DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF A MODEL FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

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by

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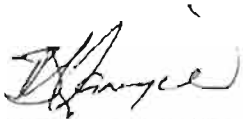PROMOTER: PROFESSOR L.R UYS

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DEDICATION

To all adult learners and their teachers. In every person lies a mass of knowledge and skills acquired in a wide variety of ways and distributed between heart, hands and head, some significant some insignificant. May all the learners and their teachers, through this thesis bring this mass out into the open, identify it through appropriate assessment, record it as evidence and let it work for all.

DECLARATION

I declare that

The Development and testing of a model for implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references. Permission to adapt the Self assessment tool used was obtained from the author as indicated below.

Thembisile Khanyile   15 November 2001

DEVELOPING BENCHMARKS FOR PRIOR LEARNING
ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION
PRACTITIONERS PERSPECTIVES
GUIDELINES FOR THE CANADIAN
PLAR PRACTITIONER

Written by Malcolm Day and Paul Zakos
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Permission is hereby given to T D Khanyile to
adapt the Self Assessment tool on page 42 and
to use it for the purpose of collecting data
for the present study

Author _____

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Date __17/06/2000__

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ABSTRACT

The Minister of Education's public statement in August 1999, that South African citizens should mobilize and build an education and training system for the 21st century, among other things emphasized the application of procedures for recognition of prior learning as part of the restructuring process. On the other hand the resolution taken by the South African nursing Council at the beginning of 2000, that enrolled nurses should be upgraded through the process of recognition of prior learning further increased the urgency for nursing education institutions to develop and implement RPL policies. In South Africa, Recognition of Prior learning (RPL)is seen as an appropriate approach to offer equity and redress of past imbalances in the education and training system.

The purpose of the study was to develop and test an appropriate model that could be used for Recognition of Prior Learning for nurses. To test the model, it was implemented in a form of pilot projects by three institutions. It was important for the model development to identify and involve all the stakeholders of the nursing education system. An appropriate design for the study was a multiphase decision oriented evaluation research. Stuffelbeam's Context, Input, Process and Product evaluation model was used to guide the research process.

The first phase was the development of the model which involved the Context evaluation. During the context evaluation phase, the Education Committee of the South African Nursing Council and the evaluative researcher developed the guidelines for the RPL process. These were refined by the stakeholders during the regional workshops. The results of this phase was the RPL guidelines. The second phase was the Input and the Process evaluations. Each institution had to make

planning decisions for implementation The result was RPL policies for each institution. Thereafter. the three institutions implemented the RPL guidelines to specific target groups of nurses that were identified for the purpose of the pilot project. Data collection instruments varied according to the phase of the model development. Checklists were used to measure the extent to which each institution had followed the RPL guidelines During the Product (evaluation) phase. candidates' scores were compared with those of other candidates who accessed the specific programs through the traditional entry routes.

According to the results all RPL candidates were successful in the programs they aimed at accessing During the testing phase after access. the RPL candidates compared favourably with other the other candidates who accessed the programs through traditional routes. The result indicate that the self- directed approach used during RPL helped the candidates in the actual programs. A process oriented and competency- focused model was developed through an inclusive process. Nursing education institutions and policy makers can use the model to structure and evaluate RPL implementation in nursing education institutions in South Africa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 2

Literature review

Chapter 3

Theoretical framework

Chapter 4

Methodology

Chapter 5

Results of the development phase

Chapter 6

Results of the implementation phase

Chapter 7

Discussions, recommendations and limitations

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
ABET	Adult Basic Education
ANC	African National Congress
APEL	Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning
APL	Assessment of Prior Learning
CAEL	Council for Adult Experiential Learning
CAPLA	Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment
CAW	Canadian Auto Workers
CIPP	Context, Input, Process and Product
CNAA	Council for National Accreditation Awards
CUP	Council for University Principals
CLEP	College Level Examination Program
CSS	Central Statistics Services
COSATU	Council of South African Trade Unions
DENOSA	Democratic Nurses Organization of South Africa
ELO	Exit Level Outcome
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
FNTI	First Nations Technical Institute
FS	Free State Province
HOSPERSA	Health and Other Services Personnel Trade Union of South Africa
JET	Joint Education Trust
KZN	Kwa Zulul Natal
LET	Learning from Experience Trust

NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union
NTB	National Training Board
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers in South Africa
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OSCE	Objective Structured Clinical Evaluation
PLA	Prior Learning Assessment
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SADNU	South African Democratic Nurses Union
SANC	South African Nursing Council
SAQA	South African Qualifications Act
SAQAu	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector for Education and Training Authority
UCT	University of Cape Town
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WHEP	Workers Higher Education Project
R2175	South African Nursing Council Regulation for the Education and Training of enrolled nurses.
R425	South African Nursing Council Regulation for the Education and Training of nurses.

LIST OF TABLES

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LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Nursing education is concerned with the education and training of nurses for the practice of nursing. This training has to occur within the most economical means. The nursing education system in South Africa, like all other organisational systems, is faced with challenges from the different sectors that make up the systems. For nursing education these sectors are: health, economic, and educational. Changes in any of these sectors have a direct influence on nursing education. Within the context of this study, it is necessary to trace these changes to appreciate the influence these changes have had on the development of the Recognition of Prior Learning system for South African nurses.

The need to transform the South African education system has been the subject of intense debate and discussions since the early 1970s. A systematic investigation done by the Committee of University Principals (CUP) in 1987 brought important issues to the fore by emphasising the importance of quality and uniform standards in South Africa. This investigation revealed that standards varied from a level which could be compared with the best international universities to standards that were barely acceptable at tertiary level (CUP 1987:100). This wide variation in standards resulted from the historical development of South African higher education against a background of the apartheid legacy which created inequality amongst institutions.

With the inception of the democratically elected government in 1994, the Department of Education was faced with the responsibility of bringing about justice and equality in education. The then Education Minister committed his department to the concept of a single coordinated system of education and training with the aim of redressing past inequalities in the education system. This single coordinated system of education and training was intended to ensure that access to higher education would expand, but within the context of limited increase in public expenditure. The concept implied a total rethinking of the entire education system, as well as a transformation of curricula and programs and required the development of a new system which would also enhance quality. The maintaining of quality was important if this system was to be comparable with others internationally. The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) responded to this challenge and in its report recognised the development of a new quality assurance system within the broad ambit of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (NCHE Report 1996: 47).

To address the compartmentalisation of education and training, the absence of norms and standards as well as the need for international recognition of South African tertiary qualifications, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established. According to this system, higher education programmes would be registered within a single coherent framework, based on a laddered set of qualifications from higher education certificates and diplomas to master and doctoral degrees. According to SAQA, all qualifications would be recognised in terms of this quality assurance system. This NQF is based on a system of credits for achieved learning outcomes and its aims are to develop a comprehensive qualifications structure and an integrated approach to education and training (NCHE 1996:46). Through the NQF, all consumers of qualifications and learners can be assured that the programme or qualification is of good standard.

The SAQA has presented a framework to guide the users of the education and training system. Educational institutions, including those of nursing education, have the task of determining standards for entry and those for exit and the duration of each course. Educational institutions must assure quality learning (throughput) to ensure quality standards (output). At implementation level, these new policies imposed a dilemma. The institutions which had to implement these policies were uncertain about how the NQF principles were to be implemented, especially those that dealt with access and portability of credits. These requirements challenged the educators at delivery level to rethink the whole culture of teaching and learning. The major principle of the NQF is the principle of recognition of prior learning. This recognition of prior learning had to be pursued across all sectors of education and training (Musker 1998:8). Educators had some concerns about the practicability of its implementation. The education system has recognised prior learning in the past through the Joint Matriculation Board which issued certificates to adults based on the notion that learning might take place outside the educational boundaries. This new concept of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has been seen by the Department of Education and other sectors as a vehicle for redressing past inequalities but how it is to be implemented is seen from differing points of view by all those affected. From the labour sector, RPL is seen as a means for accreditation and hence increasing chances of employment and or promotion. Organised labour has raised concerns about the fact that learning in higher education is 'book bound' meaning that it is theoretical and conservative and therefore not easily transferable to life or work situations. Organised labour has also raised concerns about the present assessment systems which are only suitable for formal structured learning in higher education (COSATU 1996; Harris 1998:125).

From the academic sector which implements the policy, RPL is seen to ensure progression and to widen access into programmes for learners who have historically been denied this access. There are concerns from the academic sector about academic standards that will be threatened by the implementation of RPL. Academics have also raised concerns about the tensions between theoretical and practical knowledge, simple versus complex knowledge that is derived from critical thinking. According to the academics, more research is needed on how this knowledge from experience will be assessed in a manner that will not compromise standards (Gawe,1999; Musker, 1998; Le Goff 1994; Harris,1999).

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The above challenges impact equally on nurse education and training. Like all educational institutions, nurse education institutions have to register their qualifications with SAQA. The system of nurse education and training must also be unified into a single coordinated system, as previously the education system was compartmentalised into different programmes. The South African Nursing Council (SANC), as the body that regulates education and training of nurses, needs to review the extent to which its activities accord with the requirements of NQF and the South African Qualifications Act No 58 of 1995 and the National Education Policy Act No 27 of 1996. The SANC needs to consider its role as the Education and Quality Assurer for the profession. While these issues continue to cause problems to the providers of education and training for nurses in South Africa, another set of challenges also exists (Department of Education, 1998).

1.2.1 From the health sector

The Primary Health Care approach requires that the curricula for nurses be structured to empower the student with the knowledge and skills to function as an independent

4

practitioner. South African nurses must therefore be trained comprehensively. The introduction of the District Health system requires the training and deployment of nurses to underserved areas at community level. According to the National Health Plan for South Africa, drafted in 1994, the state is responsible for creating a framework within which health will be promoted and health care delivered. This has led to the establishment of a single comprehensive, equitable national health system. This plan also required transformation of the education and training system for nurses (Department of Health, 1994).

The SANC took the initiative and proposed a model for the unified system of education and training for nurses. According to the SANC this form of training would broaden the entry points and allow for exit at multiple points. After three years the students could exit as generic nurses and after four years they would exit as specialist nurses. This unified model would allow the student to challenge the programme at specified levels depending on prior learning (SANC 1997). Like SAQA, and the NQF however, the SANC proposal was an ideal model only, there were no mechanisms in place to ensure that the model was implemented. The stakeholders saw this as a change in name only, they failed to see how this unified model was different from the present categorisation of nurses.

1.2.2 From the economic sector

In 1995, the Central Statistical Services (CSS) estimated that the economically active population of South Africa constituted 14,4 million people. Of those 70per cent were employed in the formal sector and 29 per cent were employed in the informal sector. The survey further revealed that only one out of every thirty new entrants to the labour market had found a job in the formal sector of the economy between 1991 and 1994. The average level of employment in the formal sector was 6.4per cent lower in 1995 than at its peak in 1989.

One of the implications of these statistics was that an annual economic growth rate of between 6 -7,5 per cent was needed to create jobs for new entrants to the labour market. A much higher rate was needed to reduce the unemployment rate (Valla, 1998:17). These rates reflect a shrinking economy in South Africa. All government sectors therefore, are applying stringent measures to ensure cost effectiveness in all institutions. Because the rate of enrolment into the diploma programme for nurses decreased as a result of the budgetary constraints, learners with matriculation had to resort to nursing schools which offer a one year training for enrolled auxiliary nurses, according to R2175 of the South African Nursing Council. On completion of their training these nurses find it difficult to find employment because they cannot be effectively utilised in the primary health care sectors where the need is greatest. Therefore, there is a backlog of nurses who require their qualifications to be upgraded to ensure that the Department of Health can effectively utilise their services (Khanyile, 2000:75)

These changes are further compounded by the 'brain drain' of high calibre nurses who are attracted by employment offers outside the country, as well as the exodus of older and highly qualified nurses through voluntary severance packages. Therefore, there is a need for the health sector to be involved in the production of manpower to ensure that the principle of relevance of programmes is implemented. If programmes for the education and training of nurses are relevant to the needs of the society, wastage and under utilisation of manpower will be prevented. Since nurses form more than 65 per cent of the health sector, it is important for their education and training to be transformed. There is a need for the following:

- Unification of the education and training system to eliminate unnecessary duplication and make programmes more cost effective.

- Development of a system that will ensure that the backlog of nurses who were not adequately trained are assimilated into the system so that they can be effectively utilised in primary and district health settings.

- Programmes should be structured so that they are in line with the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework, especially those that deal with progression, access and portability (Khanyile, 2000:73).

Research into methodologies to implement the NQF principles is necessary since presently there are no mechanisms in place to promote portability of credits between programmes.

Literature has revealed that in South Africa, RPL is seen as an appropriate approach to offer equity and to redress past imbalances in the education and training system of the country. Studies from other countries where RPL has been implemented revealed problem inherent with implementation. These problems ranged from assessment to accreditation of prior learning (Le Goff, 1994:429). Access or the ease of entry into appropriate levels of education and training for all learners in a manner that promotes progression is a problem area in the NQF.

In nursing, the entry requirement at present is matriculation or equivalent. It is still not clear however, how this equivalence is to be determined. The development of a RPL model is a measure to determine this equivalence to the traditional entry requirement. The present Bridging programme for enrolled nurses was thought of as a solution to historical problems in nurse education and training. Research into its effectiveness as a solution to problems of lack of access and progression revealed a new set of problems. For instance, the duplication of knowledge previously gained through experience, and longer training because the enrolled nurse has to start from the beginning are both problems that have arisen from the Bridging programme. These programs are centralised and therefore not readily available to all that

need it, and the cost of training have made the Bridging program unattractive even to those who need it (Nkosi, 1997:39). Through the study an alternative solution will be provided which will ensure that prior experience is credited, and candidates without matriculation but with appropriate prior learning from experience will be able to access training. This system, if implemented successfully, will ensure that the duration of training is shorter since successful candidates will be given an opportunity to access educational programmes at appropriate levels. Equity in the education and training of nurses will be afforded by a system that will ensure that enrolled nurses are upgraded so that they can receive a professional nurse qualification. This upgrading of nurses will help the Department of Health in terms of personnel retention and the fact that personnel of good quality will be effectively utilized.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

- As was mentioned earlier, studies from other countries like the United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada and New Zealand that have implemented RPL have described its implementation. Although these countries have well established policies and programs for RPL they did experience problems. In South Africa institutions that have experimented with the RPL concept also reported some problems with its implementation. In South Africa, most of the problems arose from differing perspectives about how RPL should be implemented. These differing perspectives led to differing agendas or purposes among the different stakeholders. These problems also affect nursing education and training.

- The fragmented nature of the programmes for nurse education and training make it difficult to decide the appropriate levels at which RPL should be implemented.

- That there are no standards against which prior learning will be assessed also poses a problem for the whole system of nurse education and training since the South

8

African Nursing Council will not be able to fulfil its quality assurance role without standards against which RPL practices can be measured.

- The nursing profession therefore needs to develop mechanisms to ensure that the objectives of the National Qualification Framework are implemented constructively but the profession, can only do that once more research into the concept of RPL has been conducted.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to develop a model that could be used to implement Recognition of Prior Learning for nurses the nursing education system in South Africa. The model will be developed in participation with the policy makers and other stakeholders. The model once developed will be implemented in a form of a pilot study in selected nursing education institutions working with certain groups of nurses accessing different program. Its effectiveness and success will be evaluated in terms of the success of candidates to access the different programs.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To set the boundaries for the RPL system by establishing the policy makers' frame of reference with regard to RPL for the nursing education system, in order to ensure quality control of such a system. This will be achieved by the determination of the policy makers' values and goals for the implementation of RPL. Research question 1 will attempt to achieve this objective.

2. To involve all the stakeholders of the nursing education system in the development of the model to ensure its acceptance by the profession at large. Research question 2 will attempt to achieve this objective.

3.To ensure that planning at institutional level is guided by the RPL guidelines. Research questions 3 and 4 will attempt to achieve this objective.

4. To establish the feasibility of the model by implementing it at selected sites to discover any barriers and alternative measures taken to overcome these barriers. Research questions 5 and 6, will attempt to achieve this objective.

5.To measure the outcome of the process by evaluating it in terms of the ability of the candidates to access successfully advanced nursing program. Research questions 7and 8 will address this objective.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1 What are the South African Nursing Council's values and goals with regard to RPL for nurses?

2 How acceptable are these to the stakeholders?

3 What structures need to be put in place to ensure the effective implementation of RPL?

4 What competencies are required by those involved with the implementation of the process?(Question 3,4 will be answered by the RPL model description).

5 Were the RPL guidelines followed during implementation?

6 Which step/s of the guidelines were difficult to implement?

7 Was the RPL system implemented successfully?

8 How comparable are the RPL candidates with those who used traditional routes of entry into nursing programmes?

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study will adopt a multiphase decision-oriented evaluation research design. While applied research seeks to understand problems and identify possible solutions, evaluation research studies the process and outcomes of attempted solutions. It goes beyond the identification of solutions by attempting to apply those solutions. The goal of evaluation research is to assess or evaluate the success of a particular program, the final step being the analysis of data so that some decisions can be made about the particular program. In evaluation research, the purpose of the evaluation is to answer practical questions for people who must make the decisions about the continuation, modification and adoption of policies, programmes/ systems. Stuffelbeam's Context, Input, Process and Product model for programme evaluation will be used as a conceptual framework for the study. The main questions addressed are: how should a given enterprise be planned (planning decisions), how should a given plan be carried out (implementation decisions), how should the programme be revised (recycling decisions). Numerous methods are used in decision - oriented studies. These include surveys, case studies, observations, advocate teams, quasi – experimental and experimental designs (Stuffelbeam, 1969: 100). Stuffelbeam used the CIPP model mainly for evaluating already existing enterprises. In the present study, since the concept of Recognition of Prior Learning is fairly new in South Africa, this system will be used for both developing and evaluating the system. It is for this reason that the four stages of evaluation will be used in a cyclical manner to enable the evaluative researcher to evaluate the whole process while it being implemented.

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This chapter provided the an attempt to put the whole thesis into perspective. Due to the cyclical manner in which the whole study was organised, based on the conceptual framework

used, the thesis outline will not follow the traditional way of presenting literature review, methodology and then the results. Chapter two will be a discussion of the literature review, and in Chapter three the theoretical framework that formed the basis for the study will be given. Chapter four will be a detailed description of the methodology. The results will be divided into two successive chapters. Chapter five will present the development phase results, Chapter six presents the results of the implementation and the testing phase results. The thesis will end with Chapter seven, where the emerging RPL model will be presented together with the recommendations .

1.9 TERMINOLOGY

The following terms are defined in the sense in which they were used in this study.

Competences

This term embraces what people know, understand and can do. In this context it meant all the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that those involved with the process of RPL implementation were expected to possess.

Candidate

A candidate is anyone who undergoes RPL assessment. For this particular study, the concept is used to include those individuals selected for the purpose of the study, including those used to compare with the RPL candidates.

Decision-makers

The Education Committee members of the South African Nursing Council were identified as the decision makers since it is this committee that is responsible for making recommendations to the Council with regard to education and training of nurses in this country.

Model

A model is a structural design consisting of organized and related concepts. A model is a representation of reality and not the reality itself. It helps users to visualize the reality. A model is developed by making use of related concepts, according to Torres (1986) as cited in Riehl-Sisca. A model is developed to give some meaning to the relationship between concepts. A model has three elements, namely a goal or aim, a prescription on how this goal will be achieved, prescribing the interventions and the agents involved with those interventions and lastly the guiding framework within which the activities will occur. In the sense that the concept is used in the present study, the model will fulfil the goal of providing a framework for RPL implementation (Riehl-Sisca,1989:7). The implementation model development in this study is circular, descriptive and process based.

Stakeholder

Since nursing education is a system, stakeholders are all those different sectors that influence, or are affected by, the functioning of the system. In this study, stakeholders were identified as the nurse educators, nurse service managers. The Department of Health, and organized labour .

Structures

This concept was used, to mean the determination of the resources necessary for the implementation of the RPL process. In this case, these included financial resources, human resources, administrative material and also involved policy formulation.

Effective implementation

This meant that the process of implementation would take the guidelines into consideration as far as possible should yield the expected results

13

Traditional entry route

This term meant the normal entry requirements for nursing programmes before RPL. In this case matriculation is regarded as the traditional route of entry for the diploma in nursing and the enrolled nurse certificate is regarded as the normal requirement for the bridging programme for enrolled nurses to become professional nurses.

Recognition of Prior Learning

This term refers to a process of awarding credit/s or access into a specific programme to a candidate on the basis of evidence submitted for assessment. This assessment will identify the skills, knowledge and attitudes that the candidate has accumulated from previous learning which may be informal from experience, or formal from other programmes.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To an adult, his experience is him. He defines who he is, establishes his self-identity, in terms of a unique series of experiences.... he has a deep investment in the value of his experience. And so, when finds himself in a situation in which his experience is not being used, or its worth is minimized, it is not just his experience that is being rejected (Keeton 1978:107).

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of selected theoretical and empirical literature. The review served several important functions. It helped to identify the theoretical and philosophical basis which guided the developments of the concept, recognition of prior learning. Empirical literature helped to illuminate the significance and the relevance of the study, since it presented different models and approaches used for the recognition of prior learning. The literature showed that most of the published works on RPL have been in the form of project reports and articles with authors' opinions and concerns about the utilization of the concept. Little research- based information was found from the literature surveyed. This lack of scientific studies around the concept may be attributed to the fact that in other countries, RPL has been viewed only as a minor activity which helps adult learners to return to learning, unlike in South Africa where it is viewed as a major social imperative. The absence of adequate literature further enhanced the significance of the study as it became evident that relying only on international experiences was inadequate for the development of a model for recognition of prior learning. For the purpose of this study, the term Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as it is called in South Africa, will be used throughout the text. The author is aware that other countries have different terms which share a similar meaning.

2.2. THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE CONCEPT RPL.

Experiential learning will be described briefly to highlight its relevance to adult learners and to the assessment of prior learning. Experiential learning is a concept that is as old as mankind, because individuals have always learned through trial and error, from tentative experiments conducted for the purpose of reaching a specific goal. What is often called 'learning by doing' has been integrated into courses offered in universities all over the world. The belief was that continuous exposure to practice would allow the student to apply the learning acquired from theory. According to Keeton and Tate (1978), experiential learning refers to learning in which the learner is in direct contact with the realities being studied. It is in contrast with learning in which the learner only reads about, talks about or writes about these realities, but never comes into contact with them as part of the learning process (Keeton and Tate, 1978:31). The experiential learning movement originated in the U S A, in the radical and liberal critiques of traditional education in the 1960s.

The experiential learning theoretical model was used by the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning Project to create and implement practical and valid assessment methodologies for assessing what people had learned from prior work and life experiences. Researchers in this area were, however, more interested in what people had learned than in how they had learned. In other words, the emphasis was on the outcome of learning. This emphasis on outcomes within experiential learning led to the creation of formal links between education and industry, since the linkage depended on accurate identification and matching of personal skills with program /job demands. According to Schon (1988), reflecting on experience enables its meaning to be grasped and its potential for future practice to be explored. People may reflect on action, by thinking back on what they have done in order to

16

discover how their knowing in action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome (Schon,1988:165). Evans (1987) discussed the relevance of experiential learning to R P L by identifying the characteristics of experiential learning and explaining how people were empowered through public recognition of their qualification after they had been through the Recognition of Prior Learning system and succeeded (Evans,1987:143). Experiential learning theory can therefore, be used as a basis for studies on RPL.

2.2.1 Prior experiential learning

As already cited, Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning, according to Keeton and Tate (1978), is a process that enables people to receive formal recognition for skills and knowledge they already possess. Since prior learning cannot be recognised before it has been assessed and because not all prior experience leads to learning, it is important for educators to design mechanisms to identify, verify and assess prior learning before accreditation can be given. It is important also to highlight the fact that it is not how or where learning has occurred that is important but the emphasis is on the outcome of that learning. According to Ekstrom (1983) there are two kinds of experiential learning. There is what is termed 'sponsored' experiential learning and 'prior' experiential learning, namely:

-   Sponsored experiential learning entails planned fieldwork or practical work which takes place outside the classroom but which forms part of the program. This experiential learning is supervised by the teacher.

-   Prior experiential learning is learning which includes both intentional learning, such as self-directed learning or non credit courses, and incidental learning, from paid or unpaid work as well as other life experiences.

When people talk about recognition of experiential learning it is the second type of learning that they are referring to. A program for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning would be a

17

program structure with its own administrators and counsellors whose objective would be to help candidates who present themselves for assessment with a view to either accreditation towards a qualification or exemption from a program or a particular aspect of the program (Ekstrom, 1983: 121).The method used for RPL is based on the following propositions:

-    RPL means recognition of learning acquired through experience but is not concerned with the experience in itself. In other words, the candidate will have to provide evidence of learning from that particular experience. What is evaluated is the result of experience and not the amount of that experience.

-    RPL is not an end in itself but a means towards an end since it is always done in relation to an objective, which is either further study or employment or for promotion purposes. Therefore, it is necessary for the people involved with RPL to consider carefully the objective/ purpose of the R P L program so as to be able to select the assessment methods most suitable for the particular purpose.

-    RPL must respect the autonomy of the institution, the quality of its work and the dignity of the person who requests evaluation.

-    R P L should ensure the transferability and the portability of credits from diverse institutions and employment settings (Ekstrom, 1983 :109).

2.2.2 Relevance of experiential learning to the assessment of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning has been based on experiential learning theory because a climate of social justice and equal opportunities in higher education accepts that people do learn from experience and the result of that learning can be assessed and certified at college level. Experiential learning theory offers a foundation for social policy and action since it can be used as a basis for constructive efforts to promote access to those who have been previously denied such access. Kolb believes that:

18

Experiential learning offers a theory of learning most appropriate for the assessment of prior learning and for the design of competence centred curricula. Lifelong learning programs can find in experiential learning theory a conceptual rationale and guiding philosophy, as well as practical educational tools (Kolb, 1984:108).

The proponents of experiential learning theory were concerned about the way in which learning occurred since their focus was on adaptation as the central role of affective experience. The influence that this theory had on higher education as well as on labour organisations was such, however, that these institutions realised that they had a responsibility for ensuring life-long learning. The relevance of experiential learning theory, as far as this study is concerned, is thus in its social utility.

Willingham states:

The great significance of systemic recognition of prior learning is the linkage it provides between formal and adult life; that is a mechanism for integrating education and work, for recognising the validity of all learning that is relevant to a college degree and for actively fostering recurrent education (Willingham, 1977: 60).

Most of the reported works on RPL were from educators who were generally influenced by the experiential learning movement. While some of these authors highlighted the relevance of RPL with the experiential learning theory, others were concerned about the inappropriate manner in which RPL practices were conducted in the name of experiential learning theory.

According to Keeton (1976), there was a direct relationship between an adult's previous experience and the manner the adult processed information. Through RPL practices, experiential learning could therefore be applied cost effectively (Keeton, 1976: 104). In 1995 Portier, Stanley and Wagemans conducted a study to ascertain the effects of prior knowledge in enhancing the student's learning process. A random sample of 67 first year social science students was studied to compare learners with a low prior knowledge state and those with a high prior knowledge state. According to the results, students with high prior knowledge

19

scores obtained higher scores in all parameters. Multivariate analysis of variance and related discriminant analysis indicated however that prior knowledge difference appeared more pronounced in behavioural dimensions than in knowledge. It would appear that experiential learning played a major role in an individual's prior knowledge and hence the assessment methods that would be appropriate would be those that took into account the source of that knowledge.

Research has been conducted into the effectiveness of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) on adults' persistence in continued education. Freers (1994) conducted a study on adult learners' perceptions of the PLA courses offered by community colleges. According to the results, learners who completed PLA at a community college went on to finish a Bachelor's degree or higher degrees at a rate of 71per cent compared to other learners who had accessed these programs through normal routes (Freers,1994:15). Pearson, (2000), conducted a similar study at Simpson College to compare the persistence level of two groups of learners, namely those who had undergone the PLA course before embarking on the degree program and those who accessed the degree program through entry credit points. The variables for the study were PLA, age, gender, high school rank and the grade point average. According to the results, PLA and the grade point average were the only significant predictors of persistence. Both these studies highlighted the importance of using the portfolio as a learning tool during the assessment of prior learning, as the portfolio clearly developed the learner's potential for continued education. Other similar studies have been conducted (Murrow 1983; Dagavarian and Walters 1993). According to these authors, the long term benefits of the portfolio PLA are greater than the short term benefits although it is the short term benefits that are usually measured.

20

Michelson (1986) argued, on the other hand, that different assessment instruments are required in the assessment of an individual's prior learning. According to her, approaches to prior learning assessment were grounded in theories of enlightenment and did not adequately reflect alternatives proposed by post modernism. Michelson asserts that RPL challenged educators with new value systems about the sites of knowledge acquisition (Michelson,1986:190). Tate (1983), concurred with Michelson that RPL assessment required new tools and techniques from those designed to assess learning from the information assimilation mode. Both these authors argued against assessment practices that were based on western academic assumptions about objective, universal knowledge. According to these authors, appropriate assessments would be those based on the individual's situated knowledge. Situated knowledge is understood to mean knowledge in context.

2.3 PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE R P L SYSTEM

According to Dewey, as cited in Tanner and Tanner (1980), one cannot penetrate very deeply into any significant educational problems or issues without encountering philosophical considerations (Tanner and Tanner,1980:102). This is also true of Recognition of Prior Learning, as the philosophical basis sheds clarity on the meaning of the concept .The intrinsic tendency for people to draw upon their own experiences for both knowledge and skills, and the vast accumulation of experience that an adult has, compared to a child, makes learner experience an important concept in adult education theory and practice. Although the experiential learning movement is not restricted to adult education , it has always found a very comfortable location there. Saddington, cited in Harris (1997a), analysed the place of experience within the various traditions of adult education and through a 'mapping' process addressed the place of adult experience within those traditions which are discussed below

21

Given the purpose of RPL in South Africa, that of redress of past imbalances, an observation can be made that the tradition influencing this ideology is that of New progressivism.

New progressivism was founded in developmental, humanist, democratic and pragmatic ideologies. According to its proponents education should satisfy ethical, social, political, empirical and practical grounds. New progressivism embraces old and new values, yet its aims are more affected by social, moral and industrial demands than was the case with the old progressivism. New progressivism carries with it a strong sense of accountability whereas in the past progressivism was criticized for being laissez faire practices in the class rooms. In new progressivism, the above ideologies are viewed not as conflicting but complementing each other like four pillars of a structure. In the South African context, as was mentioned earlier, the purpose of RPL was socio-political. Academics were challenged to ensure that the best RPL practices were in place and therefore the most appropriate philosophical basis was found to be one which would have all the above elements namely; social transformational, moral and pragmatic. It can be assumed therefore that the New progressivism philosophy has had a major influence in the South African Department of Education and Training. The National Commission on Higher Education and Training states that:

The education system needs to be responsive to the social, cultural, political, and economic challenges in the country. Higher education institutions should therefore commit themselves to producing a workforce with the skills that the country needs. This is education for relevance. To ensure this, governance structures will have to provide stake holders consultation and participation in the decision making process (NCHE Report, 1996).

2.3.1. Humanistic ideology

According to the humanist, experience is the source of knowledge and the content of the curriculum. As the learner reflects on his/her own experience so he/she takes possession of it in a new way and gains knowledge which is authentic because it is true for his/her life world. The possession of experience is seen as a personal discovery of knowledge which enables

22

the learner to become a complete person, resulting in self actualisation (Harris, 1997b:6). The humanist tradition focused on the individual and is not oriented to social change, though the individual as a learner is expected to function within a given social context through increased levels of personal empowerment. The individual actively engages with his/her previous experience, attaches new meaning to it and hence new learning occurs. For this tradition, two individuals may have been exposed to similar experiences but how they manipulate their experience may be very individual and hence different. Therefore, teachers have to respect the autonomy of learners. As the learners construct their own meaning from previous experience, they may access culturally or socially valued knowledge through their own agency (Silcock,1999:137). This tradition was the most influential during the adult education movement and led to the development of the experiential learning theory.

2.3.2 Reconstructionism or Democracy

According to this ideology, education should seek to explore that which is oppressive and dominating. Focus should be on bringing about a new social order. Knowledge is obtained through dialogue and engagement in society. As learners interrogate their own learning experiences they are able to give new meaning to them. Context (social) is regarded as the main source of knowledge. Prior learning is valued in and for itself and not for its ability to fit into existing standards or curricula. In fact, present curricula are challenged by this ideology of reconstructionism. The proponents believe that human experience is culturally and historically determined. One's goals are grounded in experience and values are attached to goals. According to these philosophers, learning occurs directly through one's experience and indirectly through the experience of others (Brameld, 1999). For them education is the key to all societal reform. The curriculum must be geared to the transformation of the rising

generation so that they embrace the goals and develop the means needed for collective social transformation (Tanner and Tanner, 1987:164).

According to this ideology, learning should not be confined to schools only. In other words, other sites of learning, like the workplace, should be recognised. This ideology embraces democracy as the appropriate goal of education and therefore is in line with the ideologies of the Department of Labour which sees learning as a tool for participation, transformation, democracy and enables people to take control of own lives (COSATU, 1996:35).The SAQA speaks about building a 'working democracy' in post- apartheid South Africa, therefore implying that learning must transform society

2.3.3 Technicalism

Value is accorded to experience to the extent that it matches skills and knowledge which have been prescribed according to national economic needs. Individual experience is always quantified and used to determine an appropriate entry point into an educational or training system. Supported by the human capital theory, education in this tradition becomes increasingly instrumental, utilitarian and pragmatic. Education becomes valued in terms of its usefulness to the labour market as well as the economic returns on investments in human capital. There is an emphasis on ensuring that people are able to adapt and fit into both organisational and societal goals. Thus economic needs are more important than individual needs. It is this tradition that has underpinned most established forms of vocational education and training internationally (Harris, 1997a :6).

2.3.4 Pragmatism

Focus here is on the development of the whole person through education, so that ultimately the whole society can be improved. Human beings as active creators of knowledge and experience are the source of knowledge. Therefore prior learning has to be manipulated to conform to the curricula before it can be credited, since it cannot be taken for granted that all previous experience led to learning. In an effort to strike a balance between the two above ideologies, humanism and democracy, the new progressivism teachers were required to seek that which worked best in a particular point in time without denying the inevitability of change at a later stage if there were a need for change. What works best under certain circumstances is more important than the differences between the ideologies. These circumstances might be differing points of view (Silcock, 1999:312).

2.3.5 Developmentalism

Learners transform society through their cultures and in turn are transformed by society. While this ideology is in agreement with Humanism that individuals construct their own reality, that construction influences the social reality and is in turn influenced by the social reality. Therefore, society requires critical thinking members who will contribute to its development. Through recursive perspective taking, people's thinking is altered and new meanings and new points of view result from reflection. Growth and development occur as people critically reflect on previous experience and hence broaden their perspective about the old experience.

One can conclude therefore that the perspective, the purpose and the approaches used for the RPL systems will be influenced by one or a combination of these traditions. It can also be concluded that different sectors view education differently and hence they will have different

25

purposes for RPL. For example, from an educational perspective, it would appear that the pragmatic, the developmental and the humanistic ideologies will play a significant role, especially in cases where the purpose of the RPL system would be for advanced standing whereas the technical ideology would embrace the concerns of the economic sector. In the economic sector, experience is valued only in terms of its market relatedness. On the other hand, the reconstructionist as well as the humanist tradition would be embraced by the labour sector

It would appear that non-governmental organizations that have spearheaded the implementation and the developments of RPL in countries like the U.S., Canada, South Africa and the U.K have all been guided by combinations of all the above ideologies. According to Tate (1983), the Council for Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL) revised its mission statement to include not only the development of the individual but also that of the whole society. This revision has been reflected in CAEL's latest strategy of working with groups than with individuals. It has also been reflected in its move from focusing on higher education institutions only to focusing on all sectors where there are adults in need of learning. The same can be said of similar organizations in countries like the United Kingdom the Learning from Experience Trust (LET), in Canada the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) and in South Africa the Joint Education Trust (JET).

Having discussed the philosophical basis of RPL, it becomes evident that the context of the RPL process is more important than the concept of learning from experience itself. This is especially so in South Africa, where the concept RPL is understood within political and social contexts. It would appear that for R P L to be implemented successfully, it is necessary to retain a strong sense of social context and responsibility for the broader social and political

26

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implications of R P L practices (Usher.1996).

2.4 ASSESSMENT METHODS FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The various methods of assessing prior learning can be clustered into three main categories: equivalencies, examinations and documentation, and demonstration of achievement. Some methods are more suitable than the others for particular types of learning. There is some evidence of faculty resistance to using some methods. Portfolios, for example, have proved to be less attractive than challenge tests to those that were involved with them (Koenig and Wolfson, 1994:104).

2.4.1 Program equivalencies

Sometimes learners possess significant training in their field, gained from employer related training activities, continuing education courses and other formal activities outside the post-secondary level of learning. In these cases, it would be more appropriate to set up credit equivalencies. There are basically two types of equivalencies: program and course equivalencies (Koenig and Wolfson,1994:90). Program equivalencies are better known in a traditional context as 'block credit'. In evaluating a successfully completed program, a professional certificate for credit towards a credential gives block credit for that program. Program equivalence does not measure the individual's learning. It is instruction delivered that is being evaluated, similar to the traditional articulation process. What differs is that the program, licence, or certificate being evaluated for credit is often from non-formal sources. Course equivalencies are better known in a different context as 'transfer credits'. Again, what is being evaluated is not the student's actual learning in a course, but the instruction delivered. The equivalence of the program undertaken to that which the candidate wishes to access is being measured. Whether the candidate acquired any new knowledge from the

program will have to be evaluated using other methods. The request for transfer credit could be for formal studies or non-formal learning. Especially in the case of non-formal learning, the R P L candidate bears the primary responsibility of providing details of the course content and evidence of his/ her achievement in that course.

2.4.2 Credits by examination

Some individuals acquire significant learning from the non-formal system which can be demonstrated through an examination process. This is particularly true in courses that are highly theoretical in nature. There are basically two options for exams: challenge exams and standardised exams.

2.4.2 1 Challenge examinations

Challenge exams are probably the most familiar type of R P L currently being used in Britain. A challenge exam is not a course final but is usually prepared by the instructor of the course being challenged. Ideally, challenge exams should not be text-based or require the learner to have been exposed to a particular instructor at a particular time. The exam should cover a wide body of accepted knowledge or concepts in the challenged course. It is, however common practice to use a course final (which is both text and instructor based) as a challenge exam.

Standardized exams, such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) are recognised by most post-secondary institutions in the United States but have not received acceptance in Canada. Introductory and highly theoretical courses lend themselves well to standardized examination, especially where the body of knowledge being tested is not specific, but universal in theme, like mathematics or English composition (Koenig and Wolfson, 1994:109).

28

.2 4.2 2 Challenge tests

Challenge tests are used to allow candidates to utilise their experience and prior learning to challenge a set standard by demonstrating the requisite skill as well as to elicit underlying theoretical understanding of such skills. In other words, challenge tests use both theoretical and practical assessments. According to Napier and Scott (1995), in one college challenge tests were used with ease since during the time of the project, the college had introduced competency-based training. Using challenge tests also depends on the course structure and the delivery mode.

Napier and Scott (1995) used challenge tests in two stages as introductory tests and in the advanced stage. During the introductory stage, key modules were selected for both practical and theoretical assessment. The practical portion was included to make candidates comfortable with the assessment. The theory stage was in the form of a case study which represented the end product (outcomes) of the particular trade in a structured way. Results determined whether the candidate would move to the advanced stage or not. They also determined whether the candidates required a top up depending on their weaknesses.

In the advanced stage, testing also consisted of a theory and practical assessment. Theory assessment consisted of multiple choice questions across all modules of the first stage. These questions were question bank of the particular college. One would imagine therefore that the approach used for the exposition of information would influence the assessment method used during R P L practices (Napier and Scott, 1995:88).

2.4.3 Credit by documentation or demonstration of achievement

<u>2.4.3.1 Portfolio</u>

In many cases neither exams nor equivalencies give learners the best opportunity to prove they know what they claim to know. In these situations a portfolio provides a better method for demonstrating and documenting learning. When a portfolio is supplemented with samples of achievement, this combination is known as the portfolio-assisted assessment. According to Koenig and Wolfson (1994), portfolio assessment works best with courses that have a base in practice and in which theory is seen as a rationale for practice rather than an end in itself. Portfolio assessment may not be the most suitable choice for learners who are requesting credit for highly theoretical courses such as most university courses or a course with a traditional academic content (Koenig and Wolfson,1994:201). The development of a portfolio varies according to the objectives of the student. For example the recognition of a credit is one objective and seeking employment is another objective. If the objective is academic recognition, competence must be related to existing courses and programmes of the institution and in accordance with the policies of that institution. When the portfolio is being developed for employment purposes, the situation is different. Not only must the student demonstrate learning and competence but he/ she must also demonstrate some qualifications that serve the interests of the employer (Napier and Scott,1995:89). The development of a portfolio is usually done within a particular course in the calendar of the academic institution just like any other course. According to Koenig and Wolfson(1994), of all the assessment methods, the portfolio has engendered the most resistance. It would appear that the reason for this is that the faculty do not have experience in this kind of assessment and tend to resist what is unfamiliar (Koenig and Wolfson, 1994:149).

<u>2.4.3.2 Case studies</u>

Case studies are used to make assessment of generic and industry- specific competencies over a range of applications, for instance in farm business management. They are used to supplement portfolio preparation where a candidate lacks documentation and prior learning or as an alternative means of assessment. Focusing upon examples given in the case allows both breadth and depth of discussion to occur. The candidates are assessed on their knowledge transfer and their experiential learning potential. Case studies have proved to be more flexible in the questioning part. Their strengths include the fact that they can be prepared in advance, they are structured according to the objectives and hence key areas can be explored with more ease than in the other assessment methods (Napier and Scott, 1995: 90).

2.4.4 On- job assessments

On- job assessment for employees was used by the T A F E project in England as one of its assessment methods. These assessments were based on the nationally accredited industry skills and managers were used as assessors. The assessment commenced with self assessment using the Rural Training Council's National farm skills guide (T A F E 1998). This assessment was then reviewed for confirmation. The assessment involved identifying what the candidate was competent in and the level of that competency (whether under supervision or without supervision). The advantage of using the guide was that it was nationally recognised and therefore an accredited document.

After this discussion of RPL assessment methods, the following observations can be made: that the decision on the choice of the method will be influenced by factors like the assessor's

31

experience with a particular method; the purpose / objective of the assessment (whether it is done for advanced standing or for employment purposes); the approach used for the particular course for which credit is sought; and the candidate's ability or familiarity with the particular assessment method. This last factor has implications for institutions wishing to experiment with RPL since using an inappropriate method may yield adverse results and defeat the purpose of RPL. One employee from the automotive industry confirmed this when he asked *How can we all fail when there are cars on the road?* (Govender,1997:122).

2.5 .MODELS FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Literature revealed different models used by educational institutions and organizations for the implementation of the RPL process. What became evident from literature was that the purpose of RPL, the prevailing ideologies about adult learning and the conceptualisation of the experiential learning theory, all played a major role in determining the model used to implement RPL.

2.5.1 Willingham and Geisinger's model

Willingham and Geisinger's model for RPL is process oriented as it describes each step in detail. According to Willingham and Geisinger (1984), the program for R P L should adopt the following steps:

a) *Develop a program rationale*

The administrators, advisors, assessors and the candidates should agree on the rationale for the RPL program. The following should be considered when identifying the rationale for the program, the credit value, prior learning to match existing courses or to be equivalent to credit given to courses from another institution. There is a need for a well established policy for RPL implementation. This policy should take into consideration of issues like recruitment,

32

personnel needs, availability of resources (both material and human), and the creation of an alliance between the institution and industry. Another aspect of the program rationale would be the students' justification for enrolling in the RPL program. Under these, issues like improving accessibility to job market or graduate or professional schools and decreasing the time required for college education by avoiding duplication of learning would have to be considered.

b) Define the program characteristic

Since a program to recognise prior learning will have to be formalised, stakeholders need to decide on the following, the size of the program in terms of student numbers as well as the numbers of personnel for example the administrators, counsellors and assessors; the coordination of the program, taking into consideration other institutional affairs; objectives of the program; and the assessment methods to be instituted. A formal curriculum will have to be designed and thereafter the program will have to be marketed.

c) Develop human resources

Since RPL may be a new and additional program to those offered by the institution, careful consideration should be taken to ensure that those involved are competent and willing to participate. People regarded as competent may have other responsibilities. They may not be familiar with the assessment methods chosen or there may be issues around their release time for the RPL program. There may also be resistance among staff members and support for the staff will be essential.

d) Definition of criterion standards for RPL

It is likely that different role players in an RPL program will have different purposes. It is critical therefore that the various purposes are clearly defined and agreed upon. The formulation of criterion standards will have to be based upon these primary purposes.

e) Definition of credit policy

Administrators, counsellors, assessors and students must together delineate the area of learning in which credit may be awarded. Limits on the number of credits permitted must be set as well as determining procedures for estimation of credits.

f) Decisions about financing the program

Administrators, in consultation with the counsellors and assessors need to make proper decisions with regard to expenditures, release time for personnel involved with the process and overhead cost, direct as well as indirect. The sources of income must be determined, if whether funds will be attracted from government or industry or be derived only from student fees. The quality of the program will depend on its economic sustainability.

g) Admission of students

People involved in admissions are the administrators and counsellors. They need to determine the appropriate qualities of prospective candidates as well as their characteristics. They will need to do this in relation to the program objectives. Careful consideration will be needed to ensure that candidates from previously disadvantaged groups are not excluded since the whole objective of the RPL program is transformation of the education system. Dissemination of information concerning the program must be done adequately and admission should be on a voluntary basis. In other words, employers should not impose the program on their employees.

h) Advisory support for students

Once candidates have been selected, orientation workshops should be organized. People involved with this will be the counsellors. Candidates will be helped to develop plans to meet their identified goals as well as the program goals. They will also be assisted to understand the values and the relevance of the assessment methods as well as the learning outcomes of

34

the assessment. The counsellors should have good communication as well as interpersonal skills so as to be able to offer support to the candidates.

i) Preparation of students for assessment

The counsellors should offer seminars on the chosen assessment methods. The counsellors will help candidates with the preparation of the evidence to be submitted for assessment. They may probe the candidates to produce evidence through interviews and completed work assignments. Whatever assessment method is used, it must be such that the judgement made can be considered by the external examiners with the same degree of confidence as in other performances from existing courses. If portfolios are used, formative advice on portfolio development and how portfolios will be evaluated should be given.

j) Appraisal of learning outcomes

This step involves the assessment of the candidate. Assessors should define the requirements for the approval of evidence for accreditation. They should decide whether competence meets the requirement or corresponds adequately to the learning plan. They also have to determine the amount of credit to be awarded.

k) Integration of learning with future plans

This step involves the translation of learning outcomes into appropriate academic units as well as characterising the level or depth of learning. It also involves the reporting of the assessment results to students and helping them to decide on future plans. Depending on the results of the assessment, the students' progress towards the degree will be monitored (Quebec Education Department, 1992).

What becomes evident from Willingham and Geisinger's model is that it is practical and process oriented because it describes in detail the operational aspect of RPL implementation . This model has failed however, to highlight important considerations like the main purpose

for implementing RPL. Willingham and Geisinger's model has provided the users with a technical approach to implementation This approach has been criticised for being too instrumental or technical and considering the usefulness of the RPL process in economic terms only. Such a model would have to be adapted by taking societal needs into consideration rather than considering only the practicality of the model's application (Harris, 1997a: Usher, 1996; Michelson, 1996; Peruniak, 1993).

2.5.2 The Developmental model of RPL

According to Butterworths (1992), the origin of the Developmental model of RPL is attributed to the report written by Evans for the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) in 1988. The developmental model involves the process designed to assess an applicant's claim to have already achieved learning appropriate for access at entry level or access at an advanced level in a program of study. In this model during the process of RPL the candidate is required to reflect on and evaluate his /her previous experience, identifying in a codified way the learning that derived from it. This reflective element makes the developmental model more than just credit exchange (Butterworths, 1992: 19). The developmental model is based on Kolb's (1984) notion of the experiential learning cycle. In this cycle, learning is claimed to occur when the individual has an experience, takes time to reflect on it, moves on to develop generalisations about it and then plans new approaches to similar situations for the future after which the cycle begins anew. In other words, as the individual interrogates his/ her previous experience he/ she learns new ways of experiencing in the future and from this the developmental aspect of the model arises. This development can take numerous forms, like change in attitudes, perspectives or interest or even greater self awareness.

36

The assumptions about RPL in the Developmental model

Learning occurs consciously or unconsciously, therefore not only observable forms of learning should be recognized. Raw experience does not necessarily lead to learning, because this experience needs to be acted upon through the reflective process for it to become meaningful. New learning acquired through the process of reflection is equal to other forms of learning and should therefore be recognized and accredited.

Major features of the developmental model

According to this model, knowledge and understanding are seen as being constructed by the individual, integrated into their cognitive structures. Learning can lead to personal development. The learner reflects on his/her previous experience, and takes possession of it in a new way. The developmental model is based on both the developmental the humanistic ideologies. Steps involved in RPL using the developmental model are the following,

(a) abstract summarization of the prior learning claim,

(b) listing of learning outcomes,

(c) reflective writing describing the experiences and analysing how this produced the learning claimed,

(d) how it meets the criteria for the particular program being challenged, and lastly

(e) submission of evidence to support the claim in forms that will be stipulated by the institution.

The reflective process is the major feature that distinguishes this model from other RPL models. According to Butterworths (1992), this reflective element is important since it involves the reformulation of prior knowledge into codified prepositional knowledge and in this way prior knowledge or learning is reshaped into a new form. As mentioned earlier, individuals grow and develop as they learn new ways of dealing with particular situations in his lives (Butterworths, 1992:43)

This model is also concerned with change. For instance, if adopted in the South African context, it would represent an attempt to reconceptualise forms of RPL that are more reflective of South African contemporary socio-economic conditions. In the higher education system of South Africa, where responsibility increasingly rests with a broad range of stakeholders including responsiveness to the market as well as to individuals' needs this model would find a comfortable home. Unlike the other models, prior learning is valued in and for itself instead of solely in terms of its ability to fit into existing standards or curricula structures. The aim is to build two-way bridges to work towards more equal and dialectical relationships between academic knowledge and experiential knowledge. This model, if adopted, would involve restructuring curricula so as to develop alternatives to the theory to practice orientation of many programs which in turn make it difficult for RPL to be practised. Curricula would be organized in ways that took into account both the social and the academic world. Curriculum designers and standard developers would benefit from increased awareness about how dominant, often implicit, values and ideologies determine what experience, knowledge, skills and qualities count as valid (Butterworths, 1992:40).

2.5.3 The Competency based model

This model was based on the National Council Vocational Qualification (NCVQ)'s notion of competence. Its origins can be traced to an NCVQ publication in 1989. Personal competencies, assessed through the RPL process, are matched with planned learning outcomes of an accredited programme offered by an institution. Competencies which are shown to be already achieved, either through demonstration or via a portfolio of evidence, are exchanged for course credits and may lead to exemption from part of the programme.

A prerequisite for this model is the very careful delineation of the outcomes of the programme so that matching and hence exchange can take place. This form of RPL is most likely to be found in contexts where knowledge is weakly classified and framed, such as further education and vocational training, and they are frequently linked to qualification or standard frameworks. They are usually underpinned by a market-led philosophy in which education is consumer-orientated and utilitarian, viewed mainly in terms of its usefulness to the labour market (Usher, 1996: 36). It appears therefore that this model of RPL would fit well with the economic sector's perspective of education.

RPL practices based on the competency model recognise only those aspects of individuals' prior learning which match prescribed outcomes or standards. Market-led performance is valued as this is seen as synonymous with competence. In these contexts, knowledge tends to be understood in positivistic and normative terms as a product, as visible, potentially measurable performance (Butterworths, 1992:43). In other words, knowledge is seen as a means to an economic end. RPL practices using this model would often have promotion, accreditation or job allocation as the main purpose. The methods adopted would be on-the-job assessment, portfolio development, challenge tests and standardised national examinations. Competency based RPL practices engage with standards or formal curricula only in order to gauge which aspects of an individual's prior learning match them. There is no opportunity for critique of those standards. Although advisers and mentors can be involved, the emphasis is on generating evidence for assessment rather than on anything new. The candidate's competence does not alter during the recognition process because it is not explored (Butterworths,1992:46). Definition and decision making power rest solely in the hands of the assessors. Sometimes this is termed the 'credit exchange' model in that

candidates exchange a successful work record for course credits or promotion (Butterworths, 1992 78).

Critiques of this model argue that although the Competency based model is, good for practical use, there is also a sense in which at the social level, it is about containment and appeasement. People who benefit most are those whose competence is closest to that which is formalised in standards, since standards are used to measure the competence. The standards are likely to contribute to the exclusion of those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds (Butterworths, 1992). Dochy and Moerkerke (1994) assert that this model favours the supply driven nature of assessment and inhibits the demand driven nature where students would be the ones to influence the program. It would appear therefore that if these RPL practices were to make a contribution to access, their criteria for assessment would have to attribute as much as possible to the prior knowledge held by the majority of potential candidates (Trowler,1996;19).

A number of authors have argued against the view of the competency based and the developmental models as opposing ends in a continuum(Trowler 1996 and Day 2001). According to them these models should be viewed as complementary to one another. In other words, the best principles from each model should be combined in a balanced way so as to enhance the validity of RPL assessments. Day (2001) identified some underlying tensions in each model and suggested that these tensions should be resolved by combining the best principles. For example, from the credit based model the best principles are objectivity, product and quality. From the developmental model, the best principles are process, internalisation and equality.

2.6 DEVELOPMENTS OF RPL IN OTHER COUNTRIES

2.6.1. United States of America

Recognition of Prior Learning started in America when, after the Second World War, American soldiers requested that the skills they had learned during their military service and the courses they had followed to perform their various tasks in the forces be taken into account in order to avoid duplication of learning. For the first time, the Armed Forces, the state, colleges, universities, community groups, and industry got together in order to find possible ways to recognise the experiential learning of these people. Later on, the adult population in general, following numerous social changes, wanted to go back to school and obtain credits for what they already knew. Women in particular felt they needed recognition for all the voluntary services they had offered as their contribution to society. In the United States, therefore, official recognition of prior learning dates as far back as the 1970s. According to Stanley (1980), in 1980 more than 300 institutions and hundreds of individuals contributed through research to improvement of those practices which led to accreditation of prior learning.

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New York State College in 1983 offered its students the opportunity to design a program of studies based on their prior learning in relation to their educational goals. Information sessions were offered to adults to discuss future projects and how they made a link between their formal learning and what they had learned outside the academic setting. Identification and verification of prior learning was made possible with the help of the faculty
(New York State College, 1983).

Other institutions of higher education also commenced with the assessment of prior learning programs. By 1983, eight thousand (8000) Empire State College students had completed

41

their portfolios (Sansreget 1984:104). In Vermont State Colleges in 1979 a method was developed to provide recognition of prior learning that could be applied in colleges throughout Vermont State. Adult students were invited to prepare a portfolio under the guidance of a counsellor. The Office of External Programs was authorised in November 1975 by the Vermont State Colleges' Board of Trustees to award college credits to adult learners who had demonstrated college-level competencies. At Thomas A. Edison College in Trenton, New Jersey (1981), potential adult learners were helped by advisors to identify and tabulate their previous experiential learning and present this for evaluation. Since that initiative, a Students' Handbook has been prepared for this purpose (Thomas A. Edison College, 1981).

2.6.1.1Contributions of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

In America, the greatest contributions for RPL were from the Council for the Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). CAEL was founded in 1974 by Morris Keeton with a mission to expand lifelong learning opportunities for adults and to advance both experiential learning and its assessment. According to Tate (1983), CAEL's mission statement on experiential learning changed to reflect social transformation (Tate,1983 :45).The growing demand for the recognition of prior learning led to the opening of the CAEL. This Council was a small association of colleges and universities and groups of professionals in higher education who worked together for the advancement of the use of experiential learning in college and university education and for its valid and reliable assessment (Keeton, 1985: 361).

CAEL has been active for the past twenty one years. Initially it began with a three year project, upon completion of which CAEL began operating under a new charter as a free standing association of colleges and universities. CAEL has been active in initiating, developing, implementing and monitoring progress of RPL systems and providing training in

42

RPL across the USA. Its membership includes 600 colleges, universities, corporations, unions associations and individuals. The centre was originally located in New Jersey, and financed through the Carnegie Corporation of New York but to date CAEL has centres all over the world .

CAEL conducts research into the best practices of adult and human resource development. Through its initiatives, seminars and programs on adult learning, as well workshops on how to implement RPL have been made available electronically or in person. Developments in RPL throughout the world have been facilitated mainly through the initiatives of CAEL (Flint, 1999:3). CAEL has been promoting various studies on adult learning and its assessments. CAEL has been testing and promoting the principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners in Higher Education since 1998, through visits and interviews at 15 colleges and universities. The purpose of the interviews was to explore local applications and the adoption of best practices. According to the results, external barriers to the adoption of best practices were credit recognition issues and lack of support by the executives of institutions. These barriers led to slow progress in emphasizing the need to make programs in higher education more suitable for adult learners. These results were endorsed by many institutions and there was wide spread support for the benchmarking studies that followed (Dagavarian, and Walters, 1993:23).

Besides research-based projects, CAEL has spearheaded numerous projects to broaden access to life long learning through PLA. According to Tate (1983), owing to the workforce crisis in the U.S.A., labour unions moved towards investing funds in employee growth and development programs rather than corporate training programs. These programs were designed to provide access to continued education for all employees at all levels. Driven by

43

these actions. CAEL saw the issue of joint ventures as the only solution. According to Tate (1983), joint ventures meant active partnerships between the employers, labour, government and the education institutions to enable adults to acquire the skills and knowledge they needed for better employability (Tate, 1983:61). Clark, Ivanitskaya and Goodwin (2000), reported the results of a project undertaken by the university of Central Michigan and the automobile industry. Through this joint venture a unique Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Vehicle design was developed. This was a result of the auto industry seeking for personnel with highly technical skills who were able to combine the expertise of both vehicle designers and engineers. This project illuminated some important issues for consideration by institutions implementing RPL. One of these issues is that, in joint ventures, allowances should be made for compromise since culture shock may result from the fact that the two sectors may have differing perceptions about RPL. Another issue is that of cost analysis from such collaborative exercises since these programs may be designed based on estimated budgets. Real costs can easily run beyond expectations of both parties
(Clark, Ivanitsakayak,and Goodwin, 2000:18).

In the USA, the developments in recognition of prior learning continued mainly because of the contributions made by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. It is also evident that the driving force behind its establishment was the experiential learning movement. In the USA very limited government involvement was reported as compared to other countries. One can conclude therefore that in the USA., recognition of prior learning has not been viewed as a social imperative as is the case in South Africa.

2.6.2 United Kingdom

The United Kingdom followed the American initiative of recognizing prior learning, with help from the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (Charter, 1986). The early to mid -1980s saw the first broad based RPL courses in the United Kingdom run by university colleges or polytechnics, concerned with supporting adults by recognising their prior learning and helping them to make informed choices about future career/ study directions. In Britain, the recognition of prior learning is termed Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

Unlike in the USA, where the system was driven by Labour market projections, in the U.K. RPL developed because of pressure from the government. With the introduction of the Credit Accumulation and Transfer system (CAT), recognition of prior learning was understood in the same light as exchange for credits. In the United Kingdom, a different pattern of RPL emerged which was more competency based. Authors have raised numerous concerns about the implications inherent in such a model of RPL. These authors argued for an approach that would afford adults learning rather than accreditation only, as was the case with the competency based model of RPL that was in practice. They also argued for a model that would be reflective of the contemporary conditions of postmodernism (Harris,1998; Edwards,1994; Evans, 1994).

2.6.2.1 Contributions from the Learning from Experience Trust (LET)

In 1986, the Learning from Experience Trust (LET) was established in the United Kingdom. This trust was similar to the CAEL in the United States since it was an independent charity with social learning orientation, aiming at developing ways in which people could make maximum use of their prior experiential learning. In Britain the educational sector took the initiative and focused more on building partnerships with employers, and community

45

organisations. According to Charter (1986), LET had been promoting learning from experience as a valid and valued part of lifelong learning, by encouraging people at work ,in education and in their own lives to make the best use of what they had learnt from experience. LET pioneered the Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) to improve access to and progression in higher education. Other LET projects have advocated and supported learning from experience at work and in the community (Charter, 1986:87).

LET undertook research and development work and acted as a catalyst for changes within the mainstream of post secondary education and training systems (Simosko,1992:34). As a result of growing central government interest in APEL, a further and larger study into its viability within the vocational education was undertaken between 1989 and 1991. APEL was tested in different client groups, using a range of qualifications in such diverse contexts as work, community and education institutions. The results revealed that APEL could be successfully customised to a range of contexts and situations and that it could be offered in various modes, particularly involving collaboration between institutions on matters such as learner support, resources centres, marketing and initial guidance for learners
(Simosko, 1992:42).

Within UK Higher Education, APEL developed as an integral part of the credit accumulation and transfer scheme (CAT) which was developed by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). In 1988, the CNAA together with the LET engaged in a project to map APEL practices across the British Universities. According to the results, 75% of the universities recognised and accepted the credit system as a suitable form of intellectual exchange. Another study conducted by Robertson in 1994 revealed that while universities were moving towards the direction of the credit system, the movement had been very slow and cautious

while on the other hand, in the polytechnics the movement had been remarkable. According to Evans and Turner (1993), by the end of the 1980s there were more than twenty(20) polytechnics which were developing APEL schemes to serve students with a variety of needs (Evans and Turner 1993:2) The reason for the slow move of universities to develop APEL practices according to Trowler (1996), was partly due to the funding policy of the government which was allocated according to the numbers of new recruits into programs from previously underrepresented groups. This policy limited the spread of APEL in those institutions with a stronger market position while those in weaker positions were concerned about the loss of funding that would follow from giving students advanced standing through APEL. Trowler (1996), conducted a study in one of the universities. Forty (40) semi structured interviews were conducted on the development of the APEL scheme with the university. The results revealed that the academics on the ground were still defending the epistemological battlements of their disciplines.

In Britain, APEL evolved with the notion of frameworks for credits and qualifications. In the United Kingdom, APEL developed within the context of competence based education for example National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). The assessment of existing competence, regardless of how it was achieved, was a fundamental principle of the NVQ philosophy, the same principle was fundamental to prior learning assessment (Keeton, 1985:79).

2.6.3 Canada (Ontario)

In 1991, the Minister of Colleges and Universities established an advisory committee to advise him on the development and implementation of a system of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) for Ontario colleges. A series of recommendations were made which included the setting of targets for college involvement, with the aim to extend PLA processes

47

to non Ontario college providers. The establishment of portfolio development and challenge examination process were the main practices to be adopted, as well as the training of personnel to implement the programme (Harris. 1997b:7). As a result many colleges and universities embarked on joint initiatives to implement PLA.

The University of Manitoba offered a joint Baccalaureate Nursing program with the Red River College of Nursing. Transfer of credits from other programs between these two institutions was through prior learning assessment where an individual had to submit a portfolio (Day and Zakos, 1999:134). The Nortel Networks formerly known as the *Return To Learning Program* (RTLP), was another joint employability initiative sponsored by the Nortel Networks in Bellville and the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Union. The focus of the initiative was on improving employability opportunities of participants inside and outside Nortel by reducing traditional barriers to education and training, for example by offering on site training. The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology also offered PLA by working in close collaboration with industries.

Other institutions like technical institutions also introduced PLA. These institutions restructured existing programs to make them easily accessible through PLA. The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) was the largest First Nations Post Secondary Institution in Canada and had been in existence since 1976. The programs offered by the Institute are designed to strike a balance between the technical the educational skills required and the cultural tradition and knowledge of the students. All its programs can be accessed through PLA.

48

The First Nations Institute in Ontario also has PLA programs to help adult learners, especially from the First Nations like the Mohawks, to access continued education and also to gain credits from their previous experiences. The First Nations Technical Institute was established in 1985, and is an aboriginal owned and operated education and training facility located on the Tyendinaga, a Mohawk territory near Deseronto in Ontario. Programs offered amongst others are: Post Secondary Education programs like the Aboriginal Media program, Aviation Diploma, Facilitative Leadership Human Service, Public Administration Degree, Computer Training, Small Business Entrepreneurship. The learners' needs and not the institutional needs form the basis of most of the programmes offered by the institute. This approach to prior learning assessment is developmental and focuses on the historical inequality of the First Nations as a Canadian Nation. Its main aim therefore, is to ensure that the First Nations, through the PLA programs, gain control over their future in social, political, cultural and economic areas, by providing high quality learning opportunities. For the First Nations, like South Africa, RPL is viewed from a social transformation perspective. The First Nations Technical Institute, has adopted the developmental approach to RPL or APL as it is called in Canada where the Native Indians use the portfolio development process as a process of healing from their past discrimination by the Canadian government (Hill, 1997:2000).

2.6.3.1 Contributions of the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA).

The Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment is a non profit, grass-root organisation founded in 1994. Its primary purpose is to advocate improved education and human resource services which are flexible and responsive to the changing needs of adults and which include the formal acknowledgement and recognition of their prior learning, given the challenges posed by globalisation and rapidly changing technologies (Zakos, 2000:9).

The First Nations Technical Institute was the founder and home of the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA). Learning experiences are based upon an aboriginal approach to learning, rooted in the values of respect and wholeness. This approach, according to the First Nations Technical Institute, ensures that the prior learning program offered fits the people rather the people fitting into the programs. According to Day and Zakos (2000), in a study to develop benchmarks for PLA in Canada, which was jointly funded by the Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment and the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB), there are three clusters of PLA practices in Canada. The first cluster was focused on adults in transition who wish to return to or begin further education at the post secondary level. An example of such a cluster would be the joint initiative undertaken by the University of Manitoba and Red River College (Day and Zakos 2000:11). The second cluster was that of PLA practices applied for the labour market transitions, workplace human resource development and community based economic and social development such as the one offered by the First Nations Technical Institute in Tyendinaga and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. Both these clusters adopt a developmental approach to PLA. The third cluster was based on industry skills and focuses on identifying those skills which are required by specific industries such as the one offered by the Nortel Network (Day and Zakos, 2000:3). This cluster is competence based, therefore the need for benchmarking RPL practices was led by these differences between the clusters.

According to Day and Zakos (2000), the differences in national political cultures and administrative practices owing to the decentralized nature of the country were the main source of these differences. In Canada, education is governed by the federal system of governments within each state, and this makes the establishment of nationally accepted accreditation frameworks difficult. Developing benchmarks was therefore, a necessary

measure to ensure quality assurance of the PLA practices in Canada. The result of the study was the emergence of National Prior Learning Assessment benchmarks, to promote consistency and credibility for all Canadian PLA practices.

From the above discussion it is apparent that the Canadian model of RPL is the closest to the perception of what RPL should be held by most South Africans. Like in South Africa, the Canadian preference for a developmental approach to RPL has social transformation as its basis. This is preference is due to the influence of the Council for Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the influence of the First Nations culture (Hill 2000). The existence of the different clusters of RPL processes in Canada is relevant to the existing situation in South Africa. These different processes have been influenced by differing views or agendas of the different stakeholders. CAPLA has played a major role through the benchmarking study to try to inform the stakeholders about what other processes exist.

2.6.4 Australia

In 1992, the Universities Vice Chancellors' Committees and the Department of Employment, Education and Training established a joint working party to research issues related to credit transfer and RPL in universities. Australian universities have a history of informally recognising prior learning for admission but were not granting credits for this. The results of the study revealed that more work had to be done since there were numerous sources of experience. The results revealed a need to develop a systematic and planned approach to R PL within universities through the adoption of general guidelines to standardise practices whilst allowing for institutional flexibility (Harris,1997a:65). There was inadequate information found from literature on developments in RPL in Australia.

2.6.5 New Zealand

According to Hood (1991), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority was established to develop a consistent approach to the recognition of academic and vocational qualifications. This establishment followed surveys of a number of sectors, namely government agencies, universities, colleges, technikons, business, unions and community representatives. Research questions covered four areas: life and work experience; work based learning; learning which had been attested and credit accumulation and transfer. According to the results of the survey, as cited in Hood (1991), RPL was considered to be important and beneficial. There was overall support from all the above mentioned sectors in all four areas covered by the research questions. The results of the survey led to decisions by the board to design a framework composed of four primary elements: units of learning, assessment and reporting, recognition of prior learning, and quality assurance systems. The union sector was more supportive than the universities. Those opposed to RPL raised the following concerns: its threat to standards, the heavy monitoring process involved, and the fact that bias might be difficult to eliminate. Other concerns raised were issues such as who should do the assessment, what the currency of learning being accredited was and the cost of implementing the scheme. Notwithstanding the above concerns, the Board was reassured by the fact that overseas experience had shown positive results on the issue (Hood, 1991:61). This study has obvious relevance to the present study and the researcher, together with the project participants, will have to review these issues carefully.

The RPL system has since been implemented in various industries in New Zealand. In places like the dairy manufacturing and building industries, recognition of prior learning has been evaluated through the use of site supervisors as the assessors of prior learning. Manuals have been designed supervisors trained for this role. In more theory- based aspects

of the assessment, local polytechnic lecturers were used as providers. It is important to stress that these providers were selected by the Industry Training Organisation, which is a National Standards Body for industry in New Zealand (Hood, 1991:64).

Reviewing the developments in recognition of prior learning in different countries, it shows that although these countries appear to be ahead of South Africa in terms of implementation of RPL practices, they have had problems along the way. Experimentation with RPL has shown that each country, institution, program deviser needs to conceptualise the process of RPL in ways that are particularly suitable for their particular context. Countries can adopt only those aspects of the model that are transferable. According to Harris (1997b), models of RPL that are developed may be contextually specific but will have elements of generalization. It becomes clear therefore that, unless processes are deliberately conceptualised to meet the purposes of those involved, RPL may end up working against its own transformative aims (Harris, 1997b:5).

Standards will have to be developed to ensure the quality of the RPL program in South Africa and these must be consistent with those used for equivalent courses. Standards used in the process of RPL must validate candidates' knowledge (Govender, 1997:104). RPL needs to be linked meaningfully to accreditation and/ or education policies. If it is part of an accreditation assessment system then candidates can gain access to opportunities to gain skills and knowledge that they seek but do not yet have. Rydell and Irwin (1982), stated that the prior experiential learning must show some relationship to the person's degree goal and must be relevant (Rydell and Irwin, 1982: 40).

2.7 SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCES WITH RPL

2.7.1 The context of RPL implementation

RPL in South Africa is perceived as one of the most exciting yet challenging and contested aspects of the National Qualifications Framework. It is exciting because RPL holds the potential for recognition of competence of people who had been previously denied learning opportunities within the formal education sector and whose competence had been overlooked in their work places precisely because of their lack of formal certification. It is challenging because it is a complex process that is inextricably bound into prevailing social relations of power and knowledge. It is contested because these social relations reflect different and sometimes conflicting views and approaches to education and training (Khanyile and Buchler, 2001:3).

It is important to present South African experiences with RPL in the historical context, to highlight the reasons for perceiving RPL as fundamental to social transformation. During the Apartheid era the white nationalist government inaugurated a system of separate development within which black South Africans were severely restricted in land ownership, housing, health provision, education and virtually even other areas of human rights. This occurred against the population statistics which reflected that of the total population, which stood then at 43 million people, 76.7 per cent were black. Organized resistance to these and all forms of apartheid capitalism grew exponentially in the1950s as did the capacity for the racist government to deploy more repressive means to sustain their power. Political organisations were banned, three million people were forcibly removed from their communities and 'dumped' in the homelands where basic resources were scarce. Racist laws were integrated into the already highly exploitative system of government.

As far as schooling was concerned, these inequalities translated into very unequal access to basic and higher education. The period from 1950 to 1975 saw massive increases in the numbers of black learners enrolling in primary schools yet at the same time the ratios of blacks entering matriculation were one compared to 44 white learners. Other forms of oppression as far as black education was concerned involved the suppression of indigenous languages, knowledge and culture and their replacement by an inferior education that had as its consequence illiteracy among the black majority and poverty owing to lack of employment opportunities.

With the birth of democracy after 1994, the above situation was challenged. The government of national unity led by the African National Congress adopted a Bill of Human Rights and established a system of cooperative governance. Included in the constitution was the right to basic education, including adult basic education and further education. From 1995 onwards, there have been a number of policy frameworks by different sectors of government. In Chapter one these policy frameworks were discussed. In terms of the current political ,economic and social context in South Africa, RPL is seen to have the capacity to contribute towards redress and equity by opening up more inclusive ways for people to attain qualification status. RPL also enables more people to reach higher levels of qualification and expertise.

2.7.2 Development of RPL practices in South Africa

The development of RPL can be traced within two broad perspectives namely in the workplace and in higher education. As in the USA, the need for RPL in South Africa was a labour market initiative. According to Harris (1997), formal work on RPL began in June 1994 when the National Training Board (NTB) established a sub committee of an existing working

55

group to address assessment issues. Before this there were various initiatives at national and local levels, although they were not officially called RPL systems. The Department of Education and Training has made a commitment to the development of RPL practices. This has been demonstrated by its appearance in major policy documents like the Reconstruction and Development Programme (ANC 1994); the Draft White Paper (1994); the Draft Framework for Education and Training (ANC 1994) as well as the National Training Board (1994).So far however, it appears that the labour sector has taken the lead as far as experimentation with R P L is concerned.

2.7.2.1 The Labour Sector

RPL in the workplace dates back to the early 1990s when the representatives of organized labour sought the recognition of workplace based and experiential learning for the purpose of job grading and access to further education and training for its members. A number of pilot projects were implemented in mining, auto and construction industries but all of these had difficulty in meeting the different purposes of RPL. Some of these pilot projects will be discussed briefly to highlight the problems experienced.

2.7.2.1.1The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA)

In 1993, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and the automative employers agreed on a once off RPL process in which workers would be assessed in terms of their current competence. The labour sector hoped that the process would prove the competencies of their members and identify those who were eligible for promotion or salary increases. It was agreed that unit standards would be used to describe the skills and knowledge against which workers would be assessed and for which they could be trained and hence recognised. The intention of NUMSA was that workers could progress through the

grading system by demonstrating and, where necessary, increasing their skills and knowledge. The outline of the RPL process was agreed at a national level, and the Automative Training Board (a body with labour and employer representation) was given the responsibility for implementation. The RPL process was agreed to for the assessment of work related skills only. It was agreed that adaptations of the Australian unit standards would be used to assess workers. The Training Board ran a three day workshop to train assessors who were representatives from both the union and the employers. Each company prepared its own assessment tool from the adapted unit standards and the RPL process ran over six months (Govender1997:14). The assessment methods used were oral examination as well as on the job observations. Workers' results were presented in the form of credits which were used to determine their level in terms of the new grading system (COSATU, 1996:23).

According to the results of this project, using unfamiliar assessment tools posed a problem for candidates. The adaptation of the Australian standards for assessment also proved to be inappropriate since they could not be adapted to reflect workers' workplace experience and work organisation. In other words, these workers were not fairly assessed since the standards used were not South African. The other problem was that these workers were assessed on the basis of their current jobs and not on the basis of their previous work experience. According to the COSATU report (1999), the assessors used for this project were not adequately trained. The results were that fewer than 10 per cent of the workers were upgraded as a result of the RPL assessment (COSATU, 1999:76).

2.7.2.1. 2 The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)

In 1995, a pilot project was implemented on a mass scale within one mining house. Workers were assessed for basic language and mathematics skills against interim national communication and maths standards at Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) levels 1,

2 and 3. At level 1, people could be examined in any of seven South African languages. The idea for the project was initiated by management who wanted to try out large scale assessment against national standards in the industry as a possible mechanism for quality assurance of the A BET provision which was already being implemented in company mines. The project was also intended to provide a baseline for planning in order to achieve the target of 100 per cent of the workforce with proved competence at different ABET levels in communication and maths by year 2000 (COSATU, 1996). The results of this project yielded a number of important issues with regard to RPL implementation. It became clear that the different purposes of RPL among all those involved in its implementation might lead to problems with its implementation. For instance, for this project there were differences between the organized labour's (NUMSA) purpose in using RPL and that of the management. While NUMSA viewed the project as one which would lead to the strengthening of its negotiation for a company wide ABET agreement and also one that would ensure that the workplace knowledge and skills of its members were recognised, management saw this as a way of streamlining the ABET provision. The process also posed some problems like the use of inappropriate assessment tools and lack of support in preparation for assessment. Another major problem that arose during this project was the huge backlog of people who met the criteria for inclusion but, owing to the financial constraints of a mass project, their numbers were scaled down.

One observation that can be made from the above pilot projects is that very few workers succeeded in gaining the recognition they sought. The reasons behind this can be summarised as follows:

(a) Standards of assessment used were not appropriate as they failed to match the work based experiential learning of workers.

(b) The workers were not familiar with the language used in writing the standards and hence they failed to interpret what was expected of them during assessment.

(c) The domination of the projects by management as was earlier mentioned also posed as a problem.

2.7.2.2 The RPL research project by Council for South African Trade Unions (COSATU)

As a response to these problems, the Council of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)in 2000 embarked on an initiative to counter what they viewed as an inherent contradiction to the social transformative purpose of RPL in the workplace. The purpose of the research project was to analyze the RPL activities in the workplace. The funding for this project was received from the German Technical Co-operation. COSATU initiated the RPL research project for several reasons. Firstly, RPL processes had taken place in several industries and COSATU wanted to use the experiences of their members in these processes to gain a better understanding of the perceived successes and problems of RPL. Secondly, COSATU already had a broad policy concerning RPL, but wished to use the understanding gained through the research to develop a more detailed policy. The project began with a workshop with several affiliates who had either had RPL processes in their industries or were about to introduce RPL. The members agreed to use a workshop as a research method and that COSATU would contract two researchers to facilitate the project, together with people from within the participating affiliates namely, NUMSA, NUM, CAWU and SACCAWU. (COSATU,1996). The methodology used for this project was a social research approach to make sure that new ideas were informed by the experiences, knowledge and perspectives of workers. Consultative workshops were used to collect data. This meant that new knowledge would be gained by the workers as they reflected on their experiences of RPL. According to Govender (1997), in order to change social structures and to correct the distortions of the past, it is

59

crucial to include the knowledge of those that have been oppressed. According to the results of the project, RPL was not being used to achieve more equitable forms of work organisation or practice, but was being used to open access for a few while continuing to exclude the majority. In other words RPL processes were implemented in such a way that they acted against the very objective of RPL (Govender,1997:16).

The other problem revealed by the research project was the domination of the process by management, who had their own purposes for the implementation of RPL. Such purposes ranged from using RPL as a skills audit for the employees, to using RPL as a measure to assess productivity of employees. In the automotive industry it was discovered that English was the only recognised language and hence candidates who were not proficient in English were disadvantaged (Govender, 1997:9). In the CAWU and SACCAWU RPL projects it was discovered that the two projects were run and initiated by the Building Industry Training Board (BITB) and Hospitality Industry Training Board (HITB) . The unions were represented on these training boards but they were not part of the decision making process. Unlike the other projects , those run by NUM and NUMSA projects were focused on the higher levels of the qualifications ladder. For the building industry, the focus was on helping individuals to become contractors. For obvious reasons, very few of the workforce felt into this category. The unions felt that these RPL process were discriminating against the already discriminated members. In the hospitality industries, the RPL process made use of British vocational standards. Because of this method of assessment, the results were very poor. Less than 10% of the candidates who sat for assessment were upgraded.   (Govender, 1997:17).

Although the above projects seem unrelated to the present study, owing to the levels at which R P L was tried out (ABET), they helped to highlight significant issues for the present study.

60

The major contributions to the development of RPL in this country have been from the labour sector. COSATU has been instrumental in the development of a policy for RPL implementation. The capacity-building workshops initiated by COSATU helped the workers at grass-roots level to understand better the implications of the new policies like the Skills Development Act of 1998, the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and the National Qualifications Framework of 1995. COSATU has also issued a booklet called *Learning and Work* which was developed to address important issues about work based learning, and the RPL policy (COSATU, 2000).

2.7.3 The Educational Sector

Academic contexts, although historically underpinned by the liberal human progressivist tradition in which experience is valued, have traditionally not valued experience either in terms of accreditation or as a measure within teaching and support. Experience is seen as a means towards the academic end (Harris, 1997). The challenge in South Africa is that, RPL is the key principle of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and is to be followed across all sectors. For educators in South Africa, as the boundaries for higher education continue to weaken, knowledge is less strongly classified and framed, and the market rather than social class becomes the deciding factor (Bernstein 1996:101). Knowledge is no longer regarded as the only source of power owned by the educators and that what counts as knowledge is no longer defined in terms of book knowledge but what the individual can do with that knowledge.

Some institutions like the University of Cape Town, University of the Orange Free State, the University of Natal, the Peninsula Technikon and the University of Port Elizabeth have started pilot programmes with RPL. In 1997, the University of Cape Town's Department of Adult

61

Education and Extra Mural Studies embarked on an empirical research project to review the theory and practice of RPL as well as its claims of redress and equity. A pilot group of adult educators was selected to apply for an Advanced Diploma course for Adult Educators The adult educators had substantial adult educator experience but were not in possession of the formal entry requirement (first degree or certificate level qualification). Although six of the seven candidates gained admission to the Diploma course and progressed well, the researchers were left with more questions than answers regarding the nature of RPL. According to them, they expected that (in their own words):*We could move the Diploma discourse into people's heads experientially, rather than allowing it to be acquired as a social practice* (Harris, 1999:50). What these researchers meant was that access through RPL practices was created but could not be fully used. The historical characteristics of these candidates militated against their access

(a) that they were all second language users of the medium of instruction,

(b) they all came from historically disadvantaged backgrounds and

(c) they were all adults who had been out of school for many years and hence were not familiar with academic discourse.

For these reasons, the research project did not use a developmental approach to RPL. The UCT researchers realised through comparison of international experiences with their own, that a more thorough epistemological and pedagogical analysis of RPL as a social practice rather than as a set of seemingly innocent and benevolent procedures was necessary. According to these researchers a re-theorisation of the RPL practice was needed and a realisation of the importance of context based RPL practices. This importance is obvious because RPL in South Africa is positioned as a central pillar of redress and RPL is seen as having the capacity to widen the entry portal to education to the advantage of historically disadvantaged adults. Unlike the frameworks of other countries which aim only at unifying,

creating ladders, linkages and pathways that afford seamless mobility to life long learning the South African Qualifications Framework holds restitutive promise that goes even beyond these advantages (Harris,1999:34). Therefore South African academics particularly need to explore the meaning of the concept in context, in order to avoid confusion and failure of the process.

The current policies for higher education in South Africa are challenged by the need to create a balance between three factors that seem to be in tension with one another. Firstly the policy speaks of a commitment to access which will be afforded by the expansion of enrolment into higher education. Secondly there is a commitment to quality which will be achieved by standards maintenance. Thirdly there is the constraint of affordability which will be achieved through redistribution of public funding. Owing to these tensions, providers of education and training in the country are faced with a challenge. If standards are maintained, access will be denied, on the other hand widening access entails that standards will be lowered. According to McMillan (1997) the very purpose of academic education, developing intellectual and discipline based skills through a long term process of acculturation and discourse acquisition, does not harmonise easily with fast tracking through credit for prior learning. These factors, coupled with a traditional view that academic standards and assessment cannot be explicitly articulated, have combined to make RPL a difficult concept to insert into many academic contexts (McMillan, 1997:45).

These challenges are not unique to South Africa. In the United Kingdom and Australia for instance, the government policy of funding in higher education institutions based on the student numbers means that the incentives for universities to search for new recruits in previously under represented groups have been reduced. This reduction in funding has

negative implications for those institutions who allow adults opportunities to access continued education through recognition of prior learning (Trowler, 1996:18). On the other hand, RPL in the U.K. has been implemented mainly due to pressure from the government to allow more adults an opportunity for life long learning. It is not surprising therefore that, in the UK concerns has been reported by academics about the measures to increase adult learner enrolments standards were dropping. In the U.K , RPL (APEL) has expanded rapidly in the ex polytechnics after it was legitimated by the 1987 regulations of the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Registry at the Council for National Academic Awards. On the other hand this expansion has been very slow in the traditional universities. This slow progress in RPL implementation may be due to the elitist mentality of standards maintenance in the universities (Evans and Turner, 1993:65).

In South Africa, the government has a responsibility to increase funds and other related resources so that the tensions that exist between access and standards maintenance are relieved. The strategy to transform the higher education system should include other issues that are sensitive for adult learners. For instance in countries like Malaysia and the United States, the government, while putting pressure on the institutions to widen access, has taken the responsibility to provide funds and such resources as day care centres as well as implementation of special programs for adult learners with special needs. In South African too, RPL candidates might have their experiential learning constructed under very disadvantaged conditions. These candidates may have a wealth of experience but might have very low levels of formal education, having the instruction medium as a second language and being drawn from largely working class communities with no socialisation to academic discourse. On this basis the situation is a complex one since a balance between recognising prior learning and rectifying past inequalities will make recognition of prior

64

learning difficult to fit easily into the traditional higher education categories (Usher and Edwards. 1995:123).

In 1996, the University of the Free State, in partnership with De Paul University, the Joint Education Trust and the Council for Adult Experiential Learning, embarked on a project to start a bridging programme for adult learners in management positions who did not have the necessary qualification. The outcome of this project saw the commencement of a Portfolio development course which served as a bridging programme for those without matriculation but who wished to be admitted into a university degree. This was the first experientially based Management and Leadership degree and was offered through the faculty of Economics and Management Sciences. Learner support mechanisms included an in-house library, and contact sessions during week ends. Methods of delivery included problem solving, dialogue and presentations. Assessment strategies included oral examinations and assignments. Adequate feedback was given to adult learners (Anderson, 1998:6)

2.7.4 The Non-governmental sector: Joint Education Trust (JET) contributions to development of RPL initiative in South Africa.

This trust was formed in 1995 by organisations from political, government, economic and labour sectors. The driving force behind its formation was the need to develop an adult learner-centred environment within the education institutions of the country. With funding from all the founding organisations a study tour was taken by a group from this trust to learn from other international trusts like the CAEL and the LET These tours were designed to look at various innovative models of RPL and adult learning in higher education institutions and workforce development projects. It was from these tours that the trust decided to launch the Workers Higher Education Project (WHEP) as a vehicle through which a more systematic

study and introduction of RPL related activities in South Africa could be initiated This project (WHEP) has been concerned with funding RPL and adult learner focussed innovations and pilot programmes at various South African higher education institutions. These innovations have largely focussed on making tertiary education accessible to the working adults who were previously denied access by discrimination or by lack of formal entry qualifications, despite having gained considerable relevant learning in non-formal or unrecognised contexts. Amongst its main activities, WHEP at the level of higher education has been instrumental in the following activities: research and development projects to stimulate creative partnerships, and pilot projects to develop and test new models for supporting adult and experiential learning in selected fields, for example management, teacher education, nursing, agriculture and rural development. All the education institutions mentioned earlier have been funded through the WHEP (Ralph, 2000a :35).

Other projects that JET has been involved in either on an evaluation basis or on a development basis include the Community Service in Higher Education project. In 1997, through a grant from the Ford Foundation, JET established this project which was aimed at promoting public debate on community service and to assist stakeholders to develop policy positions with regard to community service as well as strengthening existing community service projects and stimulating the development of new projects. Research into existing community service activities in other countries, and consultative workshops with stakeholders have resulted in JET developing a conceptual framework to be used to further the debates around this issue (Ralph, 1999:12). In 1996, JET conducted a Youth Entrepreneurs Projects Audit. This audit was focused on whether the projects led to job creation for the youth, and whether the youth received any training before embarking on these projects. The results revealed that although the youth did receive some form of training, these projects did not lead

to job creations for the youth. According to Valla (1998), this failure raised questions about the suitability of the youth as entrepreneurs or whether the models used for the training were suitable for South African youth (Valla, 1998:9).

Although the above projects seem unrelated to the present study, they both have implications for further research into whether using imported tools or models for skills analysis and development will yield positive results in the South African context. It was through JET initiatives that RPL appeared in the country's major policy documents like the Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Further Education Act of 1998 and the Higher Education Act of 1998 (Ralph, 2000b :34). JET also engaged in a study to map existing RPL programmes offered by certain higher education institutions. The objectives of the study were to develop a set of best practice guidelines for adult learner-focused programs and to benchmark RPL programs by focussing on in-depth case studies of a few such institutions. The other initiative by JET was the development of an RPL directory of Adult Learning Focused Projects between the year 2000 and 2002. Such a directory will be aimed at helping employers and other institutions who will be in the process of implementing RPL related projects. Therefore JET has been involved in an advocacy role for both educational and work based RPL projects by offering networking opportunities and support to all these institutions. Through its initiatives, the trust has managed to challenge higher education institutions to rethink their involvement in promoting or retarding the progress of introducing RPL into the mainstream of education and training.

What becomes evident when comparing RPL practices from the different parts of the world is that RPL initiatives may come from the government or from non governmental organisations or even individual agencies and that the source of these initiatives may vary from country to

country. Generally, though, a collaborative approach which involves all these different stakeholders is the most productive and effective scenario. The following points can be made to summarize the different experiences with RPL in South Africa

(a) In South Africa while the Labour sector has approached and understood the N Q F from the social and political perspective, the Education and Training sector is challenged by the need to redefine traditional boundaries between the academic, the professional and the vocational as well as the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal education (Harris, 1997a:45).

(b) South African institutions are also considering the task though they may appear to be slow in experimenting with it. It may be that institutions are overwhelmed by the rapid changes in a post-modern society, and also by the changes within the educational system.

(c) The fact that learning may take place outside education environments cannot be disputed. The Joint Matriculation Board has been issuing mature age exemption certificates for many years based on this notion. From these South African pilot projects mentioned earlier, it becomes evident that the process of RPL is a complex one, particularly in the South African context.

2.8 KEY ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH RPL IMPLEMENTATION

Literature has revealed certain issues that need to be considered as posing problems during implementation of RPL. Literature revealed also that these problems arose mainly due to context-specific issues like the following:

2.8.1 Resistance to change

Change is a process occurring over time and it is directed towards growth and development. The realisation that change is a process is a necessary prerequisite to successful initiation of change. Change is a process which involves the people who plan the change and those who implement that change. The policy makers who usually initiate change may have different perceptions from those that will implement the innovation. The personal experience of those who are affected by the change should therefore be considered if change is to be successful. This interactive participation of the role players in any change process is necessary. The gap between the ideas of the policy makers and the realities of the implementation process, coupled with the attitudes of those involved in implementation may give rise to problems. It is important therefore that any process of introducing innovation should be planned in collaboration with those to be affected so as to avoid resistance.

According to Wolf, while some faculty members eagerly embraced prior learning assessment, others remained unconvinced and were either covertly or openly resistant to the concept (Wolf, 1996:16). It becomes clear therefore that getting a new idea accepted, even when it has obvious advantages, is often very difficult. According to Wolf(1996), the most important factors affecting the adoption of a new idea are its compatibility with the existing values and beliefs of individuals concerned and their past experience with change in the social system. (Wolf, 1996: 14). In the South African context too, it is important to consider carefully strategies of introducing innovations like the Recognition of Prior Learning in a way that does not alienate those that will be involved with its implementation. There are different models that have been used by educators to introduce change. These are discussed in the next chapter.

69

2.8.2 Lack of funding

Another problem that may hinder successful implementation of RPL may be lack of funding.

For an economy as weak as South Africa's, it would be necessary for the government and

other stakeholders to provide funds for RPL projects jointly. An analysis of the direct financial

implications of RPL should be done first. Literature has revealed that RPL projects designed

on the basis of an estimated budget may run into problems when real costs become more

that the estimated costs (Clark, Ivanitskaya, and Goodwin, 2000:18).

2.8.3 Lack of personnel training

Lack of training of those that are involved with the RPL process has also been cited as a

problem during implementation. From literature it becomes clear that the assessors must

have an extremely good grasp of various assessment methods and be able to select and use

methods according to the candidates' needs and experiences. Assessors should also

understand the context in which learning has taken place. They should be familiar with the

standards against which they will assess candidates and the meaning of those standards in

that particular context.

As in the USA and in UK., RPL practices in Canada have received some criticism from a

number of authors. Thomas in 1989 conducted a survey to trace the development since 1974

of the traditional version of RPL which was introduced in secondary schools in Ontario.

According to the report, RPL practices had grown slowly after 15 years. One of the reason for

this, according to the report was due to lack of assessor training (Thomas, 1989: 38).

There are differing views about the amount and timing of support given to candidates.

According to Butterworths and Edwards (1993), support should be available and should be

more intensive during the initial phase of the assessment process (Butterworths and Edwards, 1993: 239).

2.8.4 Assessment

Butterworth and Edwards in 1993 developed an APEL system for the School of Education in the Open University in Britain. The course chosen was a second year course for a compulsory sphere of secondary education. This was a part time course which attracted adult learners from social work and nursing. This course seemed most appealing for APEL because the approach encouraged students to reflect on their experiences and develop portfolios as a resource for their own learning. Some problems, however, were experienced during this project. Assessment posed a problem for candidates who were not used to a norm referenced form of assessment. Some confusion was experienced by students as to what was expected of them by the assessors. This was partly due to the fact that the majority of the candidates were adults who were returning to education after a long time. There were also discrepancies between the results of assessment of the counsellors and the assessors. The fact that counsellors were used during the assessment influenced the results, since they already had their own biases about the particular students assessed. This discrepancy was further exaggerated by the distance between the candidates and the counsellors since the course was offered on distance learning. One would imagine that in-service education for counsellors would have minimised the problem. Because of demographic factors, candidates felt isolated and that they lacked support from both counsellors and peers. According to the results of the study, the majority of candidates felt they required support during the preparation phase which was not readily available in most cases. This raises issues about the timing of the support given to candidates. It would appear from the results of the project

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71

that the context should be considered when decisions about support to candidates are made (Butterworth and Edwards, 1993: 239).

2.8.5 Lack of appropriate policies

Another cause of problems during implementation may be due to lack of involvement of all those who will be involved with the implementation of the RPL process. According to Sachs (1980), faculty members must have a say in the definition of learning objectives, and reliable assessment of prior learning must involve consistency of judgement among different faculty members regarding the credit value or levels of competence demonstrated by a given presentation of student learning. A joint decision by all involved should be taken with regard to the above issues so that an agreement about the abilities required for granting a certain number of credits can be reached (Sachs, 1980 :342).

Peruniak (1993) examined the challenges of experiential learning and its assessment. According to Peruniak, RPL was being used by universities, industries and the government to solve economic and manpower problems (Peruniak, 1993:39). The author argued further that, in that way, RPL worked against its main objective because only industry-specific learning would be accredited. Such an approach would inhibit the potential to holistic learning. Similar concerns were raised by Thomas and Klainman in 1992. They conducted a national study to trace the utilization of RPL in Canada at all educational levels in the late 1980s. The findings reflected a surprisingly widespread usage on an equally widely decentralized basis. Usage was limited in terms of faculties, programs and individual faculty members. The survey also revealed that, with the exception of Quebec and British Columbia, throughout Canada, students had no rights to RPL assessments. The education system was not flexible enough to allow students to move in and out of formal education. In this way, RPL

72

was not seen to have any potential for educational reform. (Thomas and Klainman,1992:69).The above studies have important implications for the present study.

In the U.S.A and Canada, the experiential learning movement had a major influence on the development of RPL, whereas in Britain, the Credit Accumulation and Transfer system had a major impact. According to Day (2000), the absence of nationally recognized frameworks of educational standards in Canada because of the federal system of governments, is the major reason for the emphasis on the developmental approach to RPL that both these countries have maintained. In South Africa, while RPL is viewed from the perspective of potential social transformation, within the NQF context, recognition of prior learning poses a significant challenge for writers of standards because they must allow for recognition of experiential forms of knowledge and skills both in terms of the way these were obtained and the way they are currently used. The South African context is intended to enable the NQF objectives of redress and access.

2.9 PROBLEMS THAT INFLUENCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RPL WITHIN NURSING EDUCATION

The existence of different categories within the nursing education system makes the practice of RPL difficult. Presently matriculation is still used as an entry criterion. There are no clear cut criteria for progression within the profession, for example, to proceed from enrolled nurse to professional nurse. Forms of training are still largely decided by the service, since service needs and not those of the individual or educational institution are seen as most important. Several issues need to be addressed before a credible, comprehensive and widely accessible RPL system can be developed and implemented for the nursing profession. These issues include policy, quality assurance and curriculum issues. Curriculum issues

include the development of guidelines to serve as guides to institutions offering RPL; how standards will be set and maintained; whether there is a need for a core curriculum for all health professionals; and how RPL will be applied across disciplines. Implementing these changes is made more complex because they coincide with other changes within the educational and health sector occurring concurrently. To put the problem in perspective, a brief review of the issues of inequality, lack of access to training and lack of progression within the system will be addressed in its historical context (Khanyile, 2000:71).

2.9.1 Inequality of nurse training

It is necessary to reflect on the training of nurses in this country before the South African Nursing Council took over, to appreciate the developments that occurred as a result of this takeover, and to put the issue of redress in context. It is a fact that nurse training was unified previously since there was a single curriculum and students could exit at specified levels or progress within the same curriculum. It is not clear, however, if students were allowed to re-enter at different points within the system. When the SANC took over, the system of training was improved, though these improvements did not favour Black nurses. As entrance standards increased, it became more and more difficult for Black females to enter the profession since the majority did not have matriculation (Mashaba, 1986:3).

With the increase in the number of Black patients in hospitals, there was an urgent need to train more Blacks to provide service to their own people (Mashaba, 1986:20). Because these females did not meet the entrance criteria, they were trained as orderlies. This was a form of in -service training. As standards of education for Blacks improved, it became possible to train them as auxiliary nurses. This was a substandard form of nurse training but on completion of these nurses could register with the SANC. The continuous shortage of nurses

led to hospital authorities turning to this category of nurses, hence the beginning of the different categories for nursing. According to Potgieter, the aim was to complement the professional category with a less educated one (Potgieter, 1992 :65).

2.9.2 Lack of access

As this form of training continued, it became difficult for Black nurses to seek employment outside their province. When the Nursing Act 69 of 1957 made it possible for this category of nurses to obtain statutory recognition, their training was subjected to some changes. The duration was shortened from three years to eighteen months, the nurses wrote SANC examination. Enrolled nurse training in South Africa for obvious reasons attracted more Blacks than Whites. As standards of Black education improved, however, and as more Blacks entered nursing, the hospitals became more selective. Black females with matriculation but who had obtained poor symbols or who failed the preliminary examination were redirected to the sub professional training programmes By 1981, only 39 per cent of Black nurses enrolled with the SANC had matriculated (Mashaba,1995:102). Therefore. it becomes clear that the system of training that was used during that time excluded most Black nurses from the professional training programmes.

2.9.3 Lack of progression

The unfortunate part was that even after completion of training. these nurses could not progress into professional training. Improvement in other forms of knowledge did not guarantee them any progress in their training. The reason behind this was the fact that their curriculum was different from that of the professional nursing programme. Their curriculum focused on technical skills mainly, as well as the service needs of the institution. The emergence of this category thus favoured the needs of the service but hindered the individual

75

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educational needs of the enrolled nurse. The fact that, if they wished to continue they had to start at the beginning of the professional nurses' programme, was a clear indication that their previous experience was not recognised. This was underlined by Mashaba, who pointed out that:

although enrolled nurse training became a popular occupation with young Black females, it lacked prospects as a career. Unlike enrolled nurses in the U K who could move horizontally and acquire additional clinical qualification, those in South Africa could not proceed along those lines (Mashaba, 1995:89)

As another response to the shortage of trained nurses because of their long period of training, the government undertook schemes to train another sub-category of Black nurses, called nurse aides. Like the enrolled nurses, training for this group was done locally and according to the needs of the service. The duration of the training was six months and the content focused mainly on care of patients with tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. The first group was so good and proficient in their care of patients that they completed the course before the stipulated period. As a result, the government decided to continue with the scheme and it spread to other hospitals in the country. According to Mellish (1985), training of Black nurses was not supposed to be possible since in her own words:

Black women with the educational and mental outlook needed for professional training were not available due to, among other reasons, lack of sufficient secondary schooling facilities and the use of Black patients in urban areas for training of White nurses (Mellish 1985: 41).

Gerland supported this opinion stating that White nurses were not keen to be relieved of the duty of nursing Black male patients because they (Black male patients) provided good clinical experience (Gerland, 1984:208).

It is not clear from literature why Black nurses received the substandard form of training. Different authors gave different reasons since each one approached from a different perspective. Mashaba (1986), focused on the history of Black nurse training while Potgieter

76

(1992), was looking at the development of professional training in relation to other countries with the exclusion of the sub-professional training. One important fact is that when the training of Black nurses commenced, whether due to service crisis or on a trial basis, it proved to be successful. Nursing education in South Africa continued to respond to challenges, many of which fall outside the scope of the present study. The growth of the degree course and other post-basic courses are just two such developments.

The proposal by the Minister of Health to the South African Nursing Council that the Council, as a watchdog of the society, should ensure a balance between the production and the effective utilisation of human resources posed another challenge to the profession as a whole This proposal meant that the Council should ensure that the backlog of inadequately trained nurses would be upgraded so that they could be effectively utilised in Primary Health Care settings. On the other hand, the government notice to grant approval to private training schools who offered training for the lower categories was another challenge since control of such training would become difficult (South African Nursing Council, 1997). The RPL system clearly would be the most appropriate system for upgrading these nurses without unnecessary duplication of their training.

2.10. THE PRESENT CHALLENGES IN NURSING EDUCATION

The National Commission on Higher Education proposed that a multi-disciplinary Health Personnel Education Council be established jointly by two departments (Education and Training as well as the Health department), to develop a policy and to coordinate the organisation and funding of health personnel education and training (NCHE, 1997). The Health Science Working group was appointed by the National Commission on Higher Education to explore some of the issues raised by the Task group, which was looking into

ways by which the National Education on Higher Education could comply with the aims of the government. The task group was reviewing programmes, institutions, and the National Qualifications Frameworks. The terms of reference of the Health Science Working Group were as follows:

In order to enhance mobility. provision should be made for multiple entry and exit points within the horizontally and vertically integrated systems of education and training for health professionals through the development within the sector of the National Qualifications Framework principles (NCHE,1997.339)

This recommendation is more relevant for nursing since, of all the health personnel training systems, nursing has been the only one under the direct control of the service The disadvantages of this situation were highlighted earlier in the chapter. It would appear that the South African Nursing Council's model of a unified system of training was a response to the above proposal. According to the Council, the proposed model is a four year programme, the aim of which is the preparation of a professional nurse, capable of independent comprehensive practice within the Primary Health Care setting (SANC, 1996). This means that, for the first time in South African nursing history, all nurses will receive the same form of training, as there will be a single coordinated system of training for nurses This unified system will ensure that the National Qualifications Framework principles are implemented as it will allow for entry and exit at specified levels, therefore it will ensure portability, access as well as progression of training. Through this unified system, the student will be registered as a comprehensive generalist nurse. The SANC also proposed to use RPL to ensure that the entry portal into the system was widened. Like the NQF. the unified model of nurse education and training was viewed as just a policy issue without any guidelines on how it should be implemented. Research done by the SANC into acceptability by the profession (1997). revealed that the profession was more concerned than excited by this new system. According to the result of the consultative workshops. the nurses viewed this as a change in name only

to the old system which was fragmented and which kept certain categories outside the system (SANC, 1997: 12). It is thus clear that a need exists for more research into how the system of RPL can be used to ensure that the NQF are implemented by the nursing profession

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter formed the basis for data collection during the context evaluation phase. The evaluative researcher compiled a working document which contained key issues for the policy makers in stating their values and goals with regard to RPL for nurses. The key issues that have been highlighted in this chapter are the following:(a) the historical evolution of the Recognition of Previous Learning concept was explored. This was done by tracing the historical background of the country and its impact on education and training. Some important policies like the National Qualifications Framework, the Skills Development Act, the Bill of Human rights, the National Plan on Higher Education, and other mentioned earlier in the chapter were to be used as the guiding framework for the development of the RPL system. The theoretical basis of the RPL concepts was also discussed, from which some of the main concept to be explored by the stakeholders were given. Such concepts included the meaning of prior learning, previous experience, and assessment. International studies helped to illuminate the development of RPL. Experiences from a few institutions around the country revealed that there were some hidden exclusive factors that influenced its implementation. These studies on RPL revealed the fact that the context rather than the philosophical basis was more important to consider in any RPL system (Harris, 1998:123). They also raised important considerations such as the fact that the South African RPL candidate may be different from candidates in other countries. These differences have been mentioned earlier. These considerations were also important for the present study since the RPL system will be

developed in a collaborative way taking into consideration the different stake-holder's perspectives.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A theory is a set of concepts, definitions and propositions that projects a systematic view of phenomena by designating specific inter-relationships among concepts for the purpose of describing, explaining, predicting, and/or controlling phenomena (Chinn and Jacobs, 1983:70). In developing a theory, models are used as structural designs consisting of organized and related concepts. Models are defined as set of concepts and statements that integrate the concepts into a meaningful configuration (Fawcet, 1984:2). In this chapter, the conceptual framework or model that guided the development of the study is presented. In nursing, different conceptual models represent different world views and different classifications. Models are classified under developmental; interaction and systems models. These classifications describe the approaches to understanding the phenomena under study (Fawcett, 1984:14). The chapter starts off with a brief exposition of the systems theory, since the conceptual framework was developed from a systems theory. Thereafter a detailed description of Stuffelbeam's Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) model is given. The chapter ends with a brief description of how the model will be used to guide the study.

According to Gillies (1994), the systems theory was introduced in 1936 by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist. He/she was subsequently joined in 1955 by Miller, a psychiatrist and psychologist Boulding, an economist, in 1956 Ashby a bacteriologist in 1958 and Rapport a mathematician in 1956. Ludwig von Bertalanffy saw the need for a single systemic theoretical

framework to account for the striking parallels found in different scientific disciplines (Gillies 1994:61). The systems theory was later applied by sociologists like Parsons, as well as educationalists who used it to understand human as well as organisational behaviour. From a simple level the theory has been further developed into a more complex level.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF SYSTEMS THEORY

Contemporary attempts to describe, explain and predict organisational behaviour generally depend, as does much of modern scientific thought, upon systems theory (Gillies, 1994 :102). A system is a set of objects or elements that interact to achieve a common goal. A system is made up of the following: elements, which are the different parts of the whole system, namely: the goal, the environment, input, throughput, output and feedback; their relationships to each other, which are the links that join them together: and their boundaries, which separate the elements from each other. The closeness or openness of a system is determined by the permeability of its boundary. Closed systems for example, have impermeable boundaries. Human and organisational systems are said to be open systems because they are open to environmental influence, and adaptive to circumstances because of the diversity or complexity of their elements. The function of any system is to convert information into a useable form. This study seeks to transform information about the way the concept recognition of prior learning can be used to help nurses identify learning from their previous experiences so as to submit this prior learning for assessment and accreditation (Gillies,1994:67).

3.2.1 Elements of a system

Each system is defined in relation to the environment or context. It is separated from the environment by a boundary. The environment, though not part of the system, has potential to

82

influence its functioning. Environmental factors are dynamic and fluctuate according to prevailing conditions surrounding the system. Examples of context/ environment factors that may influence the effectiveness of the RPL system are the following: economic, political and social factors at macro level. The purpose and objectives of the RPL system will have to take these factors into consideration. At the micro level setting, cultural background and the organisational environment of the institution involved with RPL will need to be considered. Some systems theorists consider time/ era as also part of the environment (Attree, 1996:2).

The elements of a system are the following:

(a) The input is the energy in various forms, for example, information that is introduced to the system. According to Gillies (1994). input is the energizer of the system. From an educational perspective based on the systems framework, inputs would be the physical setting, and resources, human, material and financial.

(b) The process is a series of actions by which the system converts energy input from the environment into products and services that are usable by the system. The process can be modified in response to feedback about the performance of the systems. The process is the area where the actual functioning of the system takes place.

(c) The product is the accumulation of data collected from all sources and then viewed in the light of the objectives or the purpose of the system. The product is the results achieved by the system's functioning. It involves the implementation of the plans that were made during the input level (Parfitt,1986:169). According to Parfitt (1986), the context, input, and process are directed to produce the desired output or product. Product evaluation must eventually ask if the system has been worth it and if not, what systems or component of the system need to be altered.

3.2.2 General characteristics of a system

3.2.2.1 Self regulation

The ability of the system to re-establish another steady state after being stimulated or affected by external conditions is termed self regulation This self regulating ability implies that systems have order and are predictable. This orderliness enables the system to fulfil its purpose or goal. The sequence of the activities to be performed for the goal of the system are prescribed by the process of organisation. Organisation of the system is discovered, and through testing and validation, new discoveries are made and in this way self-regulation occurs. This self-regulation leads to growth and development.

3.2.2.2 Systems have mutually inclusive parts

The structures within the system can stand in and for themselves but their functioning affects the functioning of the whole system.

3.2.2.3 Feedback is important in any functioning of the system.

From any point of the system feedback is important to ensure development. The different parts of the system feed back into the system any change caused by external factors which might impact on the whole functioning of the system. For instance, a drop in the student intake rate to the college will affect the delivery of quality service since there will not be enough nurses to render this service. On the other hand, lack of resources in the service may affect the quality of training for the students (Bevis, 1989:34).

3.3 APPLICATION OF SYSTEMS THEORY

General systems theory enables specialists in different disciplines to share insight and build on one another's discoveries. Furthermore, general systems theory provides a basic

framework for joining content from different disciplines into a comprehensive body of knowledge. The theory helps in designing models of sufficient accuracy and complexity to facilitate the study of real situations that are not amenable to experimentation. The systems approach provides a means of categorising the various activities of any aspect of the scientific enquiry. The systems approach has been used for such activities as concept analysis, construction of theoretical relationships, testing of relationship statements and practical application of the theory.

3.3.1 Education

Educational evaluators have used the systems approach to introduce change. They have developed different models based on systems theory to evaluate educational programmes and curricula with a view to introducing innovations. For instance, the two models developed by Schon (1971) and Havelock (1971) were developed in response to problems that were experienced with educational innovation strategies after evaluation. These innovations were either not accepted by those involved in their implementation or the problem was caused by faculty methods used in their dissemination. Schon identified three models of dissemination which he called the Centre Periphery model, the Proliferation of Centres model and the Shifting Centres model. According to Kelly (1999), these last two models are extensions of the first model therefore all three are different versions of one Centre Periphery model. According to Schon's Centre Periphery model, the process of introducing change or innovation should be centrally controlled and managed. This change must be planned and prepared in detail by the policy makers before its dissemination to the implementers.

Criticisms of this model are that, if there is one way process from the centre to the periphery, the effectiveness of the change will depend on the strength of the centre in relation to the

periphery and the proximity of the periphery to the centre. Kelly (1999), identified was he called the inadequacies of the Centre- Periphery model. The first problem was the wide gap between the ideas of the central planners of any innovation and the realities of the implementation. The second problem, according to Kelly, was the attitudes of those involved with implementation. The third problem was what Kelly termed 'tissue rejection.' Educational institutions are living organisms and therefore they must be helped to grow and develop. In other words, imposing innovation without the involvement of those who will be implementing it often leads to rejection (Kelly, 1999: 110).

Havelock (1971) designed models for educational evaluation and innovation. His Research, Development and Diffusion model was similar to Schon's Centre Periphery model in that it was a system for a specific target and therefore could not be applied to all situations of innovation. This model, like Schon's, also assumed passivity of the implementer or receiver of the innovation. According to Kelly (1999), this model would be effective for large scale innovation. Havelock's second model, the Social Interaction model, though similar to the previous models in that central planners determined the need of the consumers, recognized that the key to adoption and implementation of the innovation was the social climate of the consumers and the implementers. With this model, Havelock offered educational evaluators a shift of focus from the centre. Havelock stressed the importance of the channels of communication between the central planners and the periphery.

Havelock's third model of educational evaluation was the Problem Solving model. With this model, Havelock ensured a total completion of the shift from the centre to the periphery in that with this model, the problem was to be identified by the consumer and thus the innovation process was to be initiated by the consumer and not the central planner. The

relationship between the centre and the periphery was to be that of mutual support and collaboration rather than the receiver and the sender relationship. Within the context of systems theory, it becomes apparent that, any change or innovation in any part of the system will affect the other parts. Therefore coordination of the innovation by involving all the parts affected is necessary. What is important for an educational evaluation is that it should be developmental, and done for the purpose of improving the current situation (Havelock 1971; Kelly 1999)

3.3.2 Nursing disciplines

The different disciplines of nursing have also used systems theory with different focuses, For example, from a nursing education point of view, systems theory has been used for curriculum construction and programme evaluation. Nursing researchers have also used systems approach to describe the nature of phenomena to be studied. Nurse researchers have used systems theory to develop a theory for nursing (Chin and Jacobs, 1987:34). From a nursing management point of view, systems theory has been used for planning organisational structures in health agencies for example staffing patterns or the evaluation of nursing standards (Fawcett, 1989:28). Systems theory will be used to guide the development of the Recognition of Prior Learning system . By definition a model is a representation of the whole (system) and therefore this approach will be appropriate in the development of such a system.

The systems approach has also been viewed as a flexible means of problem solving. From the health management perspective, this approach has been very popular in evaluating the effectiveness of the health care agency (Gillies, 1994:65). Donabedian (1986), coined a systems based framework which analyses the quality of intervention (care) from the

perspective of structure, process and output. His framework has been widely used for diagnostic purposes in order to describe, measure, analyse and evaluate the standards of care in Primary Health Care settings. Unlike other models that sought to evaluate quality of care, his model was more balanced since it looked at all the elements from a systems point of view (Donabedian, 1986:1746).

Educators have also used the systems approach to evaluate the curriculum or specific programmes. Tyler's model of curriculum evaluation focussed on the outcomes. According to him, evaluation is a process of determining the degree to which educational objectives are being achieved. Though this model was influential for a long time in educational planning, it later received criticism for its emphasis on objectives, especially from systems-oriented educators. This model was also criticised since results would be achieved only at the end of the project and therefore it did not offer continuous feedback (Scriven, 1987; Sullivan 1983).

As an alternative to Tyler's model, Stuffelbeam offered an evaluation approach that was focused on the process of providing information for decision making (Stuffelbeam, 1969:125). Systems theory also helps in decision making based on the information that has been accumulated. Decisions about how the system would be implemented, and how the system was running when it is implemented were according to him just as important as decisions about whether the system ran according to plan. Stuffelbeam combined both process and product evaluation in a balanced way in his model. He thought it was important to identify the main types of decisions first before deciding on the appropriate strategies to evaluate them. For this study Stuffelbeam's model was used as a conceptual framework.

3.4 STUFFELBEAM'S CONTEXT, INPUT, PROCESS, AND PRODUCT (CIPP) MODEL.

Since RPL had not been implemented in nursing education in South Africa before the research started, an evaluation framework that allowed for continuous evaluation had to be chosen. Stuffelbeam's CIPP model allowed for each implementation phase to be evaluated while it is being implemented. It was for this reason that Stuffelbeam's CIPP model was chosen. Stuffelbam used a systems approach to establish the degree to which the organisation or programme is able to realise its goals under a set of given conditions. The researcher too used the CIPP model to ascertain whether the identified RPL system is appropriate for the nursing profession, given the fact that certain standards had to be met and that those standards had to acceptable by all the users..

3.4.1 Basic assumptions of Stuffelbeam's evaluation model

- Evaluation is an integral part of an institution's regular program and the implementation of any evaluation model should be seen as part of an ongoing process. The results of the CIPP evaluation model should trigger further evaluation.

- Evaluations play a vital role in stimulating and planning changes. Any successful innovation must have some scientific basis.

- The employment of each type of evaluation in the CIPP model is indicated only if information beyond what already exists is needed, not for the inherent value in doing each kind of evaluation. Context, input, process and product evaluations are only a part of a large milieu of evaluation that goes on in any institution and the most important function of those commissioned studies in serving the institution's marginal needs for evaluative information.

- Evaluation information not only provides guidance for institutional problem solving, but if recorded and made available for public review, it also provides a basis for judging

89

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whether decisions either to abort or continue with a special project were made on defensible grounds.

- While the CIPP model makes no special provision for formulating and testing hypotheses, it does, through its provision for context, input and process information, provide a rich source of background data against which to interpret and understand outcomes (Stuffelbeam, 1969:143).

3.4.2 Areas of decision making

Stuffelbeam's model identified four areas of decision making : context, input, process and product.

3.4.2.1 Context evaluation for setting the boundary

A context evaluation is aimed at examining whether existing goals and priorities are attuned to the needs of whoever is being served. The methodology of context evaluation may take numerous forms, including interviews and examination of records to identify performance patterns. An expert review panel may also be used to observe closely the progression of the program, a consensus -building technique such as the Delphi may also be used to secure agreements about priority needs, and a workshop might be conducted to help the clients to study and apply the findings of the evaluation (Madaus, Scriven and Stuffelbeam 1987:131) The results of a context evaluation should provide a sound basis for adjusting existing goals and should target needed changes. Context, according to this model, would be where the objectives or purposes of RPL are determined.

3.4.2.2 Input evaluation for planning decisions

During this stage of evaluation the main focus is to help prescribe a program by which to

bring about needed changes. This evaluation should also look for barriers and constraints that may hinder the plans for change, and resources to facilitate the change process. During this stage available alternatives are considered. The methods used to accumulate information may commence with an extensive review of literature to ascertain whether potentially effective solutions exist. The next method is the advocacy team technique where expert teams are convened to make judgements about the best method or approaches to be employed. Their recommendations are then forwarded to a panel of experts who in turn pilot test the plan. For this study too, the researcher will make use of this advocacy approach in that the workshop participants will be stakeholders who are experts in their particular fields. The Education Committee members of the South African Nursing Council will be used as panellists since they represent the policy making body. The researcher will assume the evaluator role. Questions like the implementation costs, how candidates will be selected , prepared and assessed, how standards will be maintained during the assessments will all be addressed during this stage of evaluation.

3.4.2.3 Process evaluation for implementation decisions

This will be the actual implementation of the RPL model. Data that will be accumulated during this stage will indicate whether the system is running according to plan, whether there are any problems that were not anticipated and will suggest how these may be modified. During this phase of evaluation, the researcher should guard against obstructing the smooth running of the system. Whilst continuously collecting data through observations and meetings with providers, the researcher should avoid taking serious decisions with regard to changes as this could 'contaminate' the observations (Madaus, Scriven and Stufflebeam 1987). The assessment results of candidates will also be evaluated.

3.4.2.4 Product evaluation for recycling decisions

This stage involves the accumulation of data from sources that were involved during the implementation stage. Problems that were experienced will have to be identified, analysed and compared with the initial plan. According to Stuffelbeam (1969), the purpose of product evaluation is to measure, interpret and judge the attainment of a program. The product evaluation may compare the outcomes of the project with outcomes of other existing programs.

3.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter an attempt was made to describe the conceptual framework as well as systems theory from which the conceptual framework was developed. While systems theory provides a basic framework for coordinating content or viewpoints from different disciplines, it is particularly suited for the present study since the phenomena under study will influence the general functioning of the different parts of the systems. For example, the health sector, labour sector and the education sector are all affected by policy issues with regards to the education and training of nurses. As was mentioned earlier, the systems approach is useful in developing, constructing and testing of theories as well as in the practical application of those theories. The present study involved the development and testing of a system, therefore a systems approach is the most suitable one. Stuffelbeam's CIPP model for educational evaluation provides a useful framework for making decisions and at the same time evaluating the outcomes of the decisions made. In the next chapter, the CIPP model will be used to guide the data collection procedures

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to develop a model that could be implemented for the Recognition of Prior Learning in selected nursing education institutions in South Africa. To test the model once developed, it would be implemented in a form of pilot projects in selected institutions, working with groups of nurses who accessed certain programs of nurse education. Its effectiveness and success would be evaluated in terms of the ability of the candidates to access successfully into advanced nursing programs. It was hoped that the RPL model once developed and tested, would provide a practical and flexible program for nursing education institutions in South African who wished to implement RPL.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a multi-phase decision and utilization-oriented evaluation research design. According to Polit and Hungler (1991), evaluation research is an applied form of research which involves questions about how well a program is functioning. Evaluation studies provide answers to questions about the continuation, adoption or modification of policies or systems. In this particular study evaluation was used to provide answers about the adoption of a new system. Stuffelbeam's CIPP model offered a proactive way to evaluate the worth of the RPL system for nurses.

4.2.1.Purpose of evaluation research

The purpose of evaluation research is to seek answers to practical questions of decision makers. The goal of evaluation research is to assess or evaluate the success of a particular

program, by the final analysis of data so that decisions can be made about the particular program. In all evaluation contexts, there are multiple, often competing stakeholders whose interests must be considered, unlike in other types of research where the audience may be peers. In conducting evaluation studies, one must consider the different stakeholders and ensure that the evaluation answers their questions. The results of evaluation need to provide practical knowledge which has been empirically justified about the worth of a particular phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:374).

4.2.2 Evaluation methodology

Evaluation studies rely heavily on qualitative methods for construction of meaning. The method chosen must match the information needed for decision making at various levels. Evaluation studies therefore rely on the inter-actional, adaptive and judgemental abilities of the human inquirer. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1982), neither the different stakeholders' questions nor the criteria for measuring program effectiveness can be equally addressed by the same evaluation methodology. Therefore the nature or the complexity of the phenomena (decisions to be made) as well as the predispositions and beliefs of the evaluator will influence the choice of the methodology. Evaluation methodologies constitute coordinated frameworks of philosophical assumptions integrated with ideological views about the role and purpose of valuation and decision making. According to van Zyl (1991), as cited in Garbers (1996), what distinguishes one evaluation methodology from another is not the methods but rather the questions that need to be addressed, and the audience or stakeholders whose values are promoted by answering those questions. The following questions guided the selection of the evaluation framework for this particular study:

(a) What was the task at hand and how complex was the task?

The study involved a two phased task of developing and testing a model for RPL implementation. The purpose of the study indicated the complexity of the task at hand, because the model once developed, was to be used by Nursing Education Institutions all over the country. It was important to identify appropriate people to make decisions about the model development, since the results would affect the whole system of nurse education and training.

(b) Who were the decision makers?

The Education Committee of the South African Nursing Council was identified as the appropriate decision maker since this is the committee that makes guidelines and policies pertaining to the smooth functioning of the whole Nursing Education system of the country. Literature reviewed emphasized the importance of RPL practices being based on a sound policy (Harris, 1998, Keeton 1985, Evans 1994)

(c)Who were the stakeholders that would be affected by the decisions?

According to Tanner (1987), the number of people who are to be involved influences the decisions to be made. The purpose of this study entailed that the decisions made would have to be adopted by the whole system at large, therefore other stakeholders needed to be part of the decision making process, to refine the decisions made. For this particular study, the diversity of the stakeholders coupled by their diverse perspectives and their diverse ideologies made the task a complex one. Lessons from other countries which had experimented with RPL, and those which have formal RPL practices in place, emphasized the need for collaboration during the implementation process (Tanner, 1987;134). As was mentioned in Chapter two, RPL like any other innovation affects those who will be involved

95

with its implementation and hence their involvement during the development of the system was deemed important.

(d)What were the prevailing circumstances, or what information was available that could help the decision makers in arriving at decisions?

In Chapter 2, problems experienced during the implementation of RPL practices in South Africa and in other countries were explored. From educational evaluation literature, problems related to educational innovation were also explored, and these experiences also influenced the choice of the evaluation framework. Since RPL is a new phenomena for nursing in South Africa, and since Nursing Education in South Africa is a regulated profession, decisions had to be made in a rigorous and systematic manner. Decisions made had to be based on adequate information to ensure accountability by those involved. An appropriate design was one that would ensure information processing, because the decisions had to be based on sound knowledge of RPL. During the initial phase of the study, an extensive review of literature revealed important issues that needed to be considered. Literature also revealed problems in 'exporting' models without consideration of context. Therefore, a design that would ensure consideration of context was necessary.

(e)What role was the researcher going to play in the process?

There are differing views about the amount or extent of the evaluator's involvement in evaluation studies. At one extreme are views which support total involvement of the evaluator as a subjective partner and at the other end there are views that support the involvement of the evaluator only as an observer. For this particular study, the conceptual framework used influenced the role of the evaluator (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:328). For instance, according to the CIPP model, evaluation is defined as a process of delineating,

96

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obtaining and providing information so that decision makers may make informed and considered judgements. For this particular study, during the development phase, the researcher's role was mainly that of providing information to the decision makers for them to make informed decisions while the researcher observed and analyzed the process. This was important especially since the RPL concept was fairly new in the nursing profession. As the study progressed to implementation and testing phases, the researcher's role combined those of observer and evaluator. The evaluator's role for this study, was influenced by:

(1) the type of decisions to be made,

(2) the characteristics of the decision makers,

(3) the level at which decision were made.

This meant that the evaluator moved from being an evaluator to being a facilitator and back to being an evaluator.

4.2.3 Evaluation and decision making

Educational evaluation studies are designed and conducted to assist some audiences to judge and improve the worth of some educational objects, be they programs or any educational innovations. Such studies may, according to Stuffelbeam follow three different approaches. The first approach is politically oriented, that is it promotes a positive or negative view of an object irrespective of its actual worth. The second approach is oriented to answer specific questions whose answers may not assess the object's worth. The third approach is designed primarily to assess and improve the worth of an object (Stuffelbeam,1987:104). Decisions-oriented studies fall under the third category since they emphasize that the evaluation should be used pro-actively to help improve a program as well as retrospectively to judge its worth. The main questions addressed are: how should a given enterprise be planned (planning decisions), and how should a given plan be carried out (implementation

97

decisions), how should the program be revised (recycling decisions). Numerous methods are used in decisions-oriented studies. These include surveys, case studies, needs assessment, advocate teams, observations and quasi-experimental methods. The main advantage of decisions-oriented studies is that they encourage educators to use evaluation continuously and systematically in their effort to plan and implement programs that meet educational needs. They also provide a rationale for helping educators to be accountable for to the decisions they have made in the course of implementing the program. In this study the stakeholders had different levels (policy makers, program managers, program implementers, beneficiaries and consumers) so an appropriate design was one that would cater for different types of decisions at different levels in a systematic and coherent way. Therefore, a decisions and utilization-oriented evaluation design was chosen. Stuffelbeam's Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) was used to guide data collection and analysis (Stuffelbeam, 1987:68).

4.3 STUFFELBEAM'S CONTEXT,INPUT,PROCESS AND PRODUCT (CIPP) MODEL

Stuffelbeam used a systems approach to establish the degree to which the organization or program is able to realize its goals under a set of given conditions. The evaluative researcher will use the CIPP model to ascertain whether the RPL model is appropriate for the nursing profession. The Context Input Process Product (CIPP) model of evaluation was originally developed to provide timely information in a systematic way for decision making as a proactive application of evaluation. It contains three basic steps: first delineation of questions to be answered; second providing information to decision makers for their use and thereby improving ongoing programs; and third, making the decisions about the worth of such programs.

98

4.3.1 Context evaluation for planning decisions

A context evaluation is aimed at examining whether existing goals are attuned to the needs of whoever is being served. Context evaluation is macro- analytic in that it sets the boundaries of the system to be evaluated and describes and analyses it. It describes the values and goals of the system, thus providing the basis for control within the system by continuous monitoring of the system. It also provides the basis for stating objectives through determining the amount of information available for supporting change. Context evaluation aimed at achieving the first two objectives of this study. Determination of context was important in setting the boundaries for the RPL system by establishing the policy makers' frame of reference with regard to RPL for the nursing education system, in order to ensure quality control of such a system. This will be achieved by the determination of the policy makers' values and goals for the implementation of RPL. According to Stuffelbeam (1992), during the context evaluation, if-then questions are asked by the decision makers. Research question 1 will attempt to achieve this objective.

The framework for discussions with the policy makers is presented later in this chapter, see page 106. A number of relevant models which were discussed in Chapter 2 were identified and presented to the policy makers. The result of this first step was a discussion document which contained the policy makers' views about RPL for nurses. Thereafter, the stakeholders analyzed these and made their input and Guidelines for RPL implementation emerged from this evaluation.

The second level of context evaluation was the level of the stakeholders. Literature revealed that for any new innovation to be accepted by those who would be affected, involvement of those affected was important. Research question 2 will attempt to achieve this objective. For

this study, the first step involved the evaluative researcher in doing an extensive literature review to establish the existence of information that could be used by the policy makers in identifying their goals and values with regard to the RPL system for nurses. According to Stuffelbeam, the decision to proceed to the next step of evaluation will be influenced by the results of the current evaluation. For this study too, the appropriateness of the system needed to be determined. In order to do this, the people involved with its implementation at institutional levels needed to make decisions about how the RPL program would be structured, taking into consideration the context of their situation. The guidelines developed during the context evaluation step were used as a basis for such decisions. The context evaluation step will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. (See chapter 5 for the RPL guidelines discussion document).

4.3.2 Input evaluation for structuring decisions

During this stage of evaluation the main focus is to help prescribe a policy by which to bring about needed changes. This evaluation should also look for barriers or constraints that might hinder the plans for change and process. According to Linstone and Turoff (1977), during this stage available alternatives are considered The methods may be the advocacy team technique where expert teams are convened to make judgments about the best methods or approaches to be employed (Linstone and Turoff,1977:32). For this study, the evaluation was carried out by those institutions that were going to be involved with the implementation of the system. The evaluative researcher's role during this stage was to obtain information and to make it available to the decision makers. and then to analyze the process. The guidelines developed during the context evaluation were used as a basis to formulate institutional policies on RPL implementation. The institutions involved had to determine the structures that would be necessary for RPL implementation. A checklist was used to evaluate the extent

to which the RPL guidelines were followed during this stage of the system development (See Annexure 7).

4.3.3 Process evaluation for implementation decisions

The most appropriate participants during process evaluation are those closely affected by the decisions. because they have contextual understanding of the feasibility of the decisions taken. For this study, the stage involved here was the actual implementation of the RPL system. Data accumulated during this stage focused on whether the system was running according to plan, whether there were any problems that had not been anticipated and how these might be solved. During this phase of evaluation, the evaluation researcher maintained the observer role as much as possible though she offered clarity on certain aspects of information being processed as the need arose. The evaluative researcher should however avoid taking serious decisions with regard to changes as this could 'contaminate' the observations (Madaus, Scriven and Stuffelbeam 1967:68). For this study too, the feasibility of the RPL system had to be tested by implementing the policies made during the input evaluation to ascertain if there were problems and to determine alternative steps to overcome the problems. The results of this evaluation helped to shape the model. During this phase of the model development, a pilot project protocol was developed and used to evaluate the extent to which each institution followed the RPL guidelines during the implementation of the RPL process. Based on the information received from the three pilot sites, a checklist was used to compare the three sites.

4.3.4 Product evaluation for recycling decisions

According to Stuffelbeam (1969), the purpose of product evaluation is to measure, interpret and judge the attainment of a program. Sometimes the product evaluation should compare

101

the outcomes of the project with outcomes of other existing programs. Unlike input evaluation, which occurs prior to the implementation of a project, product evaluation occurs during and after the project. Product evaluation reports that objectives were either achieved or not, thus providing a basis for replication or recycling of the decisions taken. For this study, product evaluation looked at the comparability of the RPL candidates with those that accessed the nursing program through the normal route. The RPL candidates' performance whilst in the advanced program was evaluated to judge the effectiveness of the RPL system. Results of this evaluation helped in refining and reshaping the developed RPL system. The ability of the RPL candidates to compare favorably with the other candidates from the traditional routes of entry would mean that the main objective of the RPL model, that of access of mature adults had been achieved.

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CONTEXT
EVALUATION          RQ              STAKEHOLDER
EDCO                1.2             Refirement

              RPL GUIDELINES

INPUT EVALUATION    RQ              · Structuring
INSTITUTIONS        3.4             · Training

              INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

PROCESS EVALUATION  RQ              Contextual issues
INSTITUTIONAL       5 6.7           retne the Process
LEVEL

         RPL PROCESS
         ACCESS PROVIDED

PRODUCT EVALUATION  RQ              RPL Po c
                    8               refinement

              DEVELOPMENT
              Social & personal
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RQ   = Research Questions
———→ = information
------- = feedback
═════ = outcome

Research questions
1   What are the South African Nursing Council's goals and values?
2   How acceptable are these to the stakeholders?
3   What structures need to be put in place to ensure the effective implementation?
4   What competences are required by those involved with the implementation?
5   Were the RPL guidelines followed during implementation?
6   Which step of the guidelines was difficult?
7   Was the RPL system implemented successfully?
8   How comparable were the RPL candidates?

Figure 4 1 Stuffelbeam s CIPP model for educational evaluation (Stuffelbeam 1984 321)

4.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Figure 4.1 is an illustration of Stuffelbeam's CIPP model which was used as a framework for the collection and analysis of data. The different phases of evaluation as depicted by the CIPP model guided the data collection. The data collection procedures of the different evaluation phase are presented separately.

4.4.1 Context evaluation

For the purpose of this study, context evaluation was done at two levels. The first level was policy making, in which the Education Committee of the South African Nursing Council was involved and the second was the delivery level, where the various stakeholders of the profession were sampled. In this manner, the model was developed, and refined before being implemented.

Level	Objective	Research question	Sample	Data collection	Outcome
Policy makers	To set the boundaries for the RPL system	What were the SANC's values and goals with regard to RPL for nurses?	The Education Committee members of the SANC.	Through a consultative workshop. Policy framework as the main source of data	Discussion document with RPL policy guidelines for refinement. See annexure 2.
Stakeholders	To involve the stakeholders in the development of the RPL guidelines	How acceptable are the RPL guidelines proposed by the policy makers?	Stakeholder representatives from the three identified regions	Consultative workshops. Discussion document with the proposes RPL guidelines as the source	Refined RPL guidelines ready for implementation

Figure 4.2 A framework for context evaluation

104

4.4.1.1 Sample description

There were two samples namely, the policy makers and the stakeholders.

Education Committee sample description

The Education Committee members (EDCO) of the South African Nursing Council formed part of the policy makers' sample during the context evaluation. There were eight members of the EDCO and three Council officers (N=11). See table 4.1

Table 4.1: The Education Committee's sample

Sample characteristics	Present	Absent
Nurse educators	5	0
Nurse Representatives	2	0
Department of Health	1	0
Department of Education	1	1
Community representative	2	0
TOTAL	11	1

Stakeholder's sample description

The providers of Nursing Education and Training, the consumers of the profession, namely the Department of Health, the Nursing Service Managers from the different health institutions, the representatives of the nurses, the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU), Democratic Nurses Organization of South Africa (DENOSA), Hospital Personnel Trade Union of South Africa (HOSPERSA) and South African Democratic Nurses Union (SADNU), were all included as stakeholders. According to the Hospital and Nursing Year book (1999), forty four (44) nursing education institutions in South Africa were registered with

105

the South African Nursing Council. Of these, thirty (30) are Colleges of nursing and fourteen(14) are universities. All of these were offering the 4 year Diploma course according to the South African Nursing Council regulation R425 of 1985 as amended (South African Nursing Council Guide 1992:4). According to the Hospital and Nursing Yearbook (1999), there were four hundred and eighty six (486) institutions in the country, both government and private that used the services of trained nurses. There were nine Departments of Health from one in each of the nine provinces, each with a Human Resource Department.

Sampling Criteria

The following groups were used

a) Providers

The nurse educator at the various institutions that were to be included were viewed as experts in curriculum planning, therefore their input was considered valuable since they would be the ones directly involved with the implementation of any new system. Any innovation would be supported by those who were part of the planning, especially policy innovations. Those who will implement such innovations need to be involved throughout the steps from planning to implementation.

b) Consumers

The Department of Health (Human Resource Division) and Nurse Service Managers were included since they were viewed as the consumers of the Education and Training system of nurses. The RPL system will also have a positive impact on the quality of their personnel and should help to address the challenges that presently face this sector.

c) Nurse representatives

Organizations like Democratic Nurses of South Africa, the Hospital Personnel Trade Union of South Africa and the National Education Health and the Allied Workers Union were also included because they are concerned with the welfare of South African Nurses.

106

4.4.1.2 Sampling techniques

Quota sample

Three provinces were selected based on their accessibility to the evaluative researcher. Quota sampling was done for each stakeholder category. The provinces selected were Gauteng, Kwa Zulu Natal and Free State. Another reason for the exclusion of the other provinces, besides their inaccessibility, was the existence of related RPL projects in those provinces. During the time of data collection, in Kwa Zulu Natal, there were three colleges, two universities and a Department of Health. In Gauteng, there were ten colleges, three universities offering the Comprehensive Basic Nursing Program, and a Department of Health. In the Free State, there were four colleges, one university and a Department of Health. Therefore, there were twenty-one institutions (21) involved in the study. (See table 4.2). Invitations were sent out to all the above-mentioned stakeholders. They were invited to participate in workshops for the refinement of the decisions made by the EDCO.

The sample contained in table 4.2 was made up of those representatives who managed to attend the workshop. As shown in table 4.2, in Gauteng, the representative from Department of Health did not attend the workshop although this department was invited.

Sample size: N=185 participant

Table 4. 2: Stakeholders sample

Sample characteristic	Kwa Zulu Natal	Gauteng	Free State
D.O.H (Health)	2	0	1
Service Manager	31	18	15
Nurse educators	35	21	25
University	3	3	1
DENOSA	2	2	3
NEHAWU	0	2	2
HOSPERSA	2	4	2
SADNU	1	2	2
TOTAL	76	58	51

4.4.1.3 Data Collection

(a) Literature review to delineate and obtain more information about RPL.

The first step involved the evaluative researcher in conducting an extensive literature review to identify information that could be used by the policy makers to determine the amount of information available to support and initiate change. The purpose of the study was used as a basis for selecting and organizing information to be included in the discussion document. The following questions guided the compilation of the discussion document:

❖ *What purpose will the RPL system serve, once developed?*

❖ *What is the historical evolution of RPL?*

❖ *What is the context of RPL in the country?*

❖ *What were the guiding frameworks that influence its development:*

❖ *What approaches to the development of RPL are available?*

❖ *What are the basic concepts, and how are these understood by the decision makers?*

❖ *What problems were experienced by others who had implemented RPL?*

(See chapter 5 for the discussion document information).

(b) Consultative workshops

The second data collection procedure was done in two stages, firstly with the policy makers setting boundaries for the RPL implementation, by identifying their goals, and values with regard to RPL, and secondly with the stakeholder representatives according to the second sample above. According to Feustein (1986), a workshop is a small or large group of people who meet to discuss, plan and or produce specific outputs, which may be written, recorded or illustrated. In order to probe concept understanding successfully, it is essential that the subjects feel at ease, especially when discussing an unfamiliar concept like RPL (Feustein, 1986:34). According to Ingham and Gilbert (1992), the workshop method is most suitable since it minimizes the time required for one to one interviews and also allows for explanations and explorations of difficult concepts. Unlike focus groups, which focus on probing retrospective information, workshops are particularly suited for probing prospective information that may result in learning and development (Ingham and Gilbert, 1992:41). Focus groups were also inappropriate for this particular study since their key principle is homogeneity. For this particular study, information was sought from as diverse groups as possible. A tape recorder was used during the consultative workshops. In preparation for the workshops, participants were given a discussion document that was prepared by the evaluator. (See Annexure 2 for EDCO Workshop objectives). For the policy maker's sample, the first research question formed the main focus of the discussions. The evaluative researcher provided additional information to ensure clarity about the document. For the

stakeholders' sample, the second research question was the main focus of the workshop discussions (See Annexure 4 for the regional workshops invitation).

Aim of the workshop

The workshops were highly structured and focused. The research questions were used as the workshop objectives. For instance for the consultative workshop with the stakeholders, the objectives of the workshop were designed around the second research question. The aim of the workshop was to refine the RPL guidelines proposed by the Education Committee. The objectives were

> (a) to analyze the proposed guidelines
>
> (b) (b) to add or subtract to the standards as set out in the guidelines, and
>
> (c) (c) to comment on the EDCO's proposal with regards to access through RPL.

Content of the workshop

The discussion document was used as the main instrument for data collection. The participants had all had a chance to peruse the document prior to the workshop.

The process of the workshop

A workshop program was developed by the evaluative researcher and presented to the workshop participants. This program spelt out the days activities and had to be approved by the participants. Before commencement, the evaluative researcher requested assistance with co-facilitation during the small group break away sessions. Nurse educators volunteered to help in this regard. During the workshop with the Education Committee, one of the committee members volunteered to co-facilitate. This allowed the evaluative researcher enough opportunity to move between groups and observe the process. It also allowed the evaluative researcher opportunity to clarify issues and provide information when this was necessary. In each small group, the participants chose a scribe and a reporter. The scribe was to take

down notes during the brainstorming sessions and the reporter was to represent the group during feedback sessions. During the workshop with the EDCO, a tape recorder was used.

4.4.1.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was done deductively by transcribing raw data from the tape-recorder and organized sequentially according to the workshop objectives. Data from the flip charts was also incorporated into the transcribed data. Thereafter this was read and re-read and summarized into themes. Tesch's method of content analysis was used to organize data (Cresswell,1994:155).The first step involved the researcher reading and re-reading the transcribed data to get the sense of the whole workshop proceedings. Ideas were jotted down. Thereafter the researcher went through the responses to each objective to think about the underlying meanings and these were jotted down. The study of the material culminated in a list of broad topics. Topics with similar meaning were clustered together and arranged as major topics to reduce the length of the topic list. What emerged was a workshop report document which was sent back to the Education Committee members for verification before it was sent to the stakeholders for further refinement. Comments and contributions from the stakeholders were incorporated into the guidelines and sent back to the Education Committee for their comments and approval. The result of this evaluation was a document containing the refined guidelines collaboratively developed by the policy makers and the representatives of the stakeholders. These guidelines were to be used as a basis for the implementation.

4.4.2 Input evaluation

4.4.2.1 Sampling

During the regional workshops, Nursing Education Institutions were invited to participate in the implementation of the RPL model. The following criteria had to be met before they could be included in the sample:

a) That they be accessible to the evaluator,

b) That they be willing to implement the RPL model by year 2001,

c) That they be willing to send personnel for training in RPL facilitation,

d) That the institution was not involved in other RPL practices before and during the process of implementation so as to ensure reliability of the evaluation results.

Three institutions met the criteria for inclusion. For the purpose of anonymity the institutions will be termed Institution A, Institution B and Institution C.

Level	Objective	Questions	Sample	Data collection	Result
Structuring decision	To ensure that planning at institutional level is guided by the RPL guidelines	What structures were put in place to ensure the effective implementation of the RPL guidelines?	The three institution in KZN. All participants formed the sample	Observations during meetings, minutes of meetings, records as sources of data Checklist	Culminated in Institution policies. See annexures 10,11 and 12
Human resource Development	Same as above	What competencies were required by those involved?	Participants selected by each of the three institutions	Each participant completed a self assessment instrument.	RPL facilitators became competent in RPL process implementation.

Figure 4.3 A framework for Input evaluation

4.4.2.2 Human Resource Development

According to the RPL guidelines, competent people in nursing education and in assessing learning in particular had to be trained first specifically for RPL assessment. Each institution selected a few Nurse Educators who were to attend the one-week RPL facilitator-training workshop, which was conducted by the evaluator. The evaluator designed a program that was to be offered to the participants. The training program covered the following aspects: the RPL process, standards to be used during facilitation, activities of the advisor, activities of the assessor, portfolio development and the different assessment methods (See Annexure 5 and 6 for the facilitator's workshop program and course outline).According to committee members from all the institutions, the following were identified as essential knowledge to help those involved with RPL:

- Theoretical knowledge and understanding of RPL, including the different concepts used.

- Skills in the formulation of exit level outcomes so as to be able to help the candidates during the process of matching previous learning with the exit level outcomes for the specific programs they might be challenging.

- The whole RPL process from recruitment to accreditation.

- Skills in the process of Portfolio development.

- Skills in assessment and selection of appropriate assessment methods.

- Skills in RPL policy formulation.

(See Annexure 4 for the Program of the workshop).

Sampling:

Each institution selected people to attend the workshop as follows:

113

Table 4.3: A Sample of personnel who attended the RPL Facilitator's workshop

Category	Institut. A	Institut. B	Institut. C
Service manager	1	2	0
Nurse educator	4	6	2
Clinical	0	2	0
Total	5	10	2

4.2.2.3 Data collection methods and techniques

For the input evaluation phase, two main data collection methods were used namely the case study for the structuring decisions and a questionnaire for the human resource development.

Pilot projects (Case studies)

For this particular study, the pilot project was used to mean the same thing as case studies. According to Bromley (1986),case study (pilot projects) methodologies are empirical enquiries that investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident. The desire to evaluate the outcome is the major reason for the adoption of a case study. During the time this particular study was undertaken, Recognition of Prior Learning was a new concept for the profession but it had potential to influence policy changes for the nursing profession. Case studies permit the use of different instruments so that data becomes more manageable. According to Stake (1992), by responsively focusing on the priority issues of practitioners within a given context, evaluators can construct rich experiential understanding about their context. Information grounded in vicarious experience and tacit knowledge of the practitioners, which are treated as one case, was considered useful for the development of the RPL model. To ensure the feasibility of the implementation of the model by looking at

114

barriers and alternative plans used as measures to overcome the barriers, research questions 4, and 5 were used during this stage of data collection (Stake, 1992:530). The pilot project protocol was as follows:

Gaining entry:

During the consultative workshops, at the stakeholders' level, the evaluative researcher extended an invitation to nursing education institutions to participate in the implementation phase. Many nursing education institutions expressed interest to partake, however only three institutions met the criteria for inclusion.

Developing a contract

According to the guidelines, each institution had to formulate a committee for RPL implementation. This committee had to be made up of all the stakeholder representatives namely, service managers, principals, nurse educators and representatives of nurses at each institution level. The committee had to select a coordinator, who was to chair all the meetings and liaise between the committee and the evaluative researcher. The evaluative researcher was allowed to attend all meetings and to receive a copy of the minutes from the coordinator. It was agreed that all such meetings were to be tape recorded for the sake of increased reliability of the data about the particular case. During the meetings, the following aspects were considered: financing of the program, the size of the program, the target group, recruitment and selection. The RPL Committees, which comprised Service Managers, Principals and Nurse Educators, had to make appropriate decisions with regard to expenditures, release time for personnel involved with the process, and overhead cost, direct as well as indirect. The RPL guidelines helped the committee members in making such decisions.

115

Resources used:

As mentioned, the services of a coordinator helped to facilitate the process. A tape recorder was used as well as flip charts, and other writing material was used during the meetings.

4.2.2.4 Data collection instruments

Multiple data collection instruments were used.

(a) Records and observations

Records in the form of minutes and notes after discussions were used. A tape recorder provided another source of data. Observations of the proceedings of the meetings were also made by the evaluative researcher. The fact that data was collected over a period of time (through attending a series of meetings) provided the evaluative researcher with an opportunity to establish a relationship with the committee members and this also increased the reliability of the data collected. A checklist was designed to focus the data collection process. Based on the research questions, evaluation at this level focused on two aspects, namely, decisions about the material resources required for RPL implementation, and decisions about the human resources development in preparation for implementation as specified in the guidelines (See Annexure 7 for the Process evaluation checklist).

(b) Questionnaire for human resource development

A questionnaire is a group of written questions to gather information from participants. The Nurse Educators who participated in the RPL Facilitator training workshop were given the Self Assessment tool after commencement of training. This tool was developed by Day (2000) during a study for a benchmarking survey for prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada. This study was commissioned by the Canadian Association for Prior

116

Learning Assessment. The benchmarking survey included PLA centers in Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, Halifax, Labrado, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Permission to adapt and use the Self assessment tool was obtained (see preliminary pages). The items in the tool emerged from the benchmarking study wherein the main functions of an RPL facilitator were identified by the respondents as (a) to prepare the individual for assessment and (b) to assess the individual. Under each of the two broad functions, there were numerous activities that described the broad function as follows:

RPL FACILITATION SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL FRAMEWORK

Function 1: Prepare the individual for assessment

Activity 1: Help the individual to identify relevant learning

Activity 2: Help the individual draw an action plan

Activity : Help the individual to prepare and present evidence for assessment

Function 2: Assess the individual

Activity 1: Assess evidence of prior learning

Activity 2: Judge evidence

Activity 3: Make a decision about the assessment and provide feedback.

Under each activity, there were specific actions that the facilitator was expected to perform. The RPL facilitators were to rate their abilities to perform the different activities as laid down in the tool, the following ratings on a scale of 1-5 were used:

1- denoting that the individual has observed the activity,

2- denoting that the individual can perform the activity with assistance,

3- denoting ability to perform the activity with minimal assistance,

4 denoting ability to perform the activity without assistance and

4- denoting confidence in performing the activity without assistance

117

(See Annexure 9 for the Self Assessment tool).

The Self Assessment tool was pilot tested locally by three academics who were involved with RPL projects in South Africa but were not part of the present study. The evaluative researcher held a focus group interview with the three academics in which they were asked to comment on the face validity of the tool as well as on its clarity, structure and the time it took to complete. Overall, all three respondents felt that the tool addressed the basic functions of the RPL facilitator, those of advising and assessment of the candidate. The respondents felt that under function 1 activity 2 instead of *agree to and review the candidate's action plan* the tool should read: *Help the individual to draw an action plan*. The rationale for this was that in South Africa, RPL was a policy imperative and therefore academics were expected to carry out this function. On the clarity, structure and completion time issues, no difficulty was reported by the respondents. All three took less than 30 minutes to complete the tool.

4.4.2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out simultaneously with data collection. Observations were interpreted in the most basic sense by reflecting on data until an understanding was achieved. Reflection on other forms of data was also done. Data from tape recorded transcripts and observation was analyzed separately and verified with the minutes of meetings from the coordinator. The completed policies of the three institutions were also analyzed using an agreed upon framework between the evaluative researcher and the committee members.

118

Each policy should have the following:

(a) *RPL purpose for the particular institution*

(b) *Target group should be specified*

(c) *Rights and obligations of each participant during the process to be spelt out*

(d) *Quality assurance issues to be addressed by the policy*

(e) *Procedural activities to be followed* .

This analysis was done to ensure the reliability of the instrument used to collect data. When all the data was collected from the three institutions, a cross case analysis was made. Data analysis of the Self assessment tool was done using SPSS which is a statistical analysis package used in quantitative data analysis to determine significant relationships among variables.

4.4.3 Process evaluation

During this evaluation, each of the three institutions involved was treated as a separate case and therefore the discussion will be presented separately. The implementation did not take place simultaneously in all three institution

Level of evaluation	Objectives	Research questions	Sample	Data collection	Outcome
Process	To establish the system's feasibility by implementing it at selected sites.	Did the implementation process occur according to plan? What alternative measures were used?	Three institutions in KZN.	Sources Minutