinions. Scaled items consist of a question or statement followed by a scale of possible responses. Respondents check the place on the scale that best reflects their beliefs or opinions about the statement.

A five point Likert scale was used on the questionnaire to determine the extent to which employees were familiar with the RPL phenomenon in their workplace. (1 = strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= disagree and 4 = strongly disagree). A background section in the questionnaire covered the respondent's work history and experience. This is used to correlate response sets between different groups of people. I intentionally opted to use a scale with an even number of points in order to avoid creating a loophole for the tendency to keep a no-thought neutral answer or the 'on the fence' option. This is what Neuman (2006) refers to as the neutral position or 'no opinion' choice. It was expected that my respondents would have an opinion since RPL affects them all, whether they take part in it or not. Below is an example of how the Likert scale was used:

Indicate your opinion by selecting the most appropriate radio button (number) using below rating scales:-

1	=	Strongly Agree (SA)	2	=	Agree (A)
3	=	Strongly Disagree (SD)	4	=	Disagree (D)

1)	I know what RPL is all about.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
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3.3.1.3 Advantages of a questionnaire

Questionnaires are an inexpensive way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents, from whom large amounts of information can be collected in a short time and relatively cost-effective way. Often they are the only feasible way to reach a number of reviewers large enough to allow statistical analysis of the results. Affordability is the primary advantage of a written questionnaire because it is the least expensive means of data gathering, especially because with email there is practically no cost involved.

(http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751_97_winter/Topics/quest-design). Time is also an important resource that questionnaires can maximise. If a questionnaire is self-administered, such as an e-mail questionnaire, potentially several thousand people could respond in a few days. It would not be possible to get a similar number of usability tests completed in the same short time, hence the researcher's decision to use email in this survey. Other advantages of using questionnaires include the following:

- They do not require as much effort from the questioner as verbal or telephonic ones;
- They have the same questions for all respondents, and can ensure anonymity;
- They are versatile, allowing the collection of both subjective and objective data through the use of open or closed format questions;
- Written questionnaires minimise possible interview bias.
- They permit a respondent sufficient time to consider answers before responding, while questions requiring considered answers rather than immediate answers could enable respondents to consult documents.
- They allow clarification of ambiguity, targeting individuals who provide specific information required for your study and greater guarantee of a response. (Stewart, 2009).

- Respondents can complete questionnaires in their own time and in a more relaxed atmosphere.
- The responses are gathered in a standardised way and provide greater uniformity across the measurements because each person responds to the same questions. Questionnaires are therefore more objective than interviews.
- A respondent may answer questions of a personal or embarrassing nature more willingly and frankly on a questionnaire than in a face-to-face meeting with an interviewer who may be a complete stranger. In some cases it may happen that the respondents report less than expected and make more critical comments in a mail questionnaire.
- They can be carried out by the researcher or by any number of people with limited effect on validity and reliability
- The results of the questionnaires can usually be quickly and easily quantified by either a researcher or through the use of a software package. (http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/ltidi/cookbook/info_questionnaires/index.htm).

In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the quantitative survey was calculated for 18 items from the questionnaire. This measure must be over .7 when calculated before it can be stated that the items are internally consistent. In this instance the average coefficient was found to be .813, therefore beyond a measure of certainty that the items can be regarded as internally consistent.

3.3.1.4 Disadvantages of a questionnaire

A Questionnaire can be quite inexpensive to administer though not to design and interpret. Questionnaire design is a process that demands time and careful attention (http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751_97_winter/Topics/quest-design). Other disadvantages of using questionnaires include the following:

- With both emailed and distributed surveys, some people will respond several times or pass questionnaires along to friends to answer, or may not respond.

- Many people dislike unsolicited email. One may want to send email questionnaires only to people who expect to receive it.
- Questionnaires do not provide the flexibility of interviews, in which an idea or comment can be explored. This makes it possible to gauge how people are interpreting the question. If questions asked are interpreted differently by respondents the validity of the information obtained is jeopardised.
- People are generally better able to express their views verbally than in writing.
- Standardised answers may frustrate users.
- Questionnaires are also sharply limited by respondents ability to read the questions and respond to them.
- Written questionnaires do not allow the researcher to correct misunderstanding or answer questions that the respondents may have. Respondents might answer incorrectly or not at all due to confusion or misinterpretation.

Questionnaires are standardised so it is not possible to explain any points in the questions that participants might misinterpret. Again, people may read differently into each question and therefore reply based on their own interpretation of the question, that is, what is 'good' to someone may be 'poor' to someone else, therefore there is a level of subjectivity that is not acknowledged. In some instances questionnaires can be answered only when they are sufficiently easy and straightforward to be understood with the given instructions and definitions.

http://libweb.surrey.ac.uk/library/skills/Introduction%20to%20Research%20and%20Managing%20Information%20Leicester/page_51.htm

- Although it is relatively quick to collect information using a questionnaire, they can take a long time not only to design but also to apply and analyse. Furthermore, open-ended questions can generate large amounts of data that can take a long time to process and analyse.
- Respondents may answer superficially, especially if the questionnaire takes a long time to complete.

http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/lti/cookbook/info_questionnaires/index.html

3.3.2 Interviews

Interviews in this study were used as a follow-up to the questionnaire, as well as to provide more details about the quantitative results. An interview is a two-way conversation in which an interviewer asks the respondent questions to collect data and to learn about ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviour of the respondents. The aim of qualitative interviews is “to obtain rich descriptive data that will help in understanding the participant’s construction of knowledge and social reality” (Maree, 2007:87). According to Kvale (1996), qualitative research interviews help in understanding something from the subjects’ point of view and uncovering the meaning of their experiences. Hannan (2007) maintains that interviews are widely used because they are a powerful means of both obtaining information and gaining insights.

The qualitative research interview seeks to describe and find the meanings of central themes in the life world of the respondents. The main task is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale, 1996). Valenzuela and Shrivastava (2008) assert that interviews are one of the most commonly known forms of qualitative research and that if those interviewed value the topic and trust the interviewer they will supply information that will not be obtained in any other way. In this study, interviews were used to supplement the questionnaire, especially in areas where it could not be applicable. The Interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions which required the respondents to formulate their own answers.

Kumar (1999) maintains that in many walks of life people collect information through different forms of interaction with others. As a qualitative researcher, the researcher could not rely on a single data source but gathered it from multiple sources, namely employers and those in charge of the RPL project in the organisation. The interviews were semi-structured and they elicited rich information from respondents involved in RPL at different levels within Dx. Interviews were held with 3 employees who had participated in RPL assessments before in order to be informed by and learn from them.

“Recording an interview must be carried out in a meticulous manner” (Maree, 2007: 89). In this study, in order to record and capture the interview data, all interviews were tape-recorded with each interviewee’s permission. Notes were taken whilst the

interviews were taking place so the researcher would still have a record should the machine fail. This would also save the researcher time when transcribing by identifying the sections already known to be important. Hannan (2007) maintains that the more one succeeds in recording every possible detail of what took place, the more data one will have to analyse. Hannan (2007), on the other hand, observed that interviewees frequently say much more once the tape recorder has been switched off, or give an entirely different view when having a chat over a cup of tea in the staffroom.

3.3.2.1 Interview structure schedule

In this study, one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted. Hannan (2007) defines semi-structured interviews as

... “a half-way house, where the researcher designs a set of key questions to be raised before the interview takes place, but builds in considerable flexibility about how and when these issues are raised and allows for a considerable amount of additional topics to be built in response to the dynamics of conversational exchange”. (Hannan, 2007:).

Interviews are the form most often used in education research.

According to Maree (2007), in the structured interview, questions are detailed and developed in advance. Kvale (1996) however, argues that in qualitative research interviews, the interviewer does not use ready-made categories but is open to new and unexpected phenomena. He does however acknowledge that the input from a more structured interview will be easier to process. Therefore, for the purpose of standardisation, direction and order, in this study all questions were pre-set according to categories of interviewees to keep interviews focused. The interview schedule consisted of about 15 pre-set questions, but allowed more scope for open-ended answers. Similar open-ended questions were asked to all interviewees, though in each case they were phrased differently according to the context of the interviewee. This approach facilitated faster interviews that could be more easily analysed and compared.

Interview schedule		
Interviewee category	Purpose/Role	Interview schedule
Management or RPL specialist	Participates and has key responsibility in the development and implementation of RPL system in the institution	± 15 predetermined questions
RPL'ed employee	Participated in the process and have first-hand experience of RPL and its impact on the professional life of an individual	± 15 predetermined questions

Table 3: Interview Schedule

The interviews involved the identified 'information rich' employees, namely one member of senior management or one member of the RPL committee, to establish their perceptions on the developments of RPL and its implementation in the region/business. One employee who had once participated in the RPL process was also interviewed to elicit views from or on personal experience. One union representative was also interviewed to elicit personal views on RPL and its implementation in the workplace. The plan was to pick out those who could provide the best insights, and who represented the full range of experience and opinion (Hannan, 2007).

3.3.2.2 Advantages of using interviews

Face-to-face interviews have the highest response rate. Longer interviews are sometimes tolerated, particularly if arranged in advance. People may be willing to talk longer face-to-face than to someone on the phone.

(<http://www.surveysystem.com/sdesign.htm>).

Other advantages of using interviews include the following:
(<http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/interviews/inthome.htm>).

- They allow people to convey to others a situation from their own perspective and in their own words.
- People are generally better able to express their views verbally than in writing.

- The interviewer gets good understanding of respondent's views since they can also observe the surroundings and use non-verbal communication.
- Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic and probe the meanings interviewees give to their behaviour, ascertaining their motives and intentions. Interviews may be useful as a follow up to certain respondents e.g., to further investigate their responses.
- Interviews are completed by the interviewer based on what the respondent says.
- Interviews are a far more personal form of research than questionnaires and are able to establish rapport with respondents because the interviewer works directly with the respondent.
- Unlike mail surveys, they allow the interviewer to probe or ask follow up questions seeking clarification or further explanation;
- Interviews are generally easier for respondent, especially if what is sought are opinions or impressions.
- They give informants the chance to challenge the agenda set by the researcher, raising new issues, asking questions back as well as the opportunity to check what is meant by a question;
- They are flexible, making possible changes in the order of questioning, the questions asked and the topics discussed; (<http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/interviews/goodat.htm>).

3.3.2.3 Disadvantages of using interviews

Interviews are time-consuming, resource-intensive and expensive. Personal interviews usually cost more per interview than other methods, particularly when travel time and costs are a major factor (<http://www.surveysystem.com/sdesign.htm#methods>). Other disadvantages of using interviews include the following:

- They reveal identities and the lack of anonymity limits openness;

- They are hard to quantify;
- Given the time they take it is difficult to survey large numbers of respondents;
- Interviewer bias is reported to be greatest in face-to-face interviews. The appearance, tone of voice, question wording and facial expression of the interviewer may affect the respondent;
- Standardising procedures - it is easy to change the way a question is put from one interview to the next, or for one interviewer to differ from another in the way the same topic is raised, thus making it difficult to know that all the responses have the same stimulus;
- Comparability - flexibility brings dangers in that the same topics may not be addressed or may be addressed in a different order, thus making comparisons difficult;
- Objectivity - the interviewer may lead the respondent, shaping responses through the tone in which questions are asked, non-verbal clues (e.g., nodding the head) and sighs of affirmation or gasps of doubt;
- Simplicity - the responses may become so complex as to make analysis very difficult if not impossible;
- Time-consuming - preparation for the interview, conducting it and interpretation of the responses require much time. Transcription can also be very time-consuming, perhaps taking as much as four times as long as the interview itself.
- Costly - generally the interview method is expensive.
(<http://ornovdm99.hubpages.com/hub/Advantages-and-disadvantages-of-interviews>).

3.4 Pilot study

Pilot study can be defined as an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practices or test the procedures to be used in the subsequent full-scale project (Dane, 1990:42). It is a preliminary or "trial run" investigation using similar questions and similar respondents as in the final survey. According to

McMillan and Schumacher (2006), it is highly recommended that researchers conduct a pilot test on their questionnaires before using them in studies. Neuman (2006) also asserts that it is best to pilot-test survey interviews and questionnaires prior to implementation. The purpose for the pilot study is to identify flaws in the measuring instrument and determine how the design of the subsequent study can be improved. "Given the complexity of designing a questionnaire, it is impossible even for the experts to get it right the first time around" (Stewart, 2009:31). Stewart further maintains that questionnaires should be piloted on a small sample of people characteristic of those in the survey population after which it must be improved by polishing the question order, wording and layout.

Neuman further maintains that after the pilot tests, the researcher should interview the pilot respondents to "cover aspects of the experiment that need refinement" (2006: 267). In this study, pilot tests were run in order for the researcher to get an idea of what the method will actually look like in operation and what effects it is likely to have. Interviews and follow ups to get feedback on the instruments were done in order to determine how the design of the subsequent study can be improved as well as to identify flaws in the measuring instrument if any. This feedback led to important improvements in the main study and on both the survey questionnaire and the interview questions.

3.4.1 Quantitative pilot study

The researcher located a sample of respondents or respondents with characteristics similar to those that would be used in the study and administer the questionnaire to them. A sample size of 20 Human Resource Development (HRD) staff in Northern Region Distribution was requested to participate in the pilot. This sample would not form part of the actual study. All 20 of the researchers' colleagues are within the training section and based in Menlyn Dx offices. All participants completed the questionnaire and follow-up was made with each participant for feedback on how the questionnaire was. Several inputs and suggestions were made which contributed to refining of the final questionnaire that was sent to the rest of the employees. The pre-testing was done in order to find out whether the questionnaire would take too long

to complete, and whether the instructions and items were clear. Alterations were made where necessary and questions and/or instructions that were misinterpreted were reformulated because “Mindful review and testing is necessary to weed out minor mistakes that can cause great changes in meaning and interpretation”. (http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751_97_winter/Topics/quest-design/). After running the pilot study through a pre-test and making necessary changes, the researcher was satisfied that the questions complied adequately with the requirements of the study.

3.4.2 Qualitative pilot study

Hannan (2007) strongly recommends that a researcher pilots his schedule and test his methods of recording before undertake the project itself. He further maintains that it is a good idea to undertake some preliminary analysis of the data collected in a pilot so that the researcher can know whether he is getting the sort of information he needs.

Pilot study for interviews could not work as desired or planned and major changes had to be made. The qualitative pilot study in the form of pre-interviews was conducted with three of the employees who had indicated in the survey that they had been RPL'ed in the past. However, the pre-interviews revealed that none of them could give the organisational experience since they were all RPL'ed by independent institutions. Follow-up calls revealed that there were as yet no relevant candidates in the region. As a result, the researcher opted to using 1 employee who was an RPL candidate at that time and also identified two potential candidates who were directly involved with RPL practices and implementation in Eskom Dx. Running another pilot test with them was not feasible or practical as they were the only sources the researcher could use in the study. However, the pre-interviews assisted in identifying areas where alterations and changes needed to be made on the interview questions for the participants and only briefing sessions were held with each participant prior to the interview.

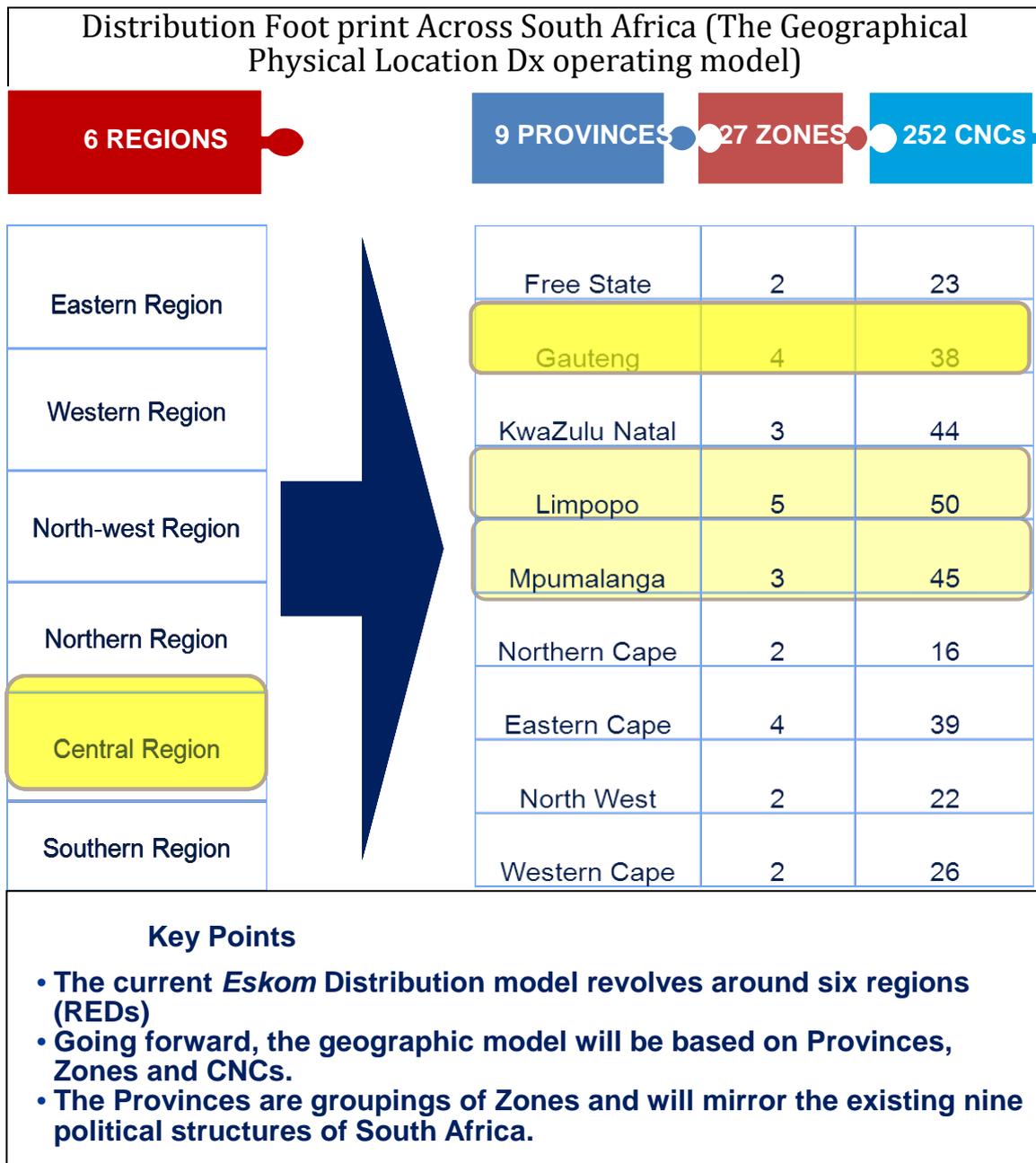
3.5 Ethical issues

Neuman (2006) alerts that people can conduct surveys in ethical or unethical ways. Kvale (1996) maintains that ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and consequences for the interviewee should be taken into account with any qualitative interview. Furthermore, he also maintains that research subjects should be informed about the purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design. In this study, ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and consequences for the interviewee were taken into account. The researcher firstly requested permission from the organisation to conduct the survey (refer to Appendices 1 and 2), after which a covering letter was sent together with the questionnaire (Appendices 2 and 3) requesting respondents to participate in the research/survey. Research respondents were informed about the purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design. There was no consent form to be signed by the respondents, however, the issue of voluntary participation was emphasised to all those who made follow-up calls or emailed back wishing to know why they had been selected.

For the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality, no names were requested on the questionnaire, and interview candidates were not addressed by their names. Debriefing sessions were held with each interview candidate to give full information before the initial interview so that their understanding of the research encounter would be as complete as possible.

3.6 Population and samples

Neuman (2003) points out that the researcher's target population is a particular pool of individuals or cases that he or she wants to study, that is, "a group of interest to the researcher and one to which the results of the study will be generalised" (Gay & Airasian, 2003:102). According to Stewart (2009), in sampling, we gather data on an entire "population" by measuring only a subset of that population, known as the sample. Eskom comprises four major divisions, namely: Generation (Gx), Transmission (Tx), Distribution (Dx) and Cooperate. Dx was singled out as the focus case for this study. Below is a structure that shows the DX make-up at the time of the study, when it was going through a change process.



Model 5: Distribution Foot print Across South Africa (Adopted from: Transformation Journey: Gauteng Operating Unit Presentation of 19/10/2011)

The respondents in the survey were mainly employees in the Distribution (DX) Northern Region, which now comprises Limpopo, Mpumalanga and one of Gauteng’s four Zones, Pretoria. The Distribution Division is currently undergoing (implementing) a transformation from the present six regions to nine provincially aligned operating Units (OUs), as outlined in Model 6 (above).

The respondents who completed the questionnaire were selected from all the various departments and sections, including the 38 Customer Network Centres (CNCs). The current Distribution employee report or record, known as Dx download, had a total of 5140 employees, ranging from ages 19 to 65, from Task grade T04 to M18. The target population was 4120 employees on the emailing list of *Eskom* Northern Region and the total number of responses in the study was 242. Out of 4120 emails sent to the target population, 31 were undelivered, 110 out-of-office responses were received, and 3979 seemed to have been delivered. The questionnaire was administered to all 4120 employees on the email list, to determine who knew about RPL at their workplace and who did not.

The researcher avoided limiting and constraining the survey by sending to all employees because it was run during November and December, when most employees are on study or exam leave, and others are on annual leave (holidays). The number of out-of-office replies was very high. While the researcher also wanted to give all employees a fair chance to participate it was noted also that most of the addresses from the list were no longer in use. Two of those who were on holidays only responded in January, when they returned to work. It must also be noted that, in surveys, researchers depend on respondents' voluntary cooperation, therefore there was no need to restrict the researcher to a specific number. Only those who were willing to participate would respond. The survey was followed up by semi-structured interviews with three information-rich respondents who were selected according to their roles and involvement in RPL in DX.

A sample is "a small collection of units from a much larger collection or population, such that the researcher can study the smaller group and produce accurate generalizations about the larger group" (Neuman, 2006: 218). McMillan and Schumacher (2006) regard a sample as a group of respondents or individuals from whom the data is collected. Sampling is therefore "the process of selecting a few (a sample) from a larger group (sampling population), to form the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of knowledge, situation or outcome regarding the larger" (Kumar, 1999: 192). It is important for the researcher to carefully and completely define both the target population and the sampling frame, which in this case was *Eskom* Dx employees in the Northern Region.

In the case of the questionnaire, random sampling was utilised so that each individual in the population would have an equal probability of being selected (Creswell, 2009). The researcher's main goal was to get all possible cases that fitted particular criteria (Neuman, 2006). Creswell and Clarke (2011) maintain that the sample size needed for a rigorous quantitative study is typically quite large. The questionnaire in this survey was thus, administered to all 4120 email addresses on the Northern Dx list, because all the employees fitted one way or the other. Again, each individual's experience is valuable in getting a clearer picture of both the RPL awareness among employees and its effectiveness on their professional development, if any.

The researcher was actually unable to specify or determine the sample size because in qualitative research this is not determined at the outset. Moreover, the qualitative study was a follow up on the quantitative results. Creswell and Clarke (2011) maintain that a more systematic approach is to use the quantitative statistical results to direct the follow-up sampling procedures to select the respondents best able to help explain the phenomenon of interest. This was an idea implemented by the researcher to triangulate tools and methods. These authors further maintain that the qualitative idea is not to generalise from the sample but to develop an in-depth understanding of a few people. "... the qualitative researcher identifies and recruits a small number that will provide in-depth information about the central phenomenon or concept being explored in the study" (Creswell & Clarke, 2011:174).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), in purposive sampling the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest. They add that, on the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the population, a judgment is made about which respondents should be selected to provide the best information to address the purpose of the study. There is no fixed figure and according to Creswell and Clarke (2011) this number may range from one or two people or to 20 or 30, depending on the type of study. Based on above, purposive sampling was employed for the qualitative interviews where only specific information-rich respondents were identified for this study. The researcher had to intentionally select or recruit those who had "experienced the central phenomenon or key concept being explored"

(Creswell, 2009:217). The three individuals in this study were selected because they were involved in RPL in their different roles in Dx.

The initial 'tentative' plan was to have three sets of 2 participants for interviews (also on purposeful sampling), however, after the questionnaire responses were checked it became evident that the other two sets could not materialise. Follow-up interviews with three respondents who indicated having been RPL'ed before, revealed that the respondents were not RPL'ed by the organisation and could not therefore respond on the organisational experience. The interviews were finally conducted with one set of interviewees, viz, an RPL specialist at the Dx management level; RPL coordinator at the Northern Regional level; and one RPL candidate in Dx Northern Region who was busy with RPL at the time of data collection.

According to Neuman (2006) the primary purpose of sampling is to collect specific cases, event, or actions that can clarify and deepen understanding. The researcher's main concern as a qualitative researcher was to find relevant cases that would enhance understanding in this specific context. Again, the important consideration in qualitative data collection, according to Creswell and Clark (2011:186), lies in collecting enough qualitative information that meaningful themes can be developed.

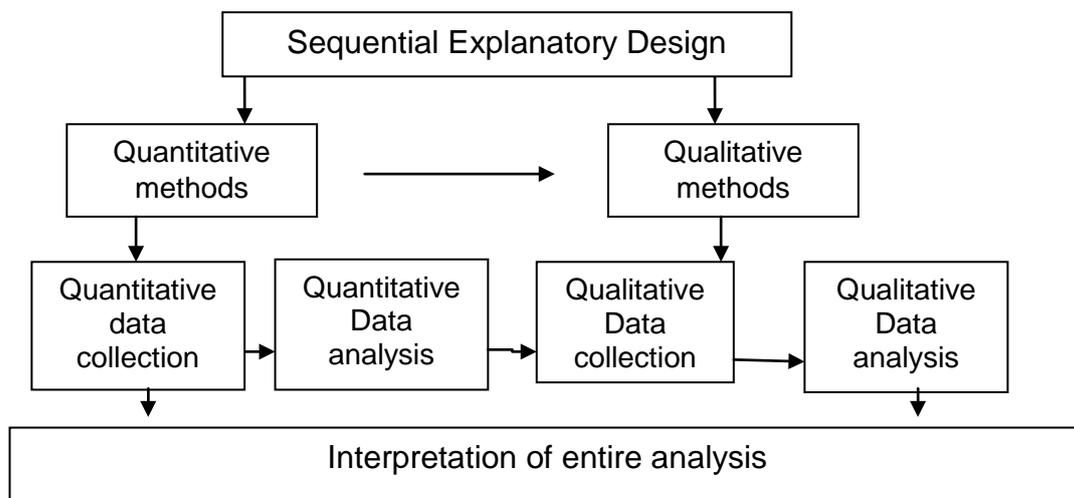
Sample size is referred to as "the number of respondents in a study" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 127). They further argue that the general rule in determining it is to obtain a sufficient number to provide a credible result. The population that was studied was homogeneous since it only consisted of similar respondents i.e., *Eskom's* Northern Region Distribution employees. According to Maree (2007), generally, in homogeneous populations, where the members are similar with respect to variables important to the study, smaller samples may adequately represent the population. Hence the researcher utilised the three sources in this study. Again, the sample size could not be predetermined for both interviews and questionnaire, but rather it was the responses from the initial stages that finally determined progress.

3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis in mixed methods research consists of analysing separately the quantitative data using quantitative methods and the qualitative data using qualitative methods. It also involves analysing both sets of information using techniques that

mix the quantitative and qualitative data and results, namely the mixed method analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In this study, both data analysis procedures were used to make sense of the collected data. The 'interactive continuum' strategy (Newman & Benz, 1998) was applied and data analysis occurred both within and between the quantitative (descriptive analysis) and the qualitative (description and thematic text).

Since the study adopted a mixed method research approach, Furthermore, mean scores and ANOVA were computed to determine the statistical significance of differences between them. Themes were generated from the sections of the questionnaire, and compared with the results obtained from the interviews with different respondents. Cross-tabulation was also used to investigate patterns or possible relationships in the data. Below model was adopted from Creswell (2009a) and Creswell and Clarke (2011) to give a clear picture of the design used by the researcher in this study.



Model 6: Sequential Explanatory Design

According to Creswell and Clark (2011), when analysing data, researchers go through a similar set of steps for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, namely, preparation, exploration, analysis, representation, interpretation, and validation, as outlined in the table below.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN: RESEARCH APPROACHES AND RESEARCH METHODS

Step	Quantitative	Qualitative
1. Preparing the data for analysis:-	Capturing raw data on a computer as numbers. Data was cleaned and arranged into machine readable form for statistical analysis. Data was coded by assigning numeric values.	Data was first prepared by transcribing each interview from the audio tape. Hard copies of transcripts were given back to interviewees for editing and corrections.
2. Exploring the data	Examined the responses given to all the questions by all respondents and used a computer programme to explore data. Data was visually inspected, and descriptive analysis was done as well as checking for trends and distributions. Themes for open-ended questions were developed	The responses given to all the questions by one respondent at a time, were examined in order to provide a total picture of the responses. This was followed by reading through the data to obtain a general sense of the information, reflect on their overall meaning, write memos and to develop qualitative codebook.
3. Analysing the data	Appropriate statistical tests were chosen and conducted, namely reliability test, descriptive stats and inferential stats (ANOVA tests). Quantitative statistical software programme namely IBM SPSS ver 19 was used. Data was analysed per each research question or statement in the questionnaire.	Every statement was analysed for content and placed under an appropriate heading or theme i.e. coding the data and dividing them into meaningful analytical units, assigning labels to codes, grouping codes into themes and interrelating categories into smaller sets of themes.
4. Representing the analysis	Data was presented in the form of charts and graphs, with a brief reading for each question or statement. Themes from the two open-ended questions from the survey were identified and in culminated into interview themes.	Responses from the three transcripts were presented under the various themes/categories developed during the analysis of data.
5. Interpreting the analysis	Highlights of the most important findings and interpretation of findings was done (as detailed in chapter 5). Findings were aligned to the research questions.	A discussion and interpretation of the evidence for the themes and categories that emerged from the analysis was done. Themes were explored by examining perspectives from the research data and the literature to describe respondents' views.
6. Validating the data and interpretation.	The data and the interpretation thereof were shared with some of the respondents.	The data and the interpretation thereof were shared with the three interviewees.

Table 4: Quantitative and Qualitative data analysis

After data was collected by means of quantitative and qualitative approaches, the researcher started the analysis process by capturing raw data on a computer as

numbers for the questionnaire and doing transcriptions for interviews. For both the questionnaire and the interviews the researcher examined the responses given to all the questions by one respondent at a time in order to provide a total picture of the responses. Responses were sorted into analytical categories in order to undertake content analysis of the different points made. In practice, this meant that every statement had to be analysed for content and placed under an appropriate heading, along with any others that are sufficiently similar. These were then grouped under more general umbrella headings to produce the description of points made with reference to their nature, range and frequency. Umbrella headings were then grouped into themes and sub-themes as emerged from analysis.

3.7.1 Quantitative data analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) indicate that quantitative research relies heavily on numbers in reporting results, sampling, and providing estimates of instrument reliability and validity. They add that the numbers are usually accompanied by unrecognised words or even stranger symbols and manipulated by statistics, which are methods of organising and analysing quantitative data. In this study, for quantitative data analysis, the data is presented in the form of frequency tables, histograms and pie charts in accordance with the sections of the questionnaire, as well as according to the respondents' captured responses on the spreadsheet that was handed in for statistical analysis. (Appendix A). Furthermore, mean scores and ANOVA were computed to determine the statistical significance of RPL practices and awareness amongst employees in Dx Northern Region.

These statistical results were used to direct the qualitative follow-up phase with regards to: a) sampling procedures to select the respondents best able to help explain the RPL phenomenon and practices in Eskom; and b) instrument design in deciding what quantitative results needed to be further explored.

3.7.2 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and it is an ongoing process involving continuing

reflection about the data, asking analytical questions, and writing memos throughout the study. Neuman maintains that:

... “a qualitative researcher gives data meaning, translates them, or makes them understandable. He or she begins with the point of view of the people being studied, and then finds out how the people being studied see the world, how they define the situation, or what it means for them” (2006:160).

Unlike quantitative research, in which measures of variables are arranged into machine-readable format for statistical analysis, in qualitative data analysis the researcher went through the transcripts and coded all main ideas that emerged. This involved organising the raw data into conceptual categories and creating themes or concepts. All the responses were then grouped together according to the themes they fitted into. This enabled the researcher to move towards theory and generalisations by matching the themes to the research questions (section 4.3). Coding and grouping responses into themes also helped in reducing large mountains of raw data into small, manageable piles, as Neuman (2006) maintains, thus allowing the researcher quickly to retrieve relevant parts of the data.

3.8 Reliability and validity

Kumar defines ‘reliability’ as the degree of accuracy or precision in the measurements made by a research instrument. He maintains that the lower the degree of ‘error’ in an instrument the higher the reliability (Kumar,1999). In this study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the quantitative survey was calculated for 18 items from the questionnaire. This measure must be over .7 when calculated before it can be stated that the items are internally consistent. In this instance the average coefficient was found to be .813, therefore beyond a measure of certainty that the items can be regarded as internally consistent.

Although most qualitative researchers accept the basic principles of reliability and validity, they rarely use the terms because of their association with quantitative measurement and they also apply the principles differently. According to Neuman (2006) reliability means dependability or consistency. As a qualitative researcher, the researcher wished to be consistent in making observations, however, it must be taken into account that the study process is not stable over time and is not supposed

to be because RPL on its own is a dynamic and evolving process. Qualitative researchers believe that the subject matter and a researcher's relationship to it should be an evolving process (Neuman, 2006). As a result, should another piece of research be conducted again in the region, it should not be expected to yield the same results.

In this study, the transcriber's reliability was considered and no detailed typing instructions were needed since the researcher transcribed and wrote everything down. The reliability procedures included checking and editing transcripts to make sure that they did not contain obvious mistakes. The researcher also gave all the respondents copies of the audio-recording and interview transcripts for them to edit and confirm correctness. According to Neuman (2006), reliability can also be improved by using a pre-test or pilot version of a measure first as covered in 3.7.

Closely connected to reliability, 'validity' can be defined as the degree to which an instrument actually measures what it purports to do. In mixed methods, validity can be defined as

... "employing strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis and the interpretations that might compromise the merging or connecting of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn from the combination" (Creswell and Clark, 2011: 239).

It refers to the truthfulness of the research findings. Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures (Creswell, 2009a). He (Creswell) further maintains that validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research, and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account. Kumar (2011) however asserts that it is difficult to establish the validity and reliability on qualitative research due to flexibility, freedom and spontaneity in the methods and procedures of data collection. Neuman (2006) maintains that qualitative researchers are more interested in authenticity than in the idea of a single version of truth, defining it as giving a fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it every day. In this study, content validity and face validity were the two kinds used.

Face Validity is “a judgement by the scientific community that the indicator really measures the construct” (Neuman, 2006:192). Kumar (2011) maintains that face validity is achieved when each question or item on the research instrument has a logical link with an objective. In this study, all the questions in both the questionnaire and interviews were related to a specific objective. To ensure face validity, the questionnaire was shown to some colleagues in the HRD and some of the experts in other regions to peruse, critique as well as establish if the logical link existed. Peer examinations or reviews were also utilised. The researcher and supervisor finalised the questionnaire after all feedback and inputs were considered.

Content Validity, meanwhile, can be defined as an examination of whether the full content of a definition is represented in a measure. It entails ensuring that all ideas or areas in the conceptual space are covered or represented. According to Kumar (2011), it involves checking if items and questions cover the full range of the item measured. In this study, the statements and questions in the surveys were constructed in line with the research objectives and questions to ensure that contents of both the questionnaire and the interviews remained valid. As with face validity, the researcher consulted the experts from both the *Eskom* Academy of Learning and its RPL experts to examine the items and questions asked as well as the scale items for content validity.

In order to improve validity in this study, a pre-test or pilot version of both the questionnaire and interview questions (a measure) were used first. The researcher developed preliminary versions of a measure and tried them before applying the final version in a hypothesis-testing situation, although this took more time and effort.

Again, to ensure the accuracy of the findings, member checking was used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through returning the final report or specific descriptions or themes to the respondents to determine whether they felt they were accurate. A pilot study was also conducted to address any shortcomings in the instrument (questionnaire) and to ensure its appropriateness.

The researcher also deployed some strategies to “minimise potential validity threats during the processes of data collection, analysis and interpretation” (Creswell & Clark, 2011:242). These included using a large sample size for quantitative and a small sample size for qualitative; using major themes as the basis for the

quantitative follow up; and interpreting the quantitative and qualitative data sets to answer the research question.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter, the methods and procedures for selecting respondents for sampling, creating and applying the measuring instrument, coding or scoring and analysing data have been discussed. The chapter also outlined the methodology employed in the study by comparing the three research designs and strategies utilised to ensure validity and reliability of the collected and analysed data. The rationale for choosing the mixed method research was also addressed. In the next chapter the empirical research is reflected upon and an analysis and interpretation of the data gained by means of the empirical research is discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology employed in this study by comparing the three research designs and strategies utilised to ensure the validity and reliability of the collected and analysed data. In this chapter, the data collected from the questionnaire is presented and the results analysed.

As indicated in Chapter 1, the research aims to explore the implementation of RPL and the extent of its effectiveness in the workplace by collecting data that address the following research objectives:

- determine the extent to which *Eskom* employees in Dx Northern Region are aware of RPL practices in their workplace
- explore the current trends and practices on RPL at the workplace
- investigate and identify if there are gaps; and
- recommend ways that can be used to strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace.

To achieve these aims, an empirical investigation was conducted to gather relevant data. The analysis and interpretation of the research results are conducted by means of the measurement frequencies based on the 242 respondents who had correctly completed the questionnaire.

The data is presented in the form of frequency tables, histograms and pie charts in accordance with the sections of the questionnaire (Appendix A). Furthermore, mean scores and ANOVA were computed to determine the statistical significance of RPL practices and awareness amongst employees in Dx Northern Region.

4.2 Quantitative data analysis

SECTION A

4.2.1 Personal information

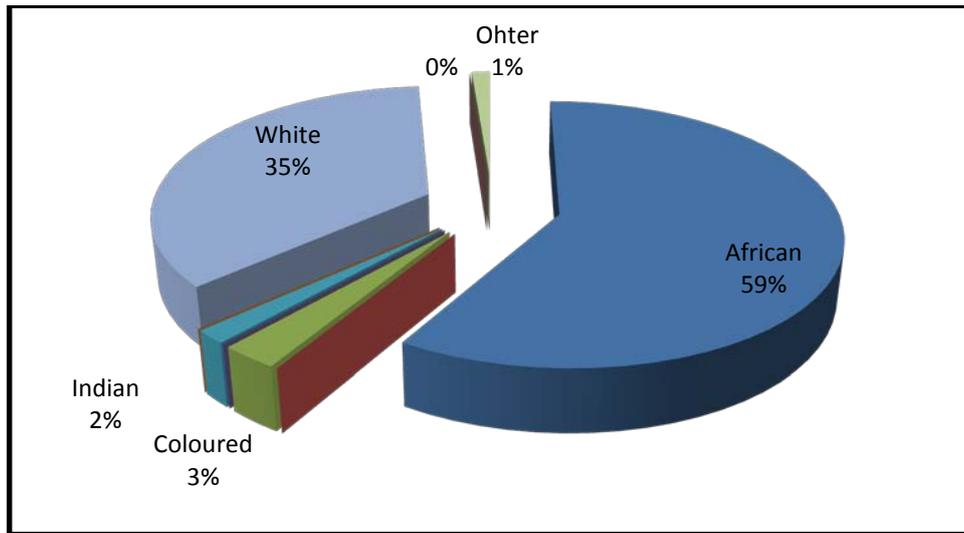
Questions 1 to 10 were formulated to obtain personal information regarding race, age, highest qualification, management centre, task grading, years at *Eskom*, current position, satisfaction level of current job, performance at current job and morale at current job. The purpose of this was to see whether responses were consistent across groups.

Race Group		
	F	%
African	142	59
Coloured	7	2.9
Indian	4	1.7
White	86	35.5
Other	3	1.2
Age group		
21-29	46	19.0
30-35	60	24.8
36-40	46	19.0
41-45	36	14.9
46+	54	22.3
Highest qualification		
Grade 11 and below	4	1.7
Grade 12	72	29.8
National Diploma	95	39.3
Degree	48	19.8
Honours degree	23	9.5

Area Management Centre		
Pretoria	119	49.2
Witbank	58	24.0
Rustenburg	28	11.6
Nelspruit	24	9.9
Kanyamazane	13	5.3
Task grading		
T08 and below	110	45.5
T09-13	99	40.9
P/G 14-18	11	4.5
M 15-18	21	8.7
E-Band + Other	1	.4
Number of years with Eskom		
0-5 years	94	38.8
6-10 years	43	17.8
11-15 years	38	15.7
16-20 years	21	8.7
20+ years	46	19.0
Experience in current job		
0-3 years	83	34.3
4-10 years	102	42.1
11-15 years	31	12.8
16-20 years	14	5.8
20+ years	12	5.0

Table 4. 1: Summary of background information of respondents (n=242)

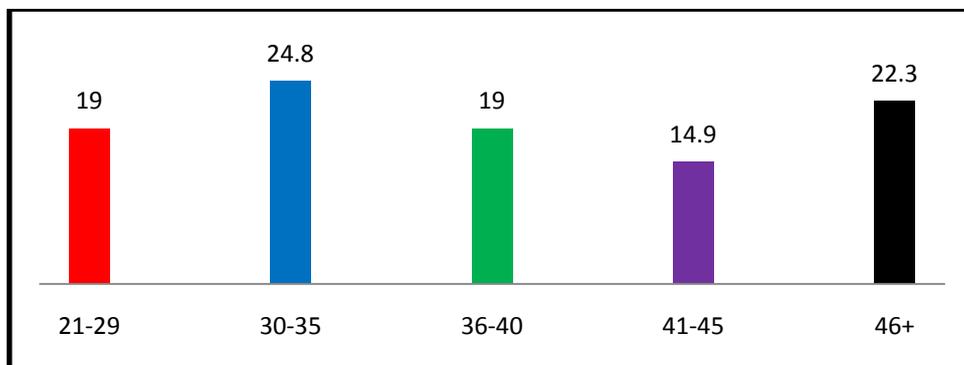
4.2.1.1 Race group



Graph 4.1: Race group

Based on the data in Table 4.1 and Graph 4.1, Africans (59%) were in the majority, followed by Whites (35%), Coloureds (2.9%) and Indians (1.7%).

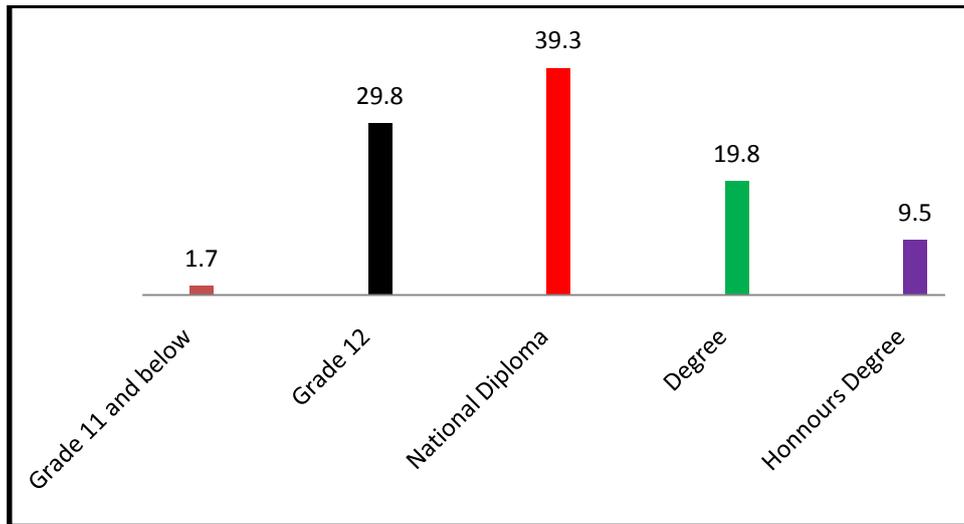
4.2.1.2 Age group



Graph 4.2: Age group

Table 4.1 and Graph 4.2 show that the majority of respondents (24.8%) fell in the category of 30-35 age range, 22.3% in the range category of 46+, followed by the age group of 21-29 and 36-40 respectively. Lastly, only 14.9% of the respondents indicate fell in the category of 41-45 age group.

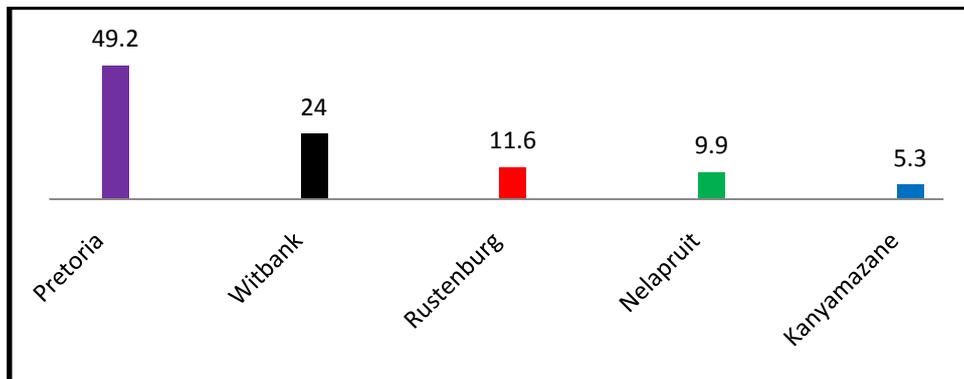
4.2.1.3 Highest Qualification



Graph 4.3: Highest qualification

From Table 4.1 and Graph 4.3, the majority held a national diploma (39.3%), followed by Grade 12 (29.8%), a degree (19.8%), honours degree (9.5%), whilst only 1.7% of the respondents indicated that they had a Grade 11 or below.

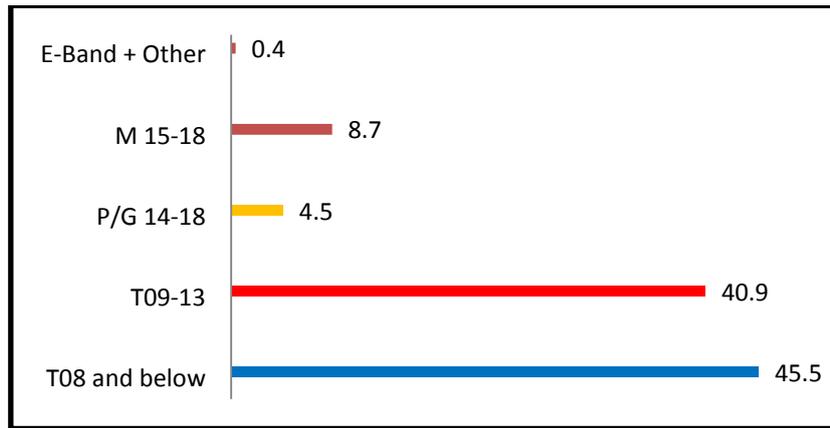
4.2.1.4 Area Management Centre



Graph 4.4: Area Management Centre

The results in Table 4.1 and Graph 4.4 indicate that the majority of respondents were from Pretoria (49.2%), followed by Witbank (24%), Rustenburg (Polokwane included) (11.6%), Nelspruit (9.9%), and lastly only 5.35 indicated that they were situated in Kanyamazane.

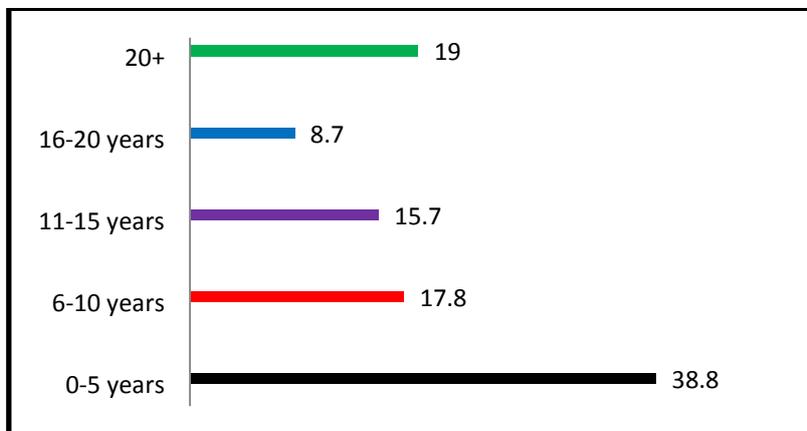
4.2.1.5 Task Grading



Graph 4.5: Task Grading

Table 4.1 and Graph 4.5 indicate that the majority of respondents are in the category T08 and below (45.5%) and T09-13 (40.9%). Others indicate that their task grading are in M15-18 (8.7%) and lastly P/G 14-18 (4.5%) while the E-band + sits at 0.4.

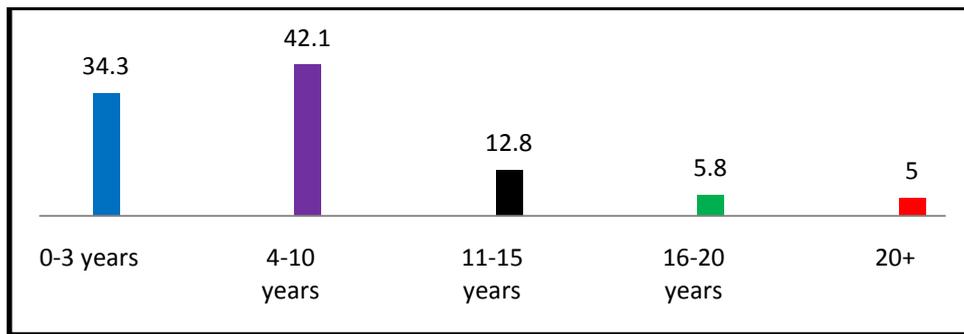
4.2.1.6 Number of years with Eskom



Graph 4.6: Number of years with *Eskom*

The information in Table 4.1 and Graph 4.6 revealed that the majority of the respondents (38.8%) have between 0-5 years number of years with *Eskom*. Among those who have been employed in Eskom for 20+ years, only 19% responded.

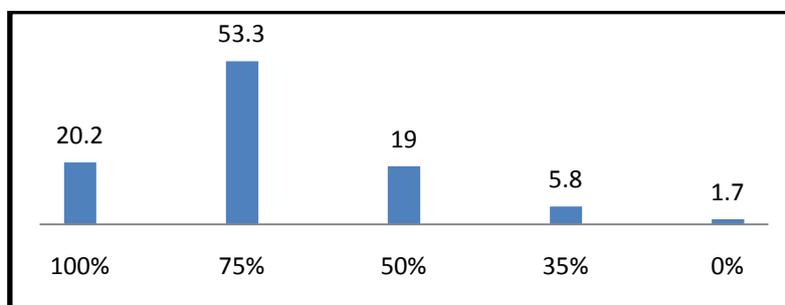
4.2.1.7 Experience in current job/position



Graph 4.7: Experience in current job/position

Based on the information in Table 4.1 and Graph 4.7 the majority of the respondents (42.1%) fell into the category 4-10 years' experience in current job with Eskom. Respondents further indicated that their experience lay in the 0-3 years category (34.3%), followed by 11-15 years (12.8%) and then by 6-20 years' experience (5.8%). Lastly, five percent indicated that they were in the category 20 and more years of experience in their current position.

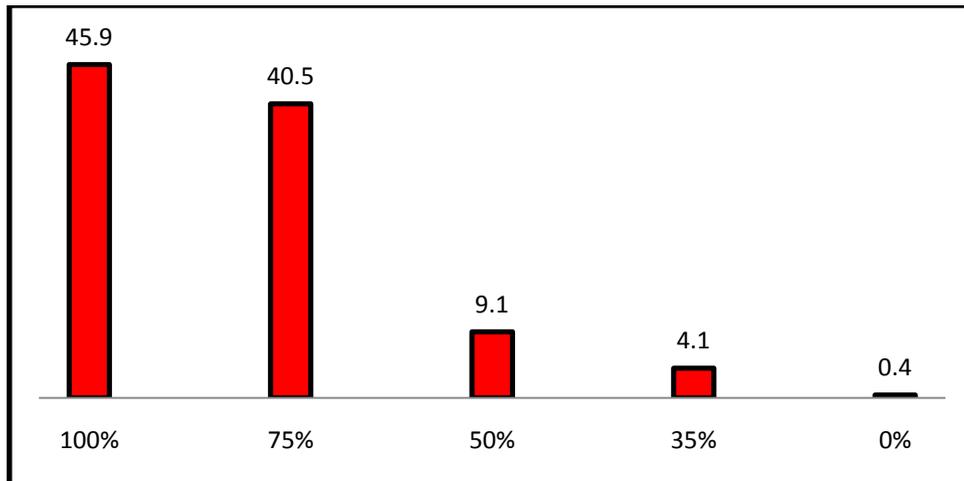
4.2.1.8 Level of satisfaction in my current job



Graph 4.8: Level of job satisfaction

The information in Graph 4.8, indicates that the majority of the respondents (53.3%) were 75% satisfied with their current jobs/positions. In the hundred percent category only 20.2% were completely satisfied with their current jobs. Nineteen percent of the respondents indicated that they were 50% satisfied with their current job, whilst only 1.7% indicated that they were zero percent satisfied with their job at Eskom.

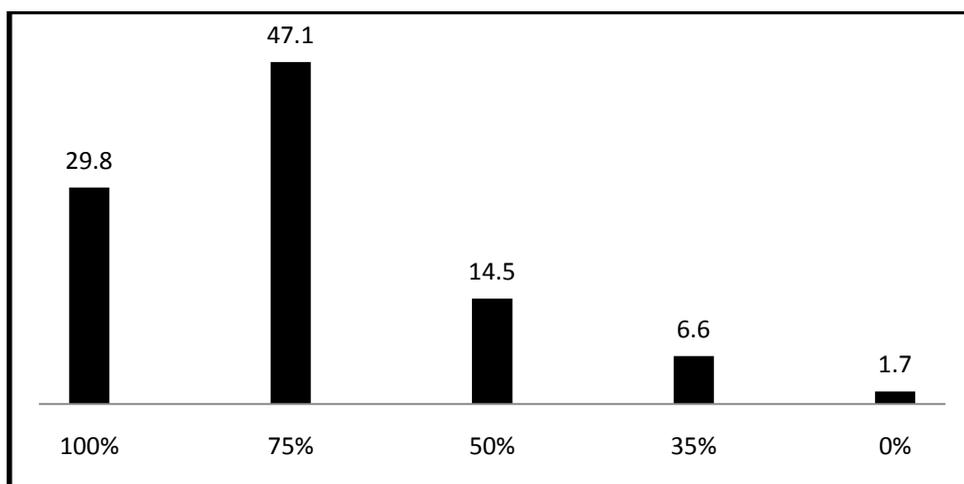
I am performing at my peak in my current job /position



Graph 4.9: I am performing at my peak in my current position

Graph 4.9 indicates that the majority of the respondents (45.9%) were satisfied with their performance in their current position, whereas in the seventy five percent category only 40.5% expressed satisfaction. At the fifty percent category 9.1% respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their current performance. Only 4.1% of respondents indicated that they were in the thirty five percent category performance at their job at *Eskom*, while 0.4 were not performing to their best ability.

4.2.1.9 My morale level in the current work output



Graph 4.10: Morale in current work output

Referring to the information in Graph 4.10, the majority of the respondents fell in the seventy five percent category (47.1%) with a high morale level in their current level of outputs. Only 29.8% reported a hundred percent morale level of outputs in their current job. Fourteen percent of the respondents indicate that their morale level with their current output was average, at 50%. Furthermore, thirty five percent indicate that their morale level of outputs were 6.6%. Only 1.7% of respondents indicated that their morale level of output was in the zero percent category at *Eskom*.

SECTION B

Training, Development And Recognition Of Prior Learning

4.1 Introduction

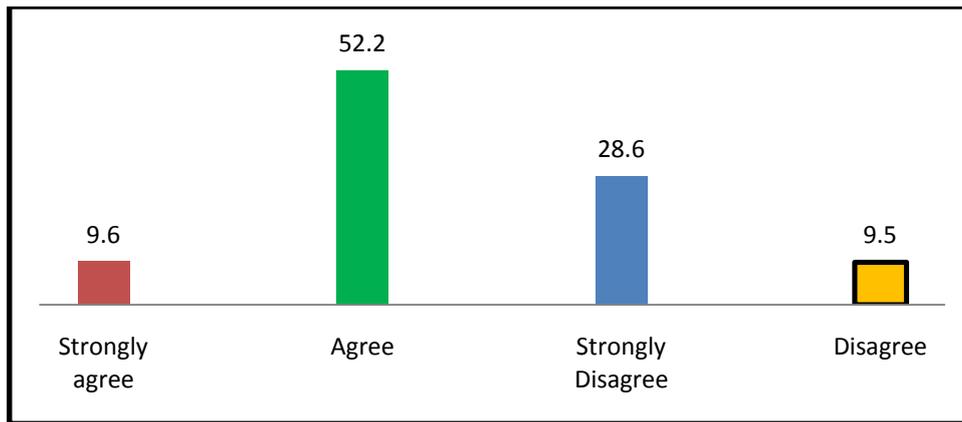
In this section, Questions 1 to 18 were formulated to obtain information regarding training, development and recognition of prior learning (RPL) at the workplace.

4.2 Knowledge of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

This section focuss on age, race, area of management and qualification on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) at the workplace.

Extent to which training, development and RPL has an effect on age, race, area of management and qualification at <i>Eskom</i>	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1. I know what RPL is all about	3.08	1.162	9.6	52.2	28.6	9.5

Table 4. 2: Knowledge about RPL (n=242)



Graph 4.11: Knowledge of RPL

The results in Table 4.2 and Graph 4.11 (above) indicate that the majority of respondents agree (52.2%) to strongly agree (9.6%) that they know what RPL is about (mean=3.08, SD=1.162). Others strongly disagree (28.6%) to disagree (9.5%) that they do not know what RPL is all about.

In Tables 4.3 and 4.4 (below), descriptive statistical analysis and ANOVA were computed to provide on age in relation to knowledge of RPL in this study.

Age group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
21-29	48.587	46	10.331
30-35	45.233	60	7.9306
36-40	44.326	46	7.6538
41-45	46.361	36	8.2433
46+	43.648	54	9.0474
Total	45.512	242	8.7815

Table 4. 3: Age group on Recognition of Prior Learning

		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Recognition of Prior Learning and Age group	Between groups	717.848	4	179.462	2.381	.042
	Within groups	17866.615	237	75.387		
	Total	18584.463	241			

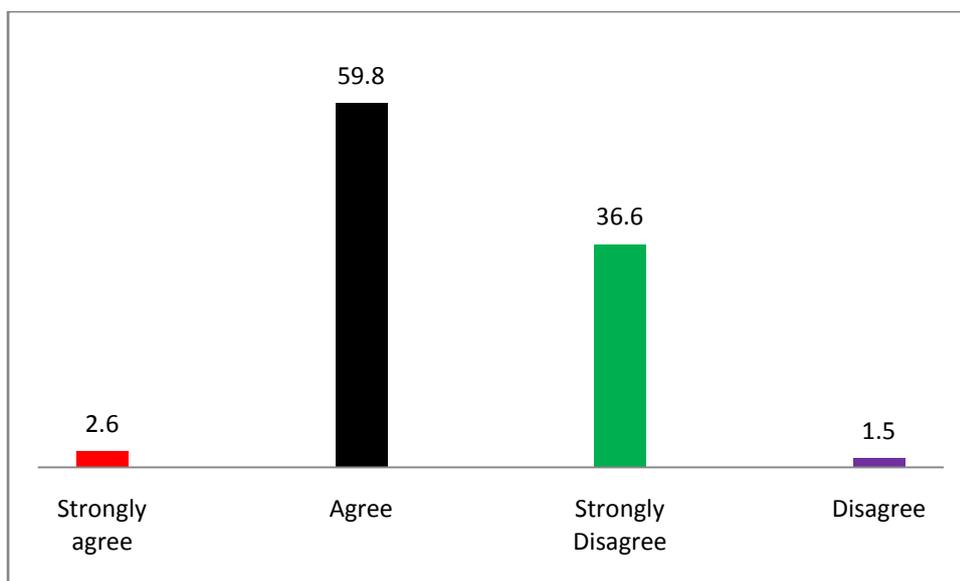
Table 4. 4: Age group on knowledge of RPL (p<0.05)

The results in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 indicate that the age group in the category of 21-29 with mean=48.587, SD=10.331 have been less exposed to RPL than the 46+ category. Computing ANOVA, statistically significant ($p=0.042$), further indicates that RPL according to age 46+ group has a strong effect ($717.848 \div 17866.615 = 0.040$). The 46+ age group as compared to the 21-26 age group show the varying extents to which that they were exposed to knowledge of RPL at the workplace.

4.2.1 Attended a workshop on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Level of awarenss on RPL	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
2 I have attended a workshop / Presentation on RPL	2.78	0.86	2.6	59.8	36.6	1.5

Table 4. 5: Attended a workshop on RPL (n=242)



Graph 4.12: Attended a RPL workshop

The results in Table 4.5 and Graph 4.12 indicate that respondents agree (59.8%) to strongly agree (2.6%) that they did know what RPL was all about (mean=2.78, SD =2.78), as impacted on those who attended a RPL workshop. Respondents further strongly disagree (36.6%) to disagree (1.5%) that they had not attended any RPL workshops at their current workplace.

In Tables 4.6 and 4.7, descriptive statistical analysis and ANOVA were computed on **race group** in relation to knowledge of RPL in this study.

Race group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
African	44.134	145	8.9384
Coloured	50.286	7	3.4017
Indian	48.000	4	13.5401
White	45.779	86	8.6261
Total	45.512	242	8.7815

Table 4. 6: Race group on knowledge of RPL

		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Race group and Recognition of Prior Learning	Between groups	373.167	5	98.129	1.214	.035
	Within groups	18211.308	237	76.317		
	Total	18584.465	242			

Table 4. 7: Race group in relation to knowledge of RPL ($p < 0.05$)

Data in Tables 4.6 and 4.7 indicates that according to race group, that in relation to RPL (mean=50.286, SD=3.4017) Coloured have the highest score. This revealed that this race group has been exposed to RPL for this study as compared to other race groups working at *Eskom*. Results for ANOVA further indicate that the Coloured respondents in relation to the knowledge of RPL according to other race groups have a strong effect ($373.154 \div 18211.308 = 0.0204$), which is statistically significant ($p = 0.35$).

In Tables 4.8 and 4.9, descriptive statistical analysis was computed on **area management** in relation to knowledge of RPL in this study.

Area Management	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pretoria	41.048	119	10.331
Witbank	49.126	58	8.206
Rustenberg	47.213	28	7.238
Nelspruit	44.266	24	8.445
Kanyamazne	46.031	13	8.011
Total Average mean	36.683	242	8.842

Table 4. 8: Area Management on knowledge of Recognition of Prior Learning.

Table 4.9: Area management on knowledge of RPL

		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Area management and Recognition of Prior Learning	Between groups	788.238	4	156.062	2.111	.044*
	Within groups	16766.615	238	73.237		
	Total	17554.853	242			

p <0.05*

Table 4. 9: Area management on knowledge RPL.

Tables 4.8 and 4.9 indicate that the area management of Witbank (mean = 49.126, SD = 8.206) show clearly much more exposure to the knowledge of RPL as compared to other management areas at *Eskom*. Results for ANOVA further indicate that RPL according to the Witbank group has a strong effect ($788.238 \div 16766.615 = 0.047$) compared to other areas of management. Results revealed that Nelspruit as an area of management of the knowledge of RPL is statistically significant ($p = 0.044$) for this study.

In Tables 4.10 and 4.11, descriptive statistical analysis and ANOVA were computed on **qualification** in reference to knowledge of RPL by respondents in this study.

Qualification	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Grade 11	34.187	4	8.332
Grade 12	44.229	72	7.451
National Diploma	49.622	95	8.034
Degree	40.341	48	6.891
Honours degree	41.556	48	7.234
Total average	41.987	242	

Table 4. 10: Qualification on knowledge of Recognition of Prior Learning

		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Highest qualification and Recognition of Prior Learning	Between groups	607.808	4	179.462	2.381	.042
	Within groups	17768.630	237	75.387		
	Total	18376.438	241			

p <0.05

Table 4. 11: Highest qualification in relation to knowledge of RPL.

Tables 4.10 and 4.11 indicate that the respondents with National Diploma (mean = 49.622, SD = 8.034) show clearly more exposure to the knowledge of RPL at *Eskom* compared to other qualifications. Computing for ANOVA, RPL according to National Diploma category showed a strong effect ($607.808 \div 17768.630 = 0.034$) as compared to other qualification categories, which is statistically significant ($p = 0.42$) for this study.

In Tables 4.12 and 4.13, descriptive statistical analysis and ANOVA were computed for **number of years at Eskom** in reference to knowledge of RPL by respondents.

Table 4.12: Number of years at *Eskom* on knowledge of RPL

# of years	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0-5 years	34.187	94	10.332
6-10 years	44.229	43	7.551
11-15 years	49.622	38	9.034
16-20 years	52.341	21	8.291
20+ years	41.556	46	8.234
Total average	41.987	242	

Table 4. 12: Number of years at Eskom on knowledge of RPL.

		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Number of years at <i>Eskom</i> and Recognition of Prior Learning	Between groups	767.848	4	179.462	1.681	.002
	Within groups	17868.630	237	75.387		
	Total	18636.478	241			

p <0.05

Table 4. 13: Years of experience at *Eskom* in relation to knowledge of RPL.

Information in Tables 4.12 and 4.13 indicate that the respondents with the number of years 16-20 category at *Eskom* (mean = 52.341, SD = 8.921) show clearly more experience to the knowledge of RPL at *Eskom* compared to other respondents. Computing for ANOVA further indicate that RPL according to number of years 16-20 category showed a strong effect ($607.808 \div 17768.630 = 0.042$) compared to other qualification categories, which is statistically significant ($p = 0.002$) for this study.

In Tables 4.14 and 4.15, descriptive statistical analysis and ANOVA were computed on **experiences in current job** in reference to knowledge of RPL by respondents in this study.

Experiences at current job	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0-3	34.187	83	11.322
4-10	44.229	102	7.491
11-15	45.322	31	9.034
16-20	40.341	14	8.891
20+	47.516	12	8.662
Total average	42.319	242	

Table 4. 14: Experiences at current job on knowledge of RPL.

		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Experiences at current job and Recognition of Prior Learning	Between groups	697.458	4	179.462	2.001	.032
	Within groups	16868.677	237	75.387		
	Total	17566.135	241			

p <0.05

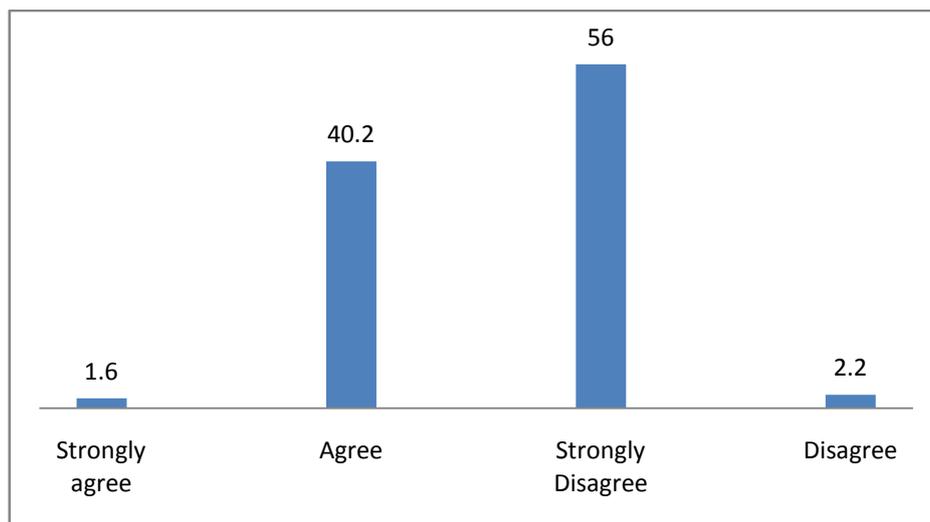
Table 4. 15: Experiences at current job in relation to knowledge of RPL.

Referring to Tables 4.14 and 4.15, which indicate that the respondents experiences at current job (mean = 47.516, SD = 8.662), there is clearly an advantage regarding knowledge of RPL at *Eskom* as compared to other respondents in their current job. Computing for ANOVA further indicates that RPL according to experience of respondents in current jobs showed a strong effect ($697.458 \div 16868.677 = 0.041$) compared to experience in current jobs, which is statistically significant ($p = 0.032$) for this study.

4.2.2 Understand the purpose and aims of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an affect on work at <i>Eskom</i> ?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
3 I understand the purpose and aims of RPL	2.12	1.98	1.6	40.2	56.0	2.2

Table 4. 16: Purpose and aims of RPL (n=242)



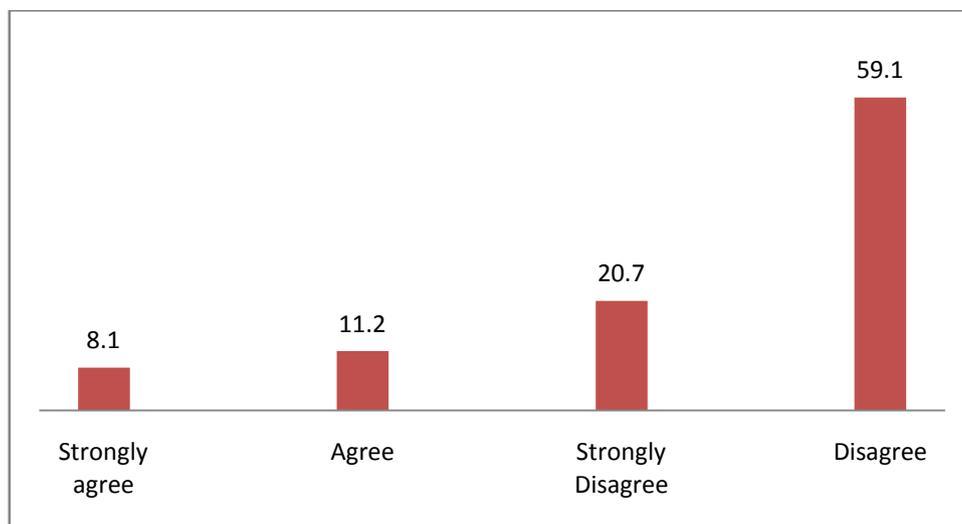
Graph 4.13: Understanding the purpose and aims of RPL

The results in Table 4.16 and Graph 4.13 indicate that respondents agree (40.2%) to strongly agree (1.6%) that they understood the purpose and aims of RPL in the workplace at *Eskom*. Furthermore the majority of respondents revealed that they strongly disagree (56%) to disagree (2.2%) that they did not understand the purpose and aims of RPL (mean = 2.12, SD = 1.98) in the workplace.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) before;

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at Eskom?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
4 I have been RPL'ed before.	1.15	1.68	8.1	11.2	20.7	59.1

Table 4. 17: RPL before (n=242)



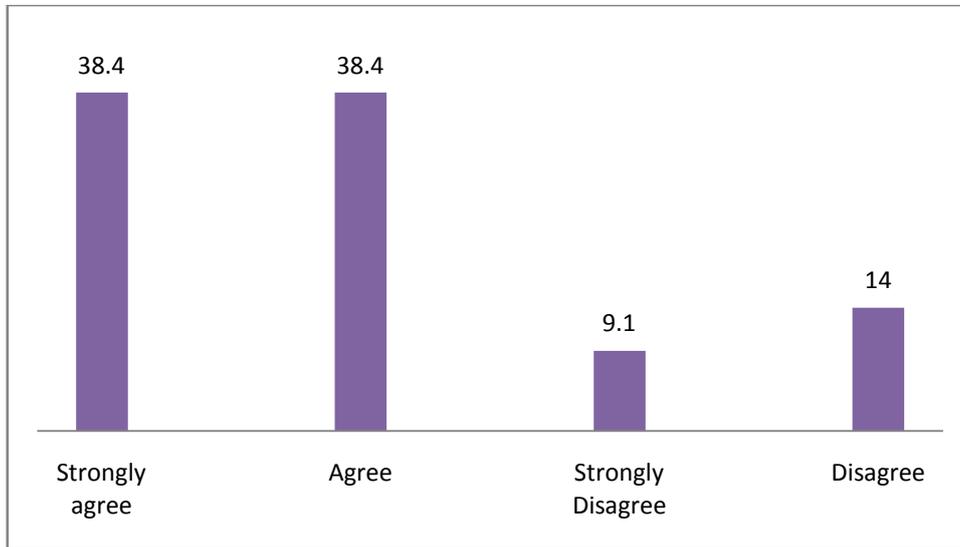
Graph 4.14: RPL'ed in the past

The results in Table 4.17 and Graph 4.14, indicate that the majority of the respondents disagree (59.1%) to strongly disagree (20.7%) that they had been RPL'ed in the past. Furthermore, respondents revealed that they strongly agree (9.1%) to agree (11.2%) that they have been RPL'ed (mean = 1.15, SD = 1.68) in the workplace.

4.2.3 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the near future

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at <i>Eskom</i> ?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
5 I would like to be RPL in the near future	3.00	2.77	38.4	38.4	9.1	14.0

Table 4. 18: RPL in the near future (n=242)



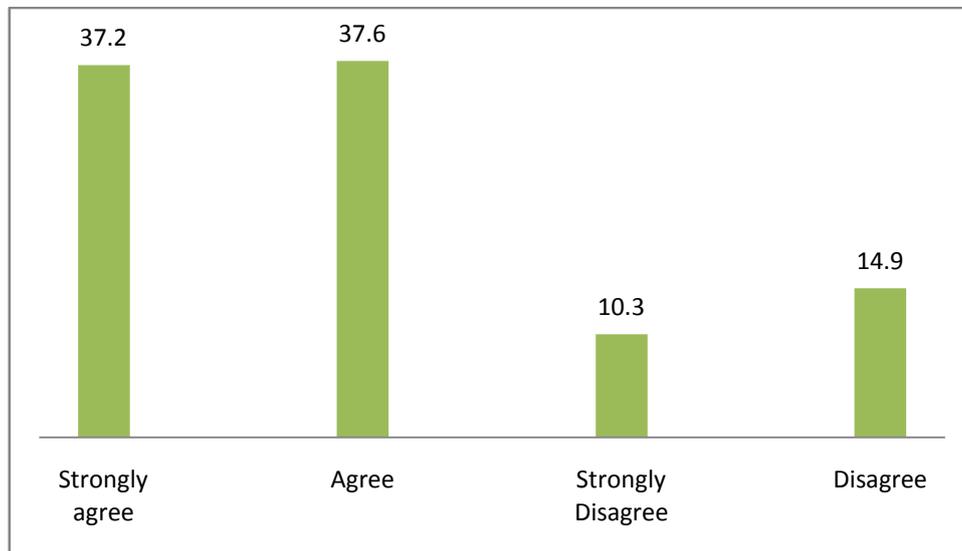
Graph 4.15: RPL in the near future

The results in Table 4.18 and Graph 4.15, indicate that the majority of the respondents indicated a desire to undergo RPL assessment in future, with strongly agree (38.4%) to agree (34.8%). That is, 76.8% in total showed interest in undergoing RPL assessment. On the other hand, respondents also revealed that they strongly disagree (9.1%) to disagree (14.0%) to being RPL'ed in the future. In other words, they had no intentions of being RPL'ed in the future (mean = 3.00, SD = 2.77) in the workplace.

Individual development plan (IDP) important guide to professional development and growth

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at <i>Eskom</i> ?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
6. My individual development plan serves an important guiding role for my professional development and growth	3.11	2.66	37.2	37.6	10.3	14.9

Table 4. 19: Individual development plan for professional development and growth (n=242)



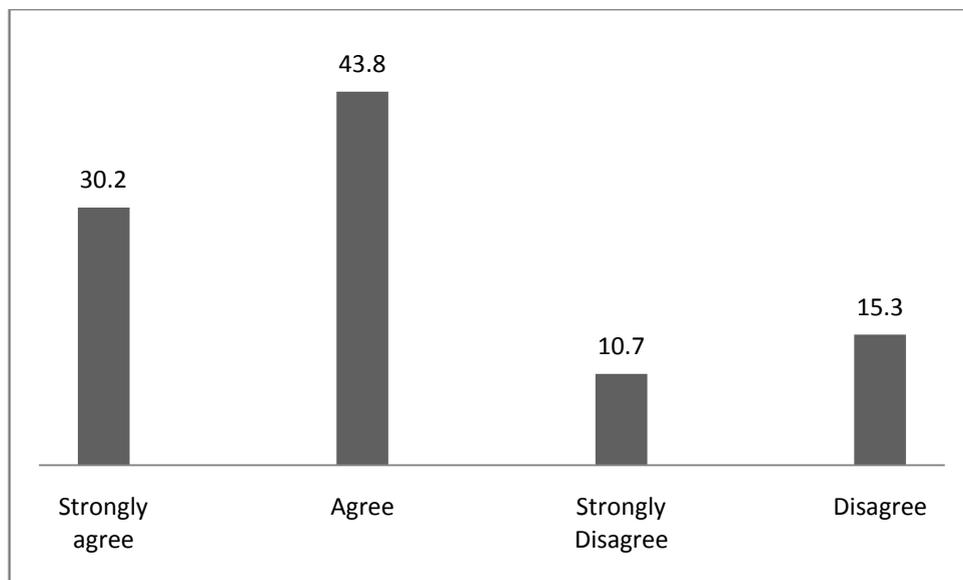
Graph 4.16: My individual development plan guide to professional development and growth.

The results in Table 4.19 and Graph 4.16 indicate that the majority of the respondents strongly agree (37.2%) to agree (37.6%) that the company’s individual development plan served as an important guide to professional development and growth. However, a minority of the respondents also indicated that they strongly disagree(10.3%) to disagree (14.9%) that the individual development plan serves as an important guide for professional development and growth (mean = 3.11, SD = 2.66) in the workplace.

Eskom short courses are adding value to my learning

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at <i>Eskom</i> ?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
7. <i>Eskom</i> courses adding value to my learning	3.72	1.33	30.2	43.8	10.7	15.3

Table 4. 20: Eskom short courses are adding to my learning (n=242).



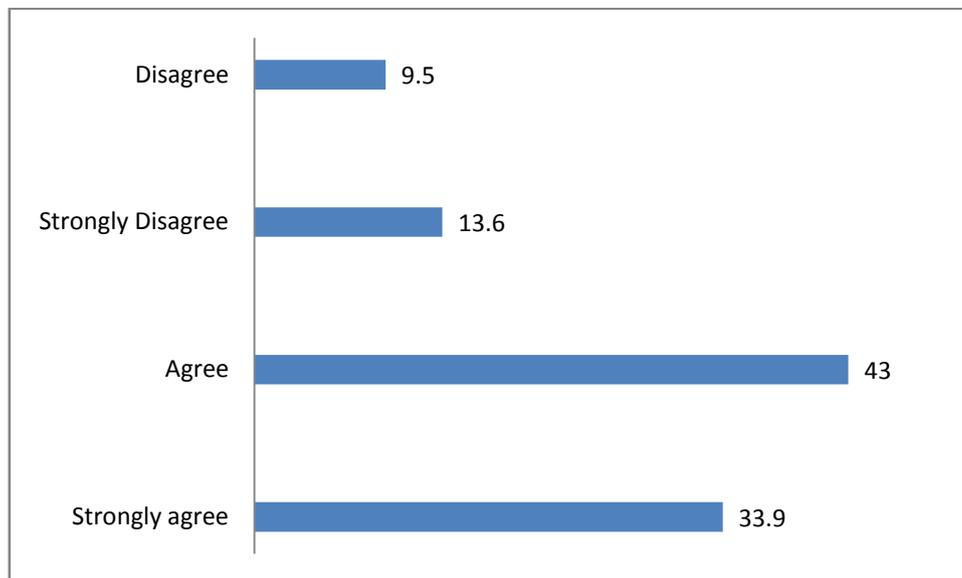
Graph 4.17: *Eskom* short courses adding value to my learning

The results in Table 4.20 and Graph 4.17 indicate that the majority of the respondents strongly agree (30.2%) to agree (43.8%) that *Eskom* short courses were adding value to their learning. Furthermore, they also indicates that they strongly disagree (10.7%) to disagree (15.3%) that the company short courses did not add value to their learning (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

4.2.4 My job matches my skills, competencies and qualifications

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an affect on work at Eskom?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
8. My job matches my skills, competencies and qualifications	3.72	1.33	33.9	43.0	13.6	9.5

Table 4. 21: My job matches my skills, competencies and qualifications (n=242)



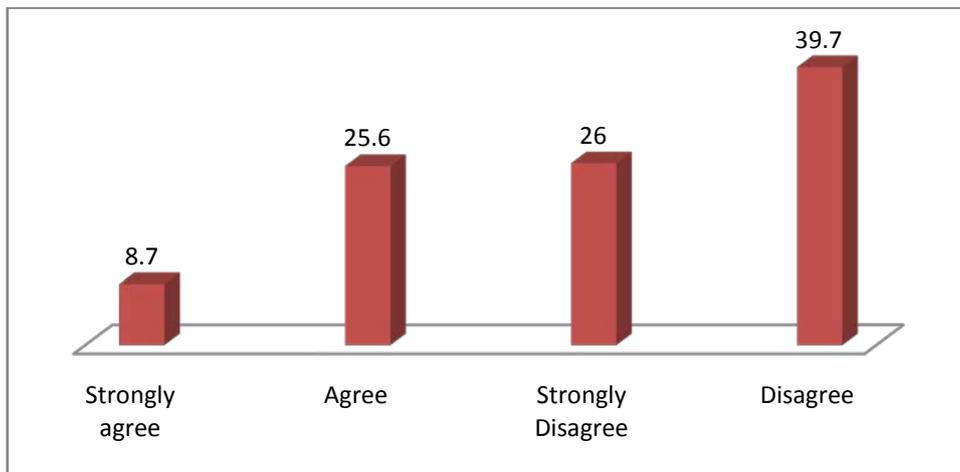
Graph 4.18: My job matches my skills, competences and qualifications

The results in Table 4.21 and Graph 4.18 indicate that the majority of the respondents strongly agree (33.9%) to agree (43.0%) that their job matched their skills, competences and qualifications. 13.6% respondents also indicated that they strongly disagree to disagree (9.5%) that their job did not match their skills, competencies and qualifications (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

RPL integrates effectively with competency-based remuneration system

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at <i>Eskom</i> ?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
9. RPL integrates effectively with competency-based remuneration system	3.72	1.33	8.7	25.6	26.0	39.7

Table 4. 22: RPL integrates effectively with competency-based remuneration system (n=242)



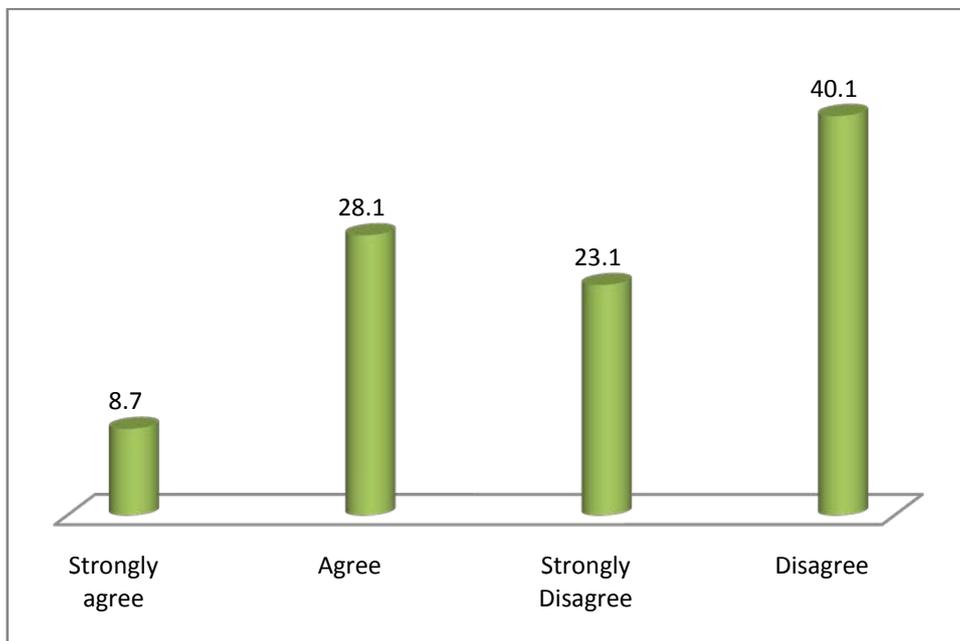
Graph 4.19: RPL integrated effectively with competency-based remuneration system

The results in Table 4.22 and Graph 4.19 indicate that the majority of the respondents strongly disagree (26%) to disagree (39.7%) that RPL did not integrate effectively with competency-based remuneration system. Furthermore respondents also indicate that they strongly agree (8.7%) to agree (25.6%) that RPL did integrate effectively with competency-based remuneration system of the company (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

4.2.5 Policies and guidelines on RPL are available

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at <i>Eskom</i> ?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
10. Policies and guidelines on RPL are available in my workplace	3.72	1.33	8.7	28.1	23.1	40.1

Table 4. 23: Policies and guidelines on RPL are available (n=242)



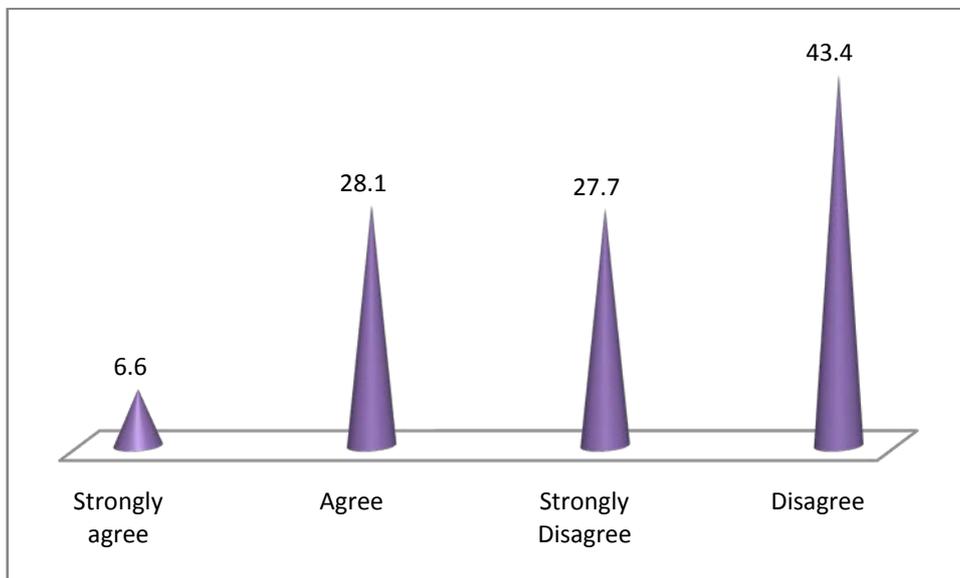
Graph 4.20: Policies and guidelines available at the workplace

The results in Table 4.23 and Graph 4.20 indicate that the majority of the respondents disagree (40.1%) to strongly disagree (23.1%) that policies and guidelines were not readily available at the workplace. Furthermore, they also indicated that they agree (28.1%) to strongly agree (8.7%) that policies and guidelines were readily available (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

4.2.6 RPL supports structures in place

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an affect on work at <i>Eskom</i> ?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
11. There are RPL support structures in place in my workplace	3.72	1.33	6.6	22.3	27.7	43.4

Table 4. 24: RPL support structures are in place (n=242)



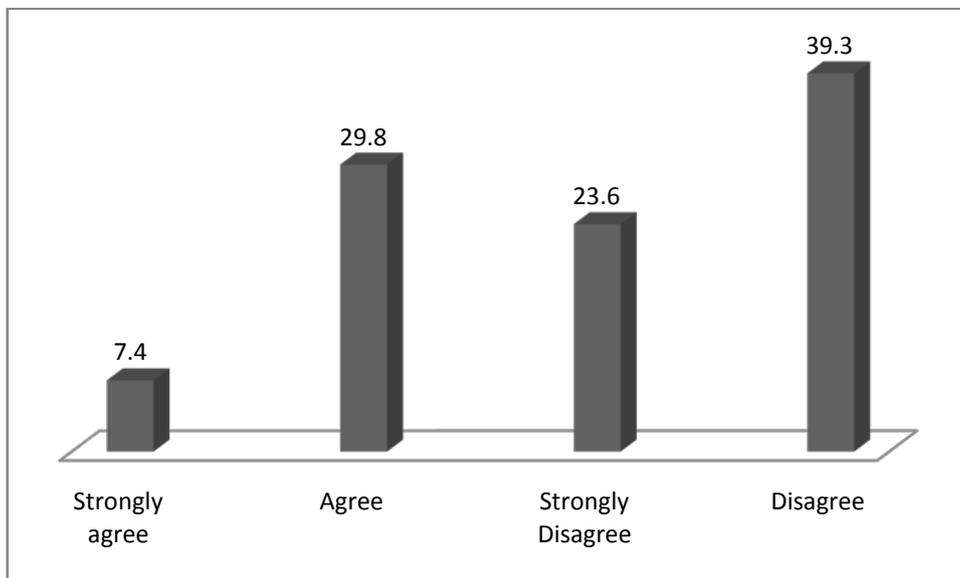
Graph 4.21: RPL support structures in place

Based on the data in Table 4.24 and Graph 4.21, the majority of the respondents disagree (43.4%) to strongly disagree (27.7%) that there were RPL support structures in place in their workplace. Respondents also indicated that they agree (22.3%) to strongly agree (6.6%) that there were RPL support structures in place (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

4.2.7 Section Management supports and promotes RPL

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an affect on work at <i>Eskom</i> ?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
12. In my section management fully supports and promotes RPL	3.72	1.33	7.4	29.8	23.6	39.3

Table 4. 25: Section Management supports and promoters RPL (n=242)



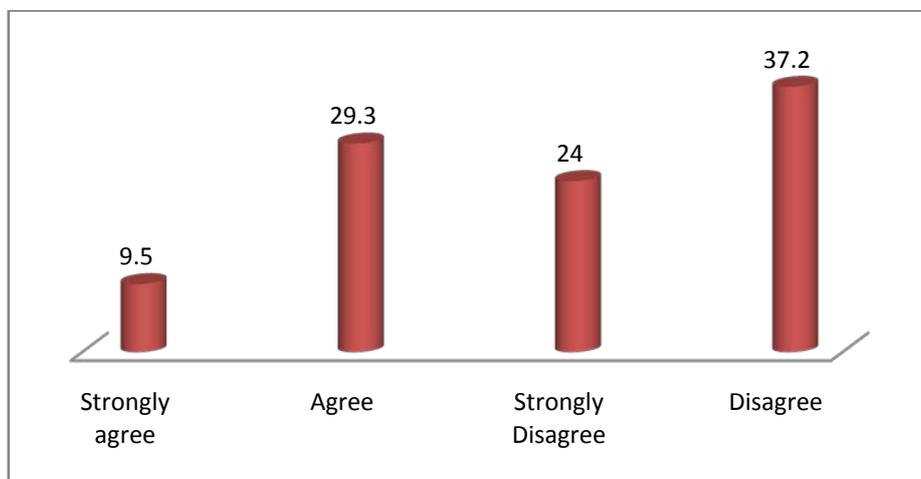
Graph 4.22: Area management fully supports and promotes RPL

Information in Table 4.25 and Graph 4.22, indicate that the majority of the respondents disagree (39.3%) to strongly disagree (23.6%) that there were section management that fully supported and promoted RPL in their workplace. They also indicated that they agree (29.8%) to strongly agree (7.4%) that their section managers fully supported and promoted RPL (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

4.2.8 Senior Management supports RPL as a skill and career development

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at Eskom?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
13. The senior management has a deep conviction that RPL is the key to skills and career development	3.72	1.33	9.5	29.3	24.0	37.2

Table 4. 26: Senior Management supports RPL for career development (n=242).



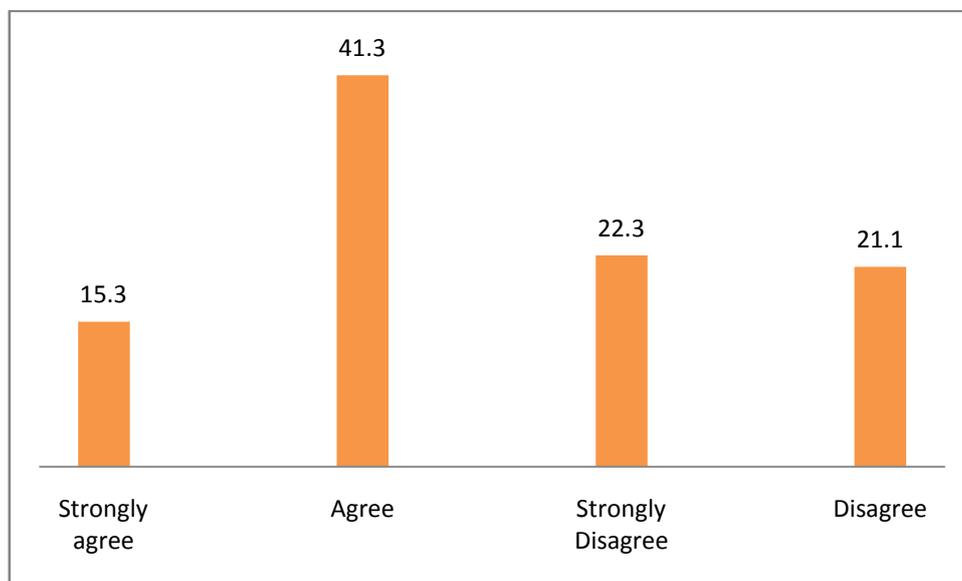
Graph 4.23: Senior management deep conviction that RPL is the key to skills and career development.

Information in Table 4.26 and Graph 4.23, indicate that the majority of the respondents disagree (37.2%) to strongly disagree (24.0%) that senior management had a deep conviction that RPL was the key to skills and career development. Respondents also indicated that they agree (29.3%) to strongly agree (9.5%) that senior management had a deep conviction that RPL is the key to skills and career development (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

4.2.9 RPL serving as determinant towards further studies

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an affect on work at Eskom?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
14. RPL is serving as a determinant towards further studies	3.72	1.33	15.3	41.3	22.3	21.1

Table 4. 27: RPL serving as determinant towards further studies (n=242).



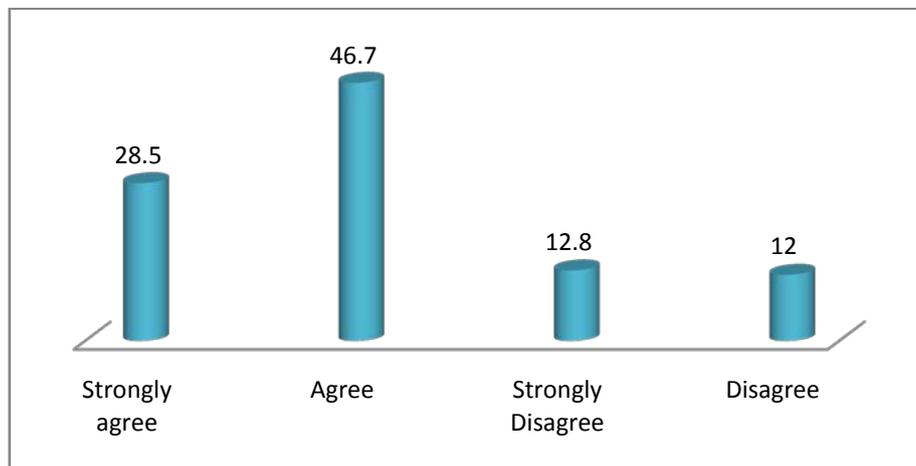
Graph 4.24: RPL served as a determinant towards further studies

Information in Table 4.27 and Graph 4.24, indicates that the majority of the respondents agree (41.3%) to strongly agree (15.3%) that RPL served as a determinant towards further studies and career development. Moreover respondents also indicated that they strongly disagree (22.3%) to disagree (21.1%) that RPL did serve as a determinant towards further studies (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

4.2.10 Company supports the culture of lifelong learning amongst employees

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at <i>Eskom</i> ?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
15. My company supports and promotes the culture of lifelong learning amongst employees	3.72	1.33	28.5	46.7	12.8	12.0

Table 4. 28: Company supports the culture of lifelong learning (n=242).



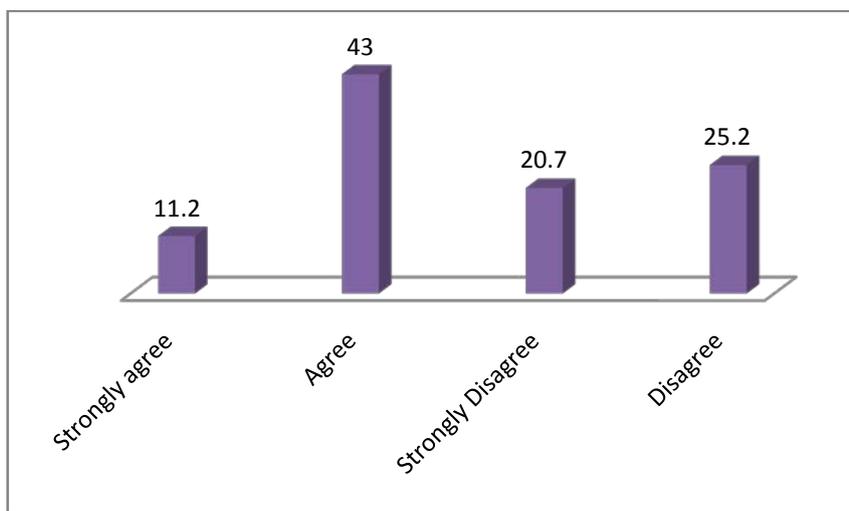
Graph 4.25: Company supports and promotes the culture of lifelong learning amongst employees

The results in Table 4.28 and Graph 4.25, indicate that the majority of the respondents agree (46.7%) to strongly agree (28.5%) that their company supported and promoted the culture of lifelong learning amongst employees. Moreover they also indicated that they strongly disagree (12.8%) to disagree (12.0%) that the company did support and promote the culture of lifelong learning amongst employees (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

4.2.11 Company using RPL to promote access to formal education and training

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at Eskom?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
16. My company is using RPL to promote access to formal education and training	3.72	1.33	11.2	43.0	20.7	25.2

Table 4. 29: Company using RPL to promote accessed to formal education and training (n=242)



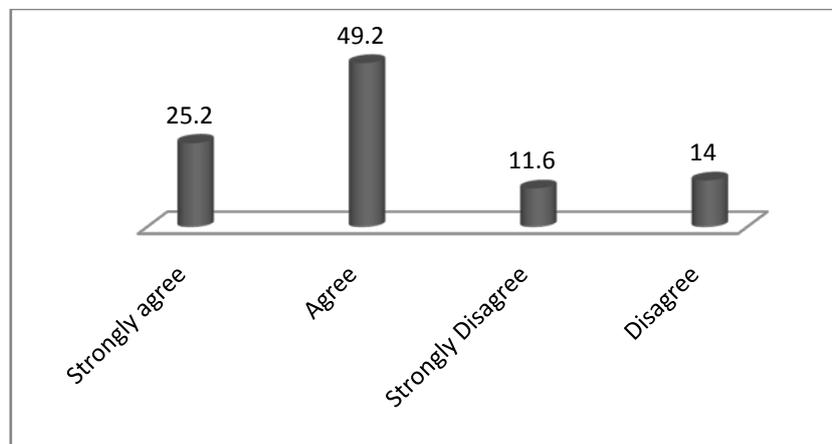
Graph 4.26: Company uses RPL to promote access to formal education and training

The results in Table 4.29 and Graph 4.26, show that the majority of the respondents agree (43.0%) to strongly agree (11.2%) that their company was using RPL to promote access to formal education and training amongst employees. Moreover respondents also indicated that they strongly disagree (20.7%) to disagree (25.2%) that the company was using RPL to promote access to formal education and training (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in the workplace.

4.2.12 RPL supports disadvantaged groups to formal education

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at Eskom?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
17. Through RPL, previously disadvantaged groups can have accessed to formal education that can lead to nationally recognised qualification	3.72	1.33	25.2	49.2	11.6	14.0

Table 4. 30: RPL supports disadvantaged groups to formal education (n=242)



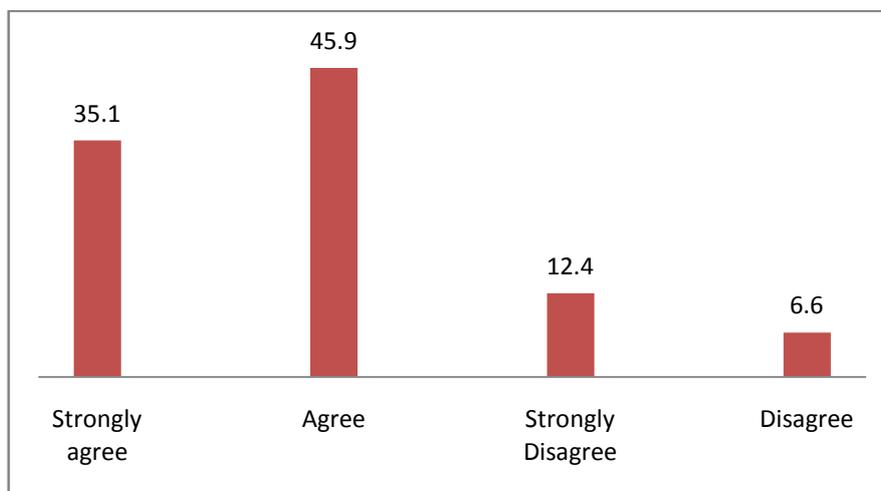
Graph 4.27: RPL as means to formal education for previously disadvantaged groups

The results in Table 4.30 and Graph 4.27, indicate that the majority (74.4%) of the respondents agree (43.0%) to strongly agree (11.2%) that, through RPL, previously disadvantaged groups could have access to formal education that in turn might lead to a nationally recognised qualification. Moreover, they also indicated that they strongly disagree (20.7%) to disagree (25.2%) that through RPL, previously disadvantaged groups could have access to formal education that could lead to a nationally recognised qualification (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in their current workplace.

4.2.13 Company supports and promotes career development

Extent to which training, development and RPL have an effect on work at Eskom?	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
18. My company promotes and supports career development amongst employees	3.72	1.33	35.1	45.9	12.4	6.6

Table 4. 31: Company promotes and supports career development (n=242)



Graph 4.28 : RPL as means previously disadvantaged groups to formal education

The results in Table 4.31 and Graph 4.28 indicate that the majority (81.0%) of the respondents agree (45.9%) to strongly agree (35.1%) that the company promoted and supported career development amongst employees. Moreover, they also indicated that they strongly disagree (12.4%) to disagree (6.6%) that the company promoted and supported career development amongst employees (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.33) in their current workplace.

SECTION C

4.2.3 Open-ended themes

Questions 19 to 20 were open-ended questions formulated to find out employees' general opinion and feelings about RPL, as well as to obtain suggestions (information) regarding strengthening the RPL practice in the workplace. The following themes were picked up from the respondents:

Question 19 What do you think should be done to strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace?

Theme #1: Knowledge, understanding and awareness on RPL

Theme #2: The purpose of RPL

Theme #3: Strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace

Theme #4: Trends and Practices: Policies, Processes and systems

Theme #5: Recommendations

These themes and their sub-themes will be addressed together with the qualitative findings, because they are qualitative in nature and fit into the qualitative findings.

4.3 Qualitative analysis

As indicated in the previous chapter, data analysis followed certain steps which involved selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting data to provide explanations of the phenomenon of interest. The researcher had to read through, describe what is going on and classify the research data according to the interviewee's responses and experiences. This was followed by analysing of text and coding the text components by assigning labels and then aggregating similar codes into themes. The researcher provided descriptions and accounts of social interaction in a natural settings based upon the interviews conducted with participants as Naidoo (2005) points out. Below is a tabular presentation of the themes/categories.

Interview question(s)	Responses	Themes	Research questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was RPL introduced in the Northern Region? • Can u tell us why was it introduced? • What marketing strategies have been used to raise the level of awareness among the employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Interviewee no 1 (Int 1): Lines (Ln): 2 b. Int 2: Lines Ln: 2 c. Int 3: Lines Ln: 2 a. Int 1: Ln: 4-5, 7-9, 11-12 b. Int 3: Ln: 4-8, 10-16, 18-23 a. Int 1: Ln: 50-54, 58-63, 65-66 b. Int 2: Ln: 4-6, 11-12 c. Int 3: Ln: 44-52 a. Int 3: Ln: 27-40, 289-290 	<p>The level or degree of awareness among employees.</p> <p>Sub-themes: Purpose:</p> <p>Benefits:</p> <p>Marketing:</p> <p>Policies, procedures and guidelines:</p>	<p>What is the level of awareness about RPL among employees in the Northern Region</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is management or line involved in promoting RPL in their respective department? • How does RPL influence the individual's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Int 1: Ln: 75-85 b. Int 2: 112-116 c. Int 3: Ln: 138-147 a. Int 1: Ln: 88-91/94-99/102-108 	<p>Current trends and practices on RPL at the workplace:</p> <p>Sub-themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support structures (management or line involved) 	<p>what are the current trends and practices in the implementation of RPL in the workplace in Dx</p>

Interview question(s)	Responses	Themes	Research questions
<p>development plan? Is there a link between RPL and the IDP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is RPL serving as a determinant towards further studies? RPL and the remuneration strategy talk to each other? Do they link? Can you give us a picture of the status of RPL as we speak, in our region? 	<p>b. Int 2: Ln:150-153</p> <p>c. Int 3: Ln: 106-116,118/121-132,136</p> <p>a. Int 1: Ln: 134-138,</p> <p>b. Int 2: Ln:18-27, 38-40</p> <p>c. Int 3: Ln: 66-70, 73-75, 80-90, 92-99,102-104, 188-201, 204-212, 214-218, 274-281</p>	<p>– link between RPL and the IDP/further studies/remuneration strategy</p> <p>– Regional/Divisional picture of the status of RPL</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For future training and workshop purposes, what aspects of RPL would you like to see included in the training programme? What are the challenges or the problems that you have experienced 	<p>a. Int 1: Ln: 166-171,</p> <p>b. Int 2: Ln:105-110, 112-116</p> <p>c. Int 3: Ln: 261-274</p> <p>a. Int 1: Ln: 147-148, 150-157</p> <p>b. Int 2: Ln:64-67, 69-73, 75-76</p>	<p>Gaps and challenges</p> <p>This ranged from capacity building and funding to quality assurance</p>	<p>What are the gaps in the implementation of RPL in the workplace? Are there challenges, barriers or problems with its implementation?</p>

Interview question(s)	Responses	Themes	Research questions
in the business in implementing RPL in this region	c. Int 3: Ln: 204-212, 235-241		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how will you address challenges and problems impeding the implementation of RPL in the region? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Int 1: Ln: 160-163, b. Int 2: Ln:82-86, 89-93 c. Int 3: Ln: 246-256 	<p>Ways to strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace.</p>	<p>How can the RPL processes and practices be strengthened?</p> <p>OR</p> <p>What can be done to strengthen its implementation in the workplace – in the Northern Region?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where do you see this programme in the next five years in the business/this region? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Int 1: Ln: 174-180, b. Int 2: Ln:174-180 c. Int 3: Ln: 214-218, 274-281, 283-284 	<p>Sub-theme:</p> <p>The future of RPL</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. other information that you would like to provide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Int 3: Ln: 287-293 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What is your impression about this little talk that we just had? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Int 1: Ln: 197-210 b. Int 2: Ln:192-199 c. Int 3: Ln: 296-303 	<p>Request for more interviews – follow-ups</p>	

Table 5: Presentation of the themes/categories

From the above table it is evident that four main themes/categories emerged in the initial coding stage. As axial and selective coding was carried out, new ideas and additional codes emerged and these constituted most of the sub-themes for the different themes (per category). These themes are presented below:

4.3.1 Background information

This information was not regarded as a theme in the interviews but was included in order for the researcher to determine whether the interviewees were directly involved in RPL and were the right candidates. This was done by asking the three interviewees what their role was in the project. The interviewees' responses to this question were as follows: (refer to Int 1 Lns 2, 4-6, Int 2 Lns14-15, Int 3 Lns 17-22).

Int 1: *My role for the business for the RPL is the RPL advisor and also a coordinator.*

Int 2: *Actually I'm still busy with my RPL and I started last year.*

Int 2: *Eskom advertised RPL and I was involved with a few of the workshops that were presented and then I thought maybe I should give it a try and see maybe I could come through with RPL as well.*

Int 3: *... I participated in the third level where the project team was established, where I represented Distribution, and that's where I came in and my role being to facilitate the RPL of employees in the organization, and the strategies, equally and fairly; advices and provides the regions with the development, registration and evaluation of RPL with relevant SETAs which our SETA is energy seta, and create awareness and advices, division on RPL in terms of those learning processes and procedures, and business requirements as stated or required by the steering committee.*

4.3.2 Theme 1: Awareness among employees

The theme and its sub-themes emerged in response to the different questions that were raised with regards to aims, purpose, workshops and marketing strategies in relation with the extent to which Eskom employees are aware of the RPL practices in their organisation? Responses from the open-ended question in the questionnaire included such statements as:

Have not received information about RPL

I Don't know!!!

... Not so familiar with the subject therefore I can't give my comment

Everything. I have no knowledge of it

I have no Idea on what the RPL is or is it another word used for IDP?

Unable to comment since I am not even aware of what RPL is.

I am hearing about it for the first time. Inform us about it.

Unfortunately I do not know what it is.

Different questions were asked to interviewees to ascertain whether there were any awareness campaigns and workshops and how effective they had been (ref to intv 1 lines 64, 67; Intv 2 Ins 3, 9 and Intv 3 Ins 32, 41). The following interview responses were noted regarding how much coverage has been achieved through workshops, road shows and awareness campaigns:

Int 1: *We conducted road shows in two thousand and ten, ehh... but only in Polokwane, the whole of Limpopo area.*

Int 1: *The time we were doing these road shows in Limpopo, um, the attendance was exceptionally good, so many people came, and you know, they can't wait to be RPL'ed, so, they are waiting for us to give them a qualification which is ready to be RPL'ed*

Int 2: *Eskom advertised RPL and I was involved in a few workshops that presented and I thought maybe I should give it a try and see maybe I could come through with RPL as well.*

Int 3: *... but the marketing strategy they used also, communication department which packaged documents and also have road shows to ensure that RPL is organised.*

...It (marketing strategies) was effective only at certain regions, I can name some of this regions, where this is really working, it really worked, but other regions didn't...

Sub-themes 1.1: The purpose of RPL

Interview responses for the questions on the purpose and reasons for RPL implementation (ref Int 1 Ins 3, 6, 10; Int 3 Ins 3, 10 and 15) included:

Int 1: *It was introduced because it was a mandate from the government, um, that is the reason why it was introduced in our business.*

Int 1: *Um, We've realised that there are so many people in the business that do not have a qualification, they do have the skill, they do have the experience but not the qualification.*

Int 1: *RPL is going to make them to be accredited, it's going to make to them realise the importance of having a qualification as an individual.*

Int 3: *It was introduced because people who worked for Eskom, for some years, their experience was not recognised, in terms of qualifications. So they had problems about not having access to apply for qualifications, I mean for jobs, that is why RPL was introduced to recognise their prior learning for a qualification.*

Int 3: *The target was actually all the people who are above 35 years and again for all Eskom employees, but at the same time we also need to look at, er, start with engineering department, those who are at the Technical officials, and Senior*

technician officers because we have people that could do the job but didn't have the qualification that is why they couldn't advance in their work environment, those were the people to start, however it is covering all Eskom employees according to the procedure.

Int 3: *The main objective was, at the first, I mean the first thing was to make sure that em, all employees with no qualifications, but having experience, must be recognised. Secondly, people need to know the level of qualification, or level of learning, whether they acquired that formally or outside of school, it must be recognised. So that they... it can be in line with a national qualification.*

Sub-theme 1.2: Benefits and advantages

In the interviews, the main question asked was: How will RPL benefit employees or are there any benefits? (ref Int 1 Ins 111, 116; Int 2 Ins 28, 31; Int 3 Ins 116, 129).

The responses included:

Int 1: *Yes, as I have mentioned earlier, the benefit is salary increase, car allowance, cell phone allowance, and again, even promotion, the person will be promoted on a higher position, either in the department or a person will apply for a position and that person will get a promotion through that.*

Int 2: *With the experience that I currently have round about twelve to thirteen years, I don't need to apply for further studying if I can just give proof and evidence of everything that I have done and get through with RPL. Then I can obtain a qualification at the end of day.*

- *“Definitely hope I'm going to benefit. I know I will and for the company as well. Further studies is costing you a lot of money, with RPL it's not that costly”.*
- *“Because it benefits in a personal way, your development, your future, career, i mean you can apply for other positions than just the normal position you are in, and you can be RPL'ed in the specific job you are currently doing whether you think it's only one time you can't get be RPL'ed but no you can be RPL'ed much more than one time.”*

Int 3 said: *Eh, I am going to mention few of which one is personal development. Eh, and/or the certification of current skills and competencies without, progression to a learning programme, if the candidate so chooses; In other words, if a person has been accredited or registered for a certain qualification if he says enough, is enough, then its fine. But if he chooses to further to a learning programme having RPL to towards a qualification in a skills programme or a learnership. Progression to a learning programme, using RPL to fast-track progression by awarding credits towards a qualification through the learning programme; And another important thing is career mobility. Maybe I can expansiate(sic) on that. Career mobility, meaning that the candidate now starts having access to challenge, they can, they become part of sourcing, because in the past they used to say you don't have a qualification so you don't have to apply.*

Sub-themes 1.3: Marketing strategies

The sub-theme of marketing strategies emerged in an attempt to check on the level of awareness among employees. Responses to the open-ended question included such statements as:

"I only heard once about this when I attended a course in Midrand. Other than that there has been no further communication on it that I am aware of"

"Workshop will play a vital role to strengthen the RPL practice in our workplace."

"Awareness should be intensified amongst employees."

In addition to above quantitative findings, qualitative responses from the three interviewees included:

Int 1: *What we do actually is to do the road show, the road show is to bring an enlightenment to the people, so that they know what RPL is all about and for them to get an overview picture of what RPL, to actually is to bring the process, to introduce the process and the whole thing about RPL.*

Int 1: *The marketing strategy that we are using to raise the level of awareness is: Firstly, we had a meeting with the managers, and the reason why with the managers is for them to support this programme and for them to understand why we are doing this and once we got the support from the managers we will be able to do this awareness...*

Int 1: *For making awareness, we doing the road shows, we arrange a date and interview (invite) people in a big boardroom or either an auditorium where we going to do presentations to this people, to make them, as I've said earlier, to give them an overview picture of the RPL, so is to do the road shows, and also to...when there is a departmental or sectional meeting in the department, we go and do a presentation.*

Int 1: *We have conducted road shows in 2010, ehh but only in Polokwane area, the whole of Limpopo area.*

Int 2 : *Eskom advertised RPL and I was involved with a few of the workshops that were presented and then I thought maybe I should give it a try and see maybe I could come through with RPL as well.*

Int 2: *That (advertising) was within the department via e-mails, we received information.*

Int 3: *the marketing strategy they used also, communication department which packaged documents and also have road shows to ensure that RPL is organised.*

On the question of effectiveness of marketing strategies, the responses were:

Int 1: *The time we were doing these road shows in Limpopo, um, the attendance was exceptionally good, so many people came, and you know, they can't wait to be RPL'ed, so, they are waiting for us to give them a qualification which is ready to be RPL'ed.*

Int 3...*it was effective only at certain regions, I can name some of these regions, where this is really working, it really worked, but other regions...*

Sub-theme 1.4: Policies, procedures and guidelines

Above sub-theme - Policies, procedures and guidelines, was not included as a question per se in the interview schedule, however the survey touched on it and the sub-theme emerged from some of the open-ended responses. One survey respondent maintains that:

The current RPL policies and procedures was never piloted and was only applicable to some employees and not applicable to others which made it difficult to control.

Another one said

I have applied for RPL via e-forms a very long time ago. Nothing has come off it.

Responses from the interviews include:

Int 1: *It was introduced because it was a mandate from the government...*

Int 3: *The target was actually all the people who are above thirty five years ...however it is covering all Eskom employees according to the procedure.*

Int 3: *Firstly there was a message from Mancom, as I said, from, top level, assuring this mandate, Eskom gave mandate to all divisions to implement RPL, as I mentioned and, secondly, at Divisional level, there was also a project plan which was put together with milestones, where to start and what to do, how much its gonna cost, who should participated etc and really what are the benefits for employees...”*

Int 3: *Time of course, in terms of our experiences and even in our procedure we said at least six months, which is quite good. So you can actually, I mean, relate it to being in a university for three years and someone who is going through six months with the RPL and they are going to have the same qualification so on time yes, it is, it is ...*

4.3.3 Theme 2: RPL Trends and Practices in the organisation

This theme emerged from responses to several questions in the interviews. This was covered through questions 12, 13 and 14 of the survey. Questions ranged from finding out when RPL was introduced, and how it relates to other employees' development practices in the workplace e.g., IDP's, further studies, skills programmes. Below sub-themes and responses were picked up:

Sub-theme 2.1: Support strategies

In the questionnaire, comments and suggestions from the open-ended question included statements like:

“Our managers they don't promote and supports the culture of lifelong learning among employee”

“RPL should be well communicated and supported by management. Should not only be kept as theory in file in the business. Practical and visible support is lacking”.

“ It should be ensured that the senior managers together with the direct managers know about RPL and must also be compelled to implement it where necessary.”

“Management must fully support it because that would make new employees to familiarizes themselves with RPL practice”.

The responses from the interviews included:

Intv 1: *Firstly, we had a meeting with the managers, and the reason why with the managers is for them to support this programme and for them to understand why we are doing this and once we got the support from the managers we will be able to do this awareness.*

Intv 1: *um, The managers, they are giving full support, there are those managers that are giving full support, you know because of their concern about their staff which are like there is this one manager who said to us, I have so many people in my department, that have, they are good, they have the experience and they have got the skill, but they do not have the qualification, and it's a concern when an advert has been advertised in their department. And there are also those managers, that are not giving that support maybe it's because they don't understand, they did not reach the level of understanding what RPL is all about, that is why we said when we talk about RPL we should not just say RPL, but we should put it the whole meaning of RPL that is the Recognition of Prior Learning.*

Int 2: *Uhm, well there is definitely support from their (external providers) side, but as I said, you need to go there and they will assist you, whereas what I would suggest is, if you have a manager or a mentor that can assist you, sit with you, (within the company) that already have background of RPL that they can assist you compiling the portfolio of evidence.*

Int 3: *Ok the training of staff at the moment is that we have at least one hundred and twenty nine, I mean active who are ready to do RPL twenty eight Moderators who can moderate and we've got at least forty six trained advisors, RPL advisors to assist and facilitate the programme in the regions.*

Int 3: *Northern Region, they've got ten available assessors, registered assessors, and then they've got three available moderators, and they've got ten trained RPL advisors.*

That is a very important group. The line managers' role is to support, influence the candidates, and release them to attend the road shows, so that they must have a bigger picture of what is RPL in their environment, where they work, they also have to influence and challenge them to register for RPL as candidates and release them to attend RPL sessions and support them in the development of the POE and a very important thing is that they must announce in their respective regional or line meeting, management's meetings, so that they must know about it.

Sub-theme 2.2: RPL link/integration with IDP and further studies (current training and Development paths)

Interviewees' responses included:

Int 1: *Yes, there is a very big link between the two, because RPL is when you, we identify, in RPL we identify the skills gaps, by identifying those skills gaps we put them in the IDP so that a person should go and do those courses, you know, so there is a very big link.*

Int 1: *Once the eh skills gap have been identified after a person have done the POE, and it has gone to the assessors and moderators and they come back with a feedback of identifying those gaps, then it's either a person will do a short courses or it will be a full qualification, you know, after the gaps have been identified, and that it will be through further studies.*

Int 2: *Yes definitely, because if there are gaps within your RPL, you can apply for further studies and do the specific course or at a specific institution or via the post and that will close the gap. Definitely. Ya Eskom supports that, between further studies and RPL, it's going hand in hand*

Int 3: *The results of RPL, The results of Recognition of Prior Learning (let me say it like that) will actually tell us or the candidate what is that s/he has acquired, in terms of the level of qualification. sometimes that candidate can acquire the*

total qualification sometimes it can be part of the qualification and then that gap should be included in his or her IDP so that that can assist managers and the candidate himself to further his or her development in the organization ..., et that's how RPL can assist the IDP, it's something like the skills' audit like, because it tells you where are you, what is the gap and how do you close it.

Int 3: *if you have an IDP, those gaps identified, can be closed through not necessarily through further studies only but through skills programmes, education skills programmes, existing skills programmes learnerships, short courses and many other courses including further studies. So that at the end of the day that gap can be closed. Remember further studies can be acquired with institutions like UNISA and other universities. Learnerships you can make use of accredited providers through SETA's and so on, and skills programmes you can have an accredited provider to ensure that the person can close the gap in the qualification or further his/her development in the organisation, so that is how the end result of RPL has got a link with further development, studies included, i mean you can use even further studies to do that.*

Sub-theme 2.3 : DX Regional progress Picture

This sub-theme emerged from interviewees' responses on both the national and regional performances regarding RPL. The responses were:

Int 1: *As far as RPL is concerned, The people that were RPL'ed, we've got a group that was RPL'ed in a qualification on ETDP and all of them, they have been declared competent, we are waiting for the certification date. And there is another group that is still busy with the compiling of their Portfolio of Evidence, I will think, I will say that for the Region, we are doing very well.*

Int 1: *Yes, we do have people who are trained to be RPL advisors and if I can give the figures, they are about, I should think they are about seven or eight.*

Int 1: *At the moment as I am saying, the qualification that is ready for us is the ETDP qualification, and we have started with the ETDP qualification though we are in the process of identifying another programme for Customer Service department.*

Int 3: *Maybe before, Let me maybe first give you the whole picture of what is the current report, progress report, of the division. Our Divisional total RPL target is a thousand employees, who are supposed to be RPL'ed, the current year, I mean that is for five years. The current year target is four hundred and six. The number of applications we received is three hundred and sixty nine out of that four hundred and six. And the number of assessments conducted already is a hundred and forty two out of that three hundred and sixty nine that applied. And then.. number of staff declared competent, which is quite amazing, is only seven and I can tell you why it's seven, because RPL is not just a once-off thing, some of these candidate's Portfolio of evidence are in the moderation stage, waiting for the verifiers to finalise the RPL results, so that's where we are at the moment.*

Int 3: *Of the Northern Region? they've got ten available assessors, registered assessors, and then they've got three available moderators, and they've got ten trained RPL advisors.*

Int 3: *Right. As we speak, I'm going to take you through a six regional regions, including Head Office as is termed as a region. Southern region people who applied as we speak is eighteen, seventeen assessed, we are waiting for the results, that is why it is zero. Eastern Region a hundred and fifty one applied, ninety three assessed, we are still waiting for results. The reason why it's a hundred and fifty one is because lots of road shows took place in the regions and that's why a hundred and fifty one people applied. Central Region thirty three applied, sixteen assessed, waiting for final results. and Western seventy applied, they have not yet assessed any portfolio of evidence so far. And we don't have anything, and North West sixty nine applied, forty five assessed, we are waiting for final results. And, Head Office twenty eight applied, sixteen assessed, we have at least seven competent candidates. That is the beginning of the certification. So, And the last one is Northern Region. No one applied, no one assessed, no results at all. It is, so that's where we are at the moment.*

Int 3: *Yes, we have already started because we have got now eh, HRD manager they called us, we made kind of meetings, and we've got plans, what we are going to start with, road shows, we got target groups already.. and then very*

soon we will be starting the whole process of RPL and then we will look the same as others as well.

Another question asked in the interviews was, "Would you say the RPL programme has been successful or unsuccessful for the period that you have had? The responses to this were:

Int 1: *In Eskom it has been successful, and for the Northern Region, Its er, those people whom we took them on the programme are still busy, it's still continuing.*

Int 3: *(this number can go up at any time) Anytime because at the moment the portfolio of evidence of Candidates are assessed in groups. So now we are ready to receive a fair number of candidates, that can be declared competent very soon. So from seven It can rocket up to a high number because remember, we've got already a hundred and forty two that are already sent through, most of them are now in the moderation stage, just waiting for the results, So it can rocket to a high number, and remember today, for this year we have got four hundred and six that is our target. However it must be noted that: not all the regions started at the same time so Northern Region is one of those regions, they are not even counted, they are still at zero, so we are ready to start anytime.*

Int 3: *At the moment, as I have stated, not all the regions started at the same time, so Northern Region is one of those regions, they are not even counted, they are still at zero so we are ready to start anytime.*

Int 3: *It was effective only at certain regions, and then I can name some regions, which showed that this is really working, it worked, but other regions didn't, ...*

Int 3: *I can't say successful exercise because if you look at our results now we are still at seven. ..., it's not successful yet, because we don't have results for now.*

Int 3: *It is going to be there because many candidates' POE are at the moderation stage, the numbers at the competency level will rise, that will show the success of this exercise but for now, I am not yet happy. But we are getting there.*

4.3.4 Theme 3: Gaps and Challenges

The research question addressed in this section was, “*What are the gaps in the implementation of RPL in the workplace?*” This was raised to determine whether there were challenges, barriers or problems with the implementation of RPL experienced by both employers and employees. From the open-ended question in the questionnaire, the following emerged:

- *The current RPL policies and procedures was never piloted and was only applicable to some employees and not applicable to others which made it difficult to control. Further not all the required systems were in place to issue qualification...*
- *There is training but if you want to use the certificate it is of no use, (it is not good enough).*
- *not all the required systems were in place to issue qualification at the end, people has expectations that they will automatically get qualifications in a quick way, even the people who had an opportunity to study or started to work after the new dispensation wanted to reap the benefits, this was defeating the purpose of RPL which was to address and ensure people who started working more than twenty to thirty years (in my opinion).*
- *Not all employees have the time to check information on the intranet therefore it would be very helpful if your department sends out a communiqué once in a while via GroupWise to inform employees of your services.*

From the interviews the following challenges were noted:

Int 1: *Umm, The response was good, but the thing that was a lack to us is that, ah, we, the response was good but some of the areas, we did not have a qualification that was ready to be RPL’ed.*

Int 1: *... And there are also those managers, that are not giving that support maybe it’s because they don’t understand, they did not reach the level of understanding what RPL is all about ...”*

Int 1: *Challenges number one in implementing the RPL as I have said, the Qualification.*

Int 1: *People er, they want to register on a certain qualification and it's not on the unit standard as yet, and the other challenge that we came across, the time we introduced RPL the business has also introduced something they called Back to Basics, and we had to, we were supposed to train every person in the Northern Region in all those different levels, and again the business introduced also a qualification for all the supervisors, it's a leadership qualification for all the supervisors, so, you know all these things they came at the same time, that's why we said we have to keep RPL on hold until two thousand and twelve.*

Int 2: *Ya the collecting of evidence and time.*

Int 3: *Especially with Engineering – Engineering we had a problem of not having a standardised assessment tool because they were using quite a number of assessment tools and the audits realised that, and we were forced to come up with a standardised tool. It's a matter of adjusting the current tools, it's not far away from that one. And another thing was Back to Basics ...*

Int 3: *You know from what we... I mean from our assessments, we realised that Northern province had a problem of having consistent HRD, at times, they had three months, one manager for a month and then another one, it went though, it's already more than six years its happening, that is nobody could drive RPL and take accountability. And again something which was really... something which affected the whole organisation was Back to Basics. 'Cos they said we need to look more and concentrate more on Back to Basics, and we had problems. That is where, that is why Northern Region is like that at the moment.*

4.3.5 Theme 4: Recommendations to Strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace

The research question here needed to address ways in which the RPL practice can be strengthened in the workplace to ensure its successful and effective implementation. In the survey, this question was open-ended and respondents were

asked to say what they thought should be done to strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace. Responses were on different aspects of RPL, most of which were mentioned under relevant themes. Responses included:

Kindly let us know more about RPL

Promotions of RPL needs to be done by HR Training

Skill evaluation within departments should be part of RPL

Promotion and competency should be part of RPL

Grading and Wage evaluation should be considered by RPL

There should be career guidance also available for most employees as some people register for courses of which they do not know if they are following their career path.

The organisation must lay all the processes and systems in place before the RPL is implemented, all steps and role played should be outlined and appointed in writing.

In addition to above, interviewees were asked which aspects would they like to see included for future training and their comments from included:

Int 1: *... the awareness, people need to know more about it, they have to know everything about RPL, what it is all about, what does it entail, and yes.*

Int 2: *Definitely I would say personal assistance, regular visits, helping the RPL candidate to put the file together, because currently I feel they just tell you on a workshop what to do and you have to go back and do it all on your own. They do say you can come in for assistance, but as I said time, you still have to do your own job, so you haven't got time to go there and get their assistance.*

Int 2: *... what I am suggesting is, if you have a manager or a mentor that can assist you, sit with you, (within the company) that already have background of RPL that they can assist you compiling the Portfolio of Evidence.*

Int 2: *What I would say is, to give the employee, let's say a day or two per month, so that they can go out and gather the evidence and proof come back to the*

office and compile their portfolio of evidence. That's definitely, ya definitely one of the main factors because time, really time it's a problem.

Int 2: *Workshops, outcomes. You have people that have successfully completed their RPL, sent mail, advertise, get information from those people how did they experience the entire process, say /send pictures, I mean that's so positive.*

Int 3: *"Number.1, which is very important, we must ensure that we've got enough capacity to drive RPL, for example, having a pool of registered assessors who can come and deal with RPL meetings are really having gatherers, we must train more gatherers to assist us or to assist the provider to collect evidence within the organisation, as you know external providers don't really work for Eskom so we need people who work for Eskom, who can be able to collect what evidence which are relevant to what providers are looking for. And another thing, quality assurance - we need to assure that we have a strong or an effective quality management system so that we can identify areas of improvement as early as possible rather than at the end.*

Int 3: *"Campaigns I want to see organised labour included. I also want to see a Communication Pack which has been standardised, which has to do with the whole entire organisation, starting from National, Divisional and regional. Firstly, awareness campaigns I want to see organised labour level so that even candidates can understand what is the purpose of that. And in the training part of it, staff, we need to ensure that we have... we need to have registered as well as gatherers who enough to ensure that RPL is going well, as well quality management system to ensure that the procedures should be adhered to and be implemented, so... and we need to have Posters and what we call, so we need to have exhibitions where people must see RPL organisation...so that people can understand that RPL is taking place.*

Sub-theme 4.1: The future of RPL

The question posed to the interviewees was, "*Where do they see RPL in the next five years?*" The responses recorded from the interviews are as follows:

Int 1: *In the next five years or beyond, in the business I see it bringing competent people , I see it bringing confident people which are more confident you know especially you'll look at people with experience and with all those things but without no qualification, you find that somehow somewhere, they are not confident because of lacks, so RPL will identify those lacks and I see it being a tool that will bring staff which is confident, which is competent, so ya, it's gonna work.*

Int 2: *I believe, within the next five years, currently I think we are doing ten percent out of a hundred percent, I believe that within the next five years, out of experience from people that have already been RPL'ed, I would say round about sixty percent people and seventy five within the next five years that will apply for RPL.*

Int 3: *... for now ... I'm quite excited because management is showing that they've got that kind of support, and you can see it's a mandate from top management and candidates are now getting excited with their certificates for past experience without going to class, and I can assure you that in future we are going to have the whole 1000 people being RPL'ed and people can start going through life learning and that will be quiet interesting, and I believe that we can be an example nationally, not ...only Eskom.*

4.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter the data that was collected from the questionnaire as well as the interviews were analysed and presented. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study and the interpretation of the results.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 focused mainly on the analysis and presentation of the results and findings. In this chapter, the focus is on the discussion and interpretation of the findings emanating from the data analysed in chapter four.

SECTION A: Background information

From the questionnaire responses the following findings based on Statements 1-10 emerged. Based on the data in Table 4.1, Africans (59%) responded in the majority. This is the group that characterise the majority of the previously disadvantaged group who were excluded by the education system and policies of the apartheid era. Although the 30-35 age group responded in the majority, the 46+ responses were second highest, a group also targeted according to *Eskom* RPL guidelines.

It also emerged that employees with a diploma showed a high response rate compared to those with grade 12, although second highest. Remarkably, those who most need upliftment, Grade 11 and below, were the lowest (1.7%). This is the group that forms the majority of the workforce in *Eskom* (recent awards presentation). Possible reasons for their low response rate could be related to computer illiteracy, lack of access to PCs, or lack of information, as opposed to lack of interest.

It appears that areas where employees were located had an effect on the respondents' rates. The majority were from Pretoria (49.2%), followed by Witbank and Rustenburg (11.6%), with Nelspruit and Kanyamazane least. However, there was an oversight of Limpopo falling under Rustenburg, that creating slight confusion for Limpopo respondents who did not know whether to choose Pretoria or Rustenburg. Others might have chosen Pretoria. Nonetheless, respondents seemed to be disadvantaged or advantaged by the areas they were in.

Findings also revealed that the majority of respondents were in the category T08 and below (45.5%) and T09-13 (40.9%). Employees in higher grades scored way below 10%. It is significant this majority of respondents fall within *Eskom's* main target

group T08 and below. The reasons may be that mostly these are old employees who have spent many years in the business, since new and young entrants join the business with qualifications and get better positions. However, contradictory findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (38.8%) had spent between 0-5 years with *Eskom* (as well as experience in their current positions), as opposed to those with 20+ years with *Eskom*, of whom only 19% responded. The reason for this could be that although the young are better qualified and graded, their level of interest in developing themselves (curiosity level) remains higher than that of their older counterparts, who might be 'in their 'comfort-zones' or have given up on any opportunities for growth.

From the findings, the majority of the respondents showed a high level of satisfaction in their job and performed at their peak. The results also indicate that the majority of the respondents strongly agree (33.9%) to agree (43.0%) that their job matched their skills, competences and qualifications, which could be the reason for the high percentage of job satisfaction. However, results indicate that the level of morale of the majority stood at 75%, while only 29,8 were at 100%. So, although respondents were satisfied and performing at their peak, their morale level was not high.

In summary, the background information results indicate that the level of interest in RPL among respondents changed and varied according to race, age group, area, qualifications, task grading and years of experience in the organisation, as did their levels of morale, satisfaction and performance. This relates to Moore's (2002) argument that "...RPL will directly address the self-confidence factor that has been so badly undermined by recent economic and employment trends in South Africa". It is probable that RPL would boost the morale and confidence of the employees and bring about a comprehensive balance to the organisation.

SECTION B

The discussions were arranged by first grouping the interpreted findings thematically and then discussing the themes under the relevant research sub-questions.

Theme 1: Knowledge, understanding and awareness on RPL

Research question 1: *What is the level of awareness about RPL among employees in the Northern Region?*

Sub-themes 1.1: The purpose of RPL

This question was raised in order to check the level of awareness about RPL among employees in the Northern Region. From the findings, the analysis of the data revealed much uncertainty among employees in the Northern Region distribution. For instance, on the one hand, 59.8% respondents admitted to knowing about RPL and 56% having attended a workshop/presentation, while on the other hand only 40.2% agreed to understanding the aim and purpose of RPL. Moreover, qualitative findings also highlighted lack of information of RPL. In contradiction to 59.8% admitting to knowing about RPL and 56% having attended a workshop/presentation, the majority were still not sure about the purpose or aims of RPL. It must be noted that among the 19.3 (11.2 + 8.1) responses that indicated having been RPL'ed, it was actually done by outside institutions not as an *Eskom* initiative. In total, 79.8 of the respondents have not been RPL'ed.

From the literature review in particular, *Eskom* policies and guidelines on RPL (Eskom 2007; Eskom 2010), there is a clear stipulated purpose which is in line with the NQF. Qualitative responses also highlighted the government's mandate for the business to recognise and credit people with skills, experience and knowledge, but without qualifications. However, it is evident that the information has not yet reached everyone in the business.

Sub-themes 1.2: Benefits and advantages of RPL

The benefits of RPL cannot go unnoticed. Both the Literature review, including national policy documents and *Eskom* procedures (Eskom 2007), have demonstrated the importance of RPL and its benefits to all stakeholders. These vary from promotion of a lifelong learning culture, as encouraged by the National Education Policy Act (no. 27 of 1996), to providing excellent prospects for the individual, companies and society in general, as noted by the Danish Government policy paper on RPL (2005). Learning, as noted by the OECD, whether it is recognised through formal credits towards qualifications or by other means, is important in meeting the career, social and personal aspirations of individual learners (Grunning *et al*, 2008:2). Furthermore, beyond the needs of individuals, the establishment of systems of non-formal and informal learning also has the potential to enrich the social, economic and cultural well-being of the country.

From the findings, it is evident that respondents agreed that once candidates have been RPL'ed and certified they have a better chance when applying for higher positions for which they did not qualify before (i.e., career mobility).

One other benefit for individual employees and employers is cost- and time-effectiveness, to which even the literature review bore witness. Authors maintain that RPL reduces the time learners have to spend in training (Moore & van Rooyen, 2002). It is upheld in the national principle that a recognition procedure should be cheaper than the corresponding full-time formal programme (Werquin, 2010). However, benefits such as salary increase, car and cell phone allowances and promotion could not be backed up or substantiated. There seemed to be a sense of uncertainty or commitment from top management and not even the policy addresses any connections of RPL qualification and the remuneration strategy. Again, the *Eskom* RPL procedure (Eskom 2007) does not include promotion as one of SAQA's purposes.

Sub-themes 1.3: Marketing strategies

From the findings, marketing emerged as the most powerful tool in creating and promoting RPL awareness among employees. The sub-theme of marketing

strategies emerged while checking on the level of awareness among employees. In the survey, this was covered to check the percentage who had attended a workshop or presentation on RPL. From the responses, only 2.6% strongly agreed to having attended while 36.6% strongly disagreed. Findings indicated an urgent need for awareness to be intensified amongst employees. This is in spite of the positive responses from the interviewees about the road show, campaigns and presentations held to date in the region.

Again, from the above, it is evident that vigorous and visible marketing strategies have to be embarked upon to raise the level of awareness among employees and to ensure 100% coverage even to the field worker, bearing in mind that not all employees are computer literate. As confirmed by national and regional RPL coordinators, many areas in the region still need to be provided with the opportunity to attend workshops and be covered by campaigns.

The cries and calls from employees for information and communication as recorded in the analysis/findings cannot be over-emphasised. It is crucial for the Northern Region to embark on vigorous RPL campaigns and promotion.

It must be noted that in those regions where awareness campaigns were radical the results were significant.

Sub-themes 1.4: Policies, procedures and guidelines

It was noted in the literature review that much work has already been done in the country in terms of developing RPL policies and implementing it from the SAQA Act to the National education policy. Grunning *et al* (2008) also reported that recognition of non-formal and informal learning is now high on the policy agenda in many OECD countries. Eskom can be applauded for having policies, procedures and guidelines governing the implementation of RPL in place as part of its skills development, from the national level to all its regional and operational structures (Dx, Gx, Tx, Corporate and head office). It is within these policies and guidelines that the RPL process and assessment processes were drawn and stipulated.

Findings have shown that these policies exist, however, 36.8% (28.1+ 8.7) of respondents agreed to them being readily available, while 63.2% (40.1+23.1

disagreed). It is evident from the findings that the current RPL policies and procedures had not been piloted, as one of the respondents claimed. Hence the emergence of calls from respondents for “clear guidelines and standards”, “the company to develop and implement policies and procedures for RPL” and “Policies and guidelines of RPL must be communicated to employees” as noted from various responses.

It is evident from the findings that it is one thing to have policies and another thing to have them readily available and accessible to people on ground level, as well as to have them implemented. This was also confirmed by research findings from the University of Pretoria, that the current RPL policy has not yet achieved its objective as a mechanism to address issues of social justice. Nor has it substantially increased the participation rate of historically disadvantaged students. This confirmed that good policy intentions do not necessarily lead to good practice.

Theme 2: RPL Trends and practices in the organisation:

Research question 2: *What are the trends and practices in the implementation of RPL in the workplace?*

Sub-theme 2.1: Support strategies

It is evident from the findings that from top management at national and divisional level there is support and governance in the running of RPL in *Eskom*. However, according to the quantitative findings, the majority of employees are not receiving enough support, for example, 43.4% disagreed that there were support structures in place, as opposed to 28.1% who agreed. Again, 39.3% disagreed that management fully supported and promoted RPL in their sections as opposed to 29.8% who agreed and 24% who disagreed with senior management’s convictions, as opposed to 9.4% who strongly agreed. It also emerged that the lack of management involvement, support and monitoring of RPL in respective departments and sections is a serious challenge in the region and the focus to address it must be expedited. Qualitative findings also indicated that although support does exist, it is not adequate and needs

to be worked on. The challenge of services and support emerged as one of the findings at Unisa (Kizito, 2006:132).

Sub-theme 2.2: RPL link/integration with IDP and further studies (current training and development paths)

Findings confirmed that RPL does not exist in isolation but supports and is integrated with other programmes for the development of employees in *Eskom*. The data confirms that there is integration between the IDP, further studies and RPL. In the survey 74.8% (37.2+37.6) agreed to the IDP contributing towards their professional growth and development, while only 10.3% strongly disagreed. Interviewees' responses also confirmed the link and integration of employees' development practices, as noted in below statements:

... there is a very big link between the two, ... by identifying those skills gaps we put them in the IDP so that a person should go and do those courses...

The results of RPL... will actually tell us or the candidate what is that s/he has acquired, in terms of the level of qualification. ... if you have an IDP, those gaps identified, can be closed through not necessarily through further studies only, but through skills programmes, learnerships, short courses and many other courses including Further studies.

Sub-theme 2.3: Dx regional progress picture

Reports and findings reveal that the Northern Region's RPL performance is still in its early stages. It was evident in the findings that some of the factors that contributed towards this slow progress were, inter alia, inconsistency in HRD management, lack of registered qualifications or unit standards against which to assess candidates, as well as other projects which took top priority in the business. However, some efforts have been underway. The milestones achieved thus far, as recorded in the findings, include issues such as staff development and training, target areas identified, other projects completed, and training management in place. With these achievements there is hope that the end of the year will see significant progress.

regarding the above theme, the literature review such as SAQA (2002), Department of Education, (1998b) Werquin (2010) etc, confirmed that RPL exists in South Africa with all the official national policies and legal frameworks. The challenge was whether this had been filtered down through the education system to the workplace. Survey questions ranged from finding out when RPL was introduced, and how it related to other employees' development practices in the workplace, for example, IDPs, further studies and skills programmes. It is evident from the findings that RPL does exist and efforts to implement it are visible/traceable, not only in HET and FET but even in the workplace and in *Eskom* particularly. As reflected in the quantitative survey and through the interview responses, it is apparent that much still needs to be done, as evident in the following four sub-themes.

On a positive note, the following milestones from the findings are worth noting: the region has 10 registered assessors, three available moderators, and 10 trained RPL advisors. It is ready to take up the RPL project for the business.

Theme 3: Gaps and challenges

Research question 3: *What are the gaps in the implementation of RPL in the workplace?*

A number of gaps and challenges impeding the success of RPL were highlighted by various authors (Deller, 2004; Kizito, 2006; Maboye, 2011; Cretchley & Castle, 2001; SAQA, 2004) in the literature review. These ranged from capacity building and funding to quality assurance. From the survey findings, however, gaps and challenges revolved around policies and procedures, proper control systems and information. Furthermore, findings from interviews indicated that there were challenges with regards to training of staff, registered unit standards and qualifications, standardised assessment tools, and lack of support from management.

According to SAQA, planning for staff development is critical for the success of RPL in an institution or workplace. The SAQA RPL policy is explicit on the need for the training of qualified and registered practitioners (SAQA, 2004). SAQA further maintains that the implementation of RPL will require the allocation of specific roles

and duties and the development of expertise in this area of provisioning (SAQA, 2004).

Theme 4: Recommendations to strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace

Research question 4: *How can the RPL processes and practices be strengthened?*

A number of suggestions were raised by respondents in this section. Suggestions and recommendations made ranged from aspects and issues of promotion and marketing to calls for management support.

While addressing emerging trends and challenges in RPL in South Africa, in the literature review, not only were challenges highlighted but solutions and lessons learnt from other countries were shared. The research question here needed to address ways in which the RPL practice can be strengthened in the workplace to ensure its successful and effective implementation. In the survey, this question was open-ended and respondents were asked to say what they thought should be done to strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace. Responses were on different aspects of RPL, as stated in chapter 4 section C. Aspects highlighted included awareness workshops, personal assistance, regular visits, helping the RPL candidate to put the file together, and sufficient capacity to drive RPL exhibitions.

Sub-theme 4.1: The future of RPL

The quantitative findings have revealed a high level of enthusiasm among Northern Region employees for RPL. For example, when asked whether they would like to be RPL'ed in the future, in principle 86.8% agreed while only 23,1% disagreed. This shows that a high percentage believe in the potential of RPL. Qualitative findings also showed interviewees' optimistic and positive opinion about the future of RPL. They saw it as being successful in fulfilling its purpose of opening opportunities for workforce empowerment and transformation in the future, with 100% coverage in the region. All interviewees challenged the researcher to conduct interviews again to gauge the level of progress that would have been achieved by then (refer Int 1: Ln: 197-210; Int 2: Ln:192-199; Int 3: Ln: 296-303).

5.2 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the various themes based on the four research questions which can be concluded as follows:

With regards to the level of awareness about RPL among employees in Eskom Dx Northern Region, the current RPL policies and procedures have not been piloted within the Northern Region, the information has not yet reached everyone in the business, and employees' level of awareness is still low.

Regarding current trends and practices in the implementation of RPL in Eskom Dx Northern Region, RPL does exist in Distribution and efforts to implement it are visible. A number of milestones and achievements are noted in the business as a whole as well as in the region, however, a lot still needs to be done to ensure full and effective implementation.

With regards to the gaps in the implementation of RPL in Dx Northern Region, one can conclude that there are a number of gaps and challenges impeding the success of RPL as highlighted in point 4.3.4. These range from capacity building to quality assurance, and linking RPL to individual's development plans and further studies among others. It is certain that if or once these gaps can be closed, successful implementation of RPL can be achieved.

Participants' pleas and calls revolve around information sharing, workshops and campaigns, as well as management support as ways of strengthening RPL processes and practices in the northern region,

Every business should become learning centres where lowly qualified people who are stuck at entry level positions within organisations can be given recognition for their knowledge and skills. This recognition can assist them to move up the corporate ladder and free up entry-level positions for the unemployed and learners on SETA learnerships.

The next chapter summarises the study, makes recommendations based on the limitations of the study and closes up by drawing conclusions.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five focused mainly on the discussion of the findings emanating from the data analysed in Chapter four. In this chapter the focus is on the summary, conclusions as well as recommendations drawn from the discussions.

6.2 Summary

The study was designed to investigate the implementation of RPL in the workplace. To this effect, the following research questions were formulated:

- (i) What is the level of awareness about RPL among employees in the Northern Region?
- (ii) What are the trends and practices in the implementation of RPL in the workplace?
- (iii) What are the gaps in the implementation of RPL in the workplace?
- (iv) How can the RPL processes and practices be strengthened?

The research aimed to explore the implementation of RPL and the extent of its effectiveness in the workplace by collecting data that addressed the following research objectives:

- To determine the extent to which *Eskom* employees in Dx Northern Region are aware of RPL practices in their workplace.
- To explore the current trends and practices in the implementation of RPL in Dx Northern Region workplace.
- To determine and identify if there are any gaps
- To suggest ways in which RPL processes and practices may be strengthened in the workplace.

A questionnaire and interviews were used as research instruments for collecting data. The questionnaire was administered to a randomly selected sample of 242 respondents while interviews were conducted with three information-rich respondents. An empirical investigation was conducted to gather relevant data. The analysis and interpretation of the research results were conducted by means of the measurement frequencies based on the questionnaire responses and themes that emerged from the interview responses. The data was presented in the form of frequency tables, histograms and pie charts in accordance with the sections of the questionnaire and the themes from the qualitative responses. Furthermore, mean scores and ANOVA were computed to determine the statistical significance of differences between mean scores.

6.3 Recommendations

In order to reassert the value of RPL in the workplace, challenges to its implementation should be addressed and the role of government, employer and employees in the implementation process need to be detailed and clarified. To achieve this objective effectively, this section contains a brief summary of critical recommendations for interventions on the key issues that need to be addressed for the three stakeholders.

6.3.1 Government – Education system

According to the Department of Education (1998b), the national government has responsibility for ensuring the social and economic development of South Africa's young democracy, and for promoting the welfare and advancement of its people (1998b:66). These include, inter alia, better opportunities for recognising prior learning within the education system, where such provisions do not already exist and at workplaces. This can be reinforced as part of the workplace skills development plans, developing tools that support documentation of prior learning in cooperation with the social partners and stakeholders from the liberal adult education sector and voluntary organisations, as well as developing a quality management system (QMS). This will ensure that quality checks carried out at the educational institutions as part

of the general monitoring and evaluations of the different areas of education become much easier.

6.3.2 Labour force/Workplace

The calls from employees for information and communication as recorded in the analysis/findings cannot be over-emphasised. The Northern Region needs to embark on vigorous and visible marketing strategies, RPL campaigns and promotion to ensure 100% coverage. This will benefit even the field worker, bearing in mind that not all employees are computer literate. It is recommended that the business works on the following:

- **Dedicated Communication:** empowering the people with the relevant and updated information on a regular basis. Since not all employees have access to computers, various methods of communication to all employees should be used through the Dx Communication Department, for example, newsletters, brochures, and flyers, in addition to the email and intranet postings.
- **Availability and visibility of policies and guidelines:** the business should push and advocate the practical aspects. It must ensure that line managers encourage, promote and put these guidelines into practice in their respective sections. It is time to translate RPL policy into operational strategies.
- **The remuneration and organisational development and Human Resources (HR)** must be involved in the RPL process in order to address misconceptions and ensure real development pathways and employment benefits.
- **Ensure financial sustainability of the RPL process to maintain its cost-effectiveness.** It must devise strategies that will make the RPL process affordable and accessible for the majority of the population “without making it a restricted service” (Harris & Saddington, 1995:33), especially because the people who need it most are those who cannot afford to access it on their own.
- **Buy-in must be obtained from all the role players in the organisation, including the management and executive (SAQA, 2004).** It is further recommended that a collective effort from all partners, both in the public and private sectors, be

secured, for example SETAs, the Department of Labour and Department of Education, for RPL to be successfully implemented.

- A professional mechanism and procedure for certification should be established to conduct final endorsement of competencies.
- It is further recommended that there be a body, pool or forum comprising Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from every section of the value chain (HR, Communication, Commercial Services, Business Strategy and Planning, Finance, Engineering, Risk management, IM and Sales and Customer service Representatives) to serve as a Quality Assurance Committee, to provide advice and guidance whenever necessary. Similar to 'support structures', as suggested in the (SAQA, 2004:22), and with the help of this body, the business could even work on expanding its accreditation to other fields outside the engineering / line construction, to avoid outsourcing and dependency on external providers. In this way the business will ensure that, on one hand, finances are not misappropriated and over spent on external providers, while on the other empowering and optimising its existing resources.
- RPL should be included as an option and opportunity for further development in every employee's individual development plan, even before he or she opts for other forms, such as further studies or skills programmes. Furthermore, it should form part of IDP discussions between line manager, HRD and employees in their annual IDP update sessions. This might even reduce the high volumes of further study applications, which appears to be the only option available currently.
- Although this study does not suggest that awareness alone will provide solutions or answers to all the challenges confronting the implementation of RPL in the region, it is seen as a foundation upon which The RPL process could be established and effectively implemented. It must be noted that in those regions where awareness campaigns were radical even the results were significant. This shows that even the Northern Region can be successful in implementing RPL.

It is further recommended that, as the business embarks on standardising, simplifying and optimising all its processes, the Northern Region could use, refer and keep regular contact with regions that have advanced, such as KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Region and Head office. The future of RPL, as evident from the findings, is

definitely promising. From the responses, all participants are optimistic and RPL, if fully utilised with all identified gaps closed as suggested and recommended throughout this chapter, will see *Eskom* not only reaching its pilot targets but also reaching across all fields and all ages. The business must start working on unit standards and qualifications across the fields in order to be able to take up the challenge and join in the national struggle to eradicate the injustices of the past and foster a culture of lifelong learning, while also producing a skilful and productive workforce that will be in a better position to contribute meaningfully to the national economy.

6.3.3 Individual level

Recommendations for the individual can be summed up in the main purposes of RPL as outlined in the introduction, vis., personal development, progression into a learning programme, promotion, and career or job change. This encourages the individual to put him/herself in a better position to achieve the above goals, take ownership of the process, make use of the opportunity, and inherit or adopt a culture of lifelong learning.

Finally, it is concluded that although the literature review vividly expressed that, to a large extent, RPL has challenges and a multitude of critics, with support from the government and an effort by all stakeholders to deal with challenges that impeded the implementation of RPL in *Eskom*, its potential for transforming the workplace cannot be underestimated. If all identified gaps can be closed, RPL will yield the desired and long overdue results of building a competent and confident workforce that can compete globally.

6.4 Limitations and recommendations for further research

The main focus of this study was on the implementation of RPL in the workplace, with particular reference to *Eskom* Dx in the Northern Region. In analysing the findings, the four topics discussed below were seen as limitations of the study since the study could not address them in details. These resulted to the researcher 's recommendations for further research as well.

6.4.1 Other Fields of studies

One of the responses from the open-ended questions was “*Research must be done on courses especially for security department, relevant institution have enough information to share with us on security management*”. Since it emerged that the focus is currently on engineering, further research into other fields of study and content of training programme is required, for example Information Technology, HR, and project management. A needs analysis should be considered to identify the key aspects of the future training required to promote learning and career development and growth among employees.

6.4.2 Extension of study findings to other divisions (Gx, Tx, Corporate and Head Office)

The study findings should be extended to other divisions in *Eskom*, since most of the challenges associated with implementation of RPL are common and demand common interventions. Lessons can be learnt from other divisions in order to standardise, simplify and optimise RPL practices in the business.

6.4.3 Possible barriers to effective learning and assessment practices

There is a need to identify, reduce and eliminate possible barriers to learning that might be the cause of lack of or low interest among the older and previously disadvantaged groups. Issues such as language, literacy levels, evidence collection and assessments or test phobias can have a negative impact on candidates. Research needs to be done on how such barriers can be reduced or eliminated.

6.4.4 RPL misconceptions

Misconceptions about what RPL is not, for example credit for life, credit for experience, not a quick and easy route, and not a cheap option, requires further research.

6.5 Conclusions

The results of the study led to the following conclusions:

- I. The level of awareness about RPL among employees in the Northern Region is very low.
- II. The trends and practices in the implementation of RPL in the workplace indicate that policies and guidelines are there but not readily accessible or well communicated.
- III. There are a number of gaps in the implementation of RPL in the workplace.
- IV. Suggestions and recommendations from respondents show that the RPL processes and practices can be strengthened.

The researcher's conclusion, on the basis of the findings, is that although there is an effort by the government and *Eskom* to foster a culture of learning in the workplace through RPL, very little progress has been made in implementing meaningful RPL in the Northern Region. Again, a number of employees are still not yet aware or up to date with RPL and how it can benefit them. There is an urgent need to have this effort transferred from a debate of ethos into a practical, workable and understandable process which will benefit all stakeholders. As one respondent commented, "... *stop preaching it, do it*".

Finally, the national objective of transforming the society through access, redress, training and empowerment opportunities, as well as career paths, can be achieved through RPL. However, it takes two to tango, but in this case, it takes three to reassert the value of RPL in the workplace:- the government, the employer and the employee.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: COPY OF LETTER: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

**To Whom It May Concern**

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

University of South Africa encourages responsible research that will be beneficial to the researcher, the University, and the community at large by exploring new ideas, broadening understanding of a particular field of study and seeking solutions to existing problems.

On behalf of the Teacher Education Department (UNISA), I hereby request permission for our student to conduct academic research in your organization. The details are as follows:

1. Name of Researcher: **Mrs Mary-Jane Makeketa**
2. Address of Researcher: **1096 Rhifumo Street
Block DD
Soshanguve
0152**
3. Email Address: **Mary-Jane.Makeketa@eskom.co.za**
4. Telephone Numbers: **Office: 012 484 5029
Fax: 086 539 7110
Mobile: 082 348 2376**
5. Reason for conducting research: **Necessary to complete the requirements for a Masters degree**
6. Research Topic: **Recognition of Prior Learning for Designated Employees at the Workplace: A Case Study of Eskom Distribution Employees in the Northern Region, South Africa**
7. Details of Research Supervisor: **Dr M.C Maphalala
University of South Africa
School of Education: Department of Teacher Education
AJH Van Der Walt Building, Room 7-53
No. 1 Preller Street, Mucleneuck Ridge, Pretoria
+27 83 430 1088
+27 12 429 4381
mphalmc@unisa.ac.za**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Maphalala", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dr M.C Maphalala
Research Supervisor

APPENDIX 2: COPY OF LETTER: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



M.S. Makeketa

Eskom
P.O. Box 36099
MENLO PARK
0102

Date:
14th November 2011

Enquiries: Ingrid Diale
Tel +27 12 421 3106

Dear Researcher

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your letter of request bears reference:

- Eskom Distribution, Northern Region wishes to inform you that you are granted permission to conduct the research **“Recognition of Prior Learning for Designated Employees at the Workplace. A Case Study of Eskom Distribution Employees in the Northern Region, South Africa”**.
- The following conditions should be observed:
 - The research should not have any financial implications for Eskom.
 - Arrangements should be made with the relevant stakeholders and participants.
 - The research should not disrupt the flow of the business.
 - The research should be conducted in line with ethics in research.
 - The final product of your study will be shared with Eskom upon completion of the research assignment.
- This letter should be produced as evidence that permission for this activity has been granted.

Eskom appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your studies.

Yours sincerely

Ingrid Diale
Human Resource Development Manager

Distribution, Northern Region
HRD
No. 1 Gobie Street
P.O. Box 36099, MENLO PARK, 0102, SA
Tel +27 12 421 3106 Fax 086 666 8289 www.eskom.co.za

Eskom Holdings SOC Limited Reg No 2002/015527/06

APPENDIX 3: COVERING LETTER OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent

Re: Request to participate in below research/survey

I am currently doing a Master's degree in Educational Psychology with the University of South Africa (UNISA) under the supervision of Dr MC Maphalala. My research component requires that I complete a research dissertation. The topic of my research is "**Recognition of prior learning for designated employees at the workplace. A case study of Eskom Distribution employees in the Northern Region, South Africa.**". You have been selected to be part of the sample through purposive sampling, which is considered as the most applicable sampling method to ensure collection of useful data in this study.

The questionnaire consists of three sections namely; **Section A: Demographic/background information, Section B: Personal Development and Training; and Section C: Recommendations.**

You are hereby requested to respond to the questions given below to the best of your knowledge about all the issues raised. The study adheres to the code of ethics, and no responses will be associated with your name. Hence you are not required to furnish your name in this questionnaire and all your responses/opinions are anonymous.

This survey should take you a maximum of 15minutes and I would appreciate it if I can get your response back by the 5th December 2011.

Kind Regards

Mary-Jane Makeketa

APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: DEMORGRAPHIC/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Complete the following statements about yourself by clicking inside the circle.

1) I belong to the following Race group:

1	<input type="radio"/> African
2	<input type="radio"/> Coloured
3	<input type="radio"/> Indian
4	<input type="radio"/> White
5	<input type="radio"/> Other

2) My age group falls between:

1	<input type="radio"/> 21-29
2	<input type="radio"/> 30-35
3	<input type="radio"/> 36-40
4	<input type="radio"/> 41-45
5	<input type="radio"/> 46+

3) My Highest Qualification is:

1	<input type="radio"/> Grade 11 and below
2	<input type="radio"/> Grade 12
3	<input type="radio"/> National Diploma
4	<input type="radio"/> Degree
5	<input type="radio"/> Honours Degree +

4) My Area Management Centre is:

1	<input type="radio"/> Pretoria
2	<input type="radio"/> Witbank
3	<input type="radio"/> Rustenburg
4	<input type="radio"/> Nelspruit
5	<input type="radio"/> Kanyamazane

5) I fall within the following Task Grading:

1	<input type="radio"/> T08 and below
2	<input type="radio"/> T09-13
3	<input type="radio"/> P/G 14-18
4	<input type="radio"/> M 15 - 18
5	<input type="radio"/> E – Band + Other

6) My total number of years with *Eskom* to date are:

1	<input type="radio"/> 0-5 Years
2	<input type="radio"/> 6-10 Years
3	<input type="radio"/> 11-15 Years
4	<input type="radio"/> 16-20 Years
5	<input type="radio"/> 20+

7) My experience in my current job/position is:

1	<input type="radio"/> 0-3 Years
2	<input type="radio"/> 4-10 Years
3	<input type="radio"/> 11-15 Years
4	<input type="radio"/> 16-20 Years
5	<input type="radio"/> 20+

8) My level of satisfaction in my current job/position is:

1	<input type="radio"/> 100%
2	<input type="radio"/> 75%
3	<input type="radio"/> 50%
4	<input type="radio"/> 35%
5	<input type="radio"/> 0%

9) I feel that I am performing at my peak in my current position:

1	● 100%
2	● 75%
3	● 50%
4	● 35%
5	● 0%

10) My morale level in the current work outputs is:

1	● 100%
2	● 75%
3	● 50%
4	● 35%
5	● 0%

Section B:

This section focuses on your personal experience on training, individual development and Recognition of Prior Learning at your workplace.

Indicate your opinion by putting a cross (x) over the most appropriate block using below rating scales (or electronically click on the appropriate radio button (small circle):-

1 = Strongly Agree (SA)

2 = Agree (A)

3 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

4 = Disagree (D)

1)	I know what RPL is all about.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
2)	I have attended a workshop/Presentation on RPL.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
3)	I understand the purpose and aims of RPL.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
4)	I have been RPL'ed before.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
5)	I would like to be RPL'ed in the near future.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
6)	My individual development plan (IDP) serves an important guiding role for my professional development and growth.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
7)	<i>Eskom</i> short courses are adding value to my learning.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
8)	The job I am doing matches my skills, competencies and qualifications.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
9)	RPL in my workplace integrates effectively with the competency-based remuneration system.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
10)	Policies and guidelines on RPL are readily available in my workplace.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●

11)	There are RPL support structures in place in my workplace.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
12)	In my section Management fully supports and promotes RPL.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
13)	The senior management has a deep conviction that RPL is the key to skill and career development	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
14)	RPL is serving as a determinant towards further studies.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
15)	My company promotes and supports the culture of lifelong learning among employees.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
16)	My company is using RPL to promote access to formal education and training.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
17)	Through RPL, previously disadvantaged group can have access to formal education that can lead to Nationally recognised qualification.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●
18)	My company promotes and supports career development among employees.	1 ●	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●

Section C - Recommendations

19) What do you think should be done to strengthen the RPL practice in the workplace? _____

20) Is there any other information you would like to provide or add?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Specialist/Manager	Employee
When was RPL introduced in <i>Eskom</i> ?	When were you RPL'ed? How did u know about RPL? Why were u RPL'ed, what was the purpose for your RPL
Why was it introduced?	Can you share with us the process that you went through from the beginning to the end?
What has your role been in the whole RPL programme?	How long did it take you to complete the whole process? How was going through the whole process like?
How has RPL progressed over the years? Since its inception how has the response been for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The training of staff? • Employees' interest and application responses 	How did it benefit you? What value did it add to your personal, career or educational development?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you say the RPL programme has been successful or unsuccessful in the past? Why? • What challenges / problems have you or the business experienced in implementing RPL in this region? • In your opinion, how will you address challenges and problems impeding the implementation of RPL in the region? • For future training and workshop purposes, what aspects of RPL would you like to see included in the training programmes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What challenges / problems have you experienced with this process? • In your opinion, how can these challenges and problems impeding the implementation of RPL in the region be addressed? • For future training and workshop purposes, what aspects of RPL would you like to see included in the training programmes? • How would you rate your level of job satisfaction before and after RPL? • To what extent did RPL add/minus to your morale and performance in your position? • Would you encourage your colleagues to opt for RPL? • Why/why not
What do you think should be done to make RPL valuable to employees?	What do you think should be done to make RPL valuable to employees?
Where do you see this programme in the next five years in the business/this region?	Where do you see this programme in the next five years in the business/this region?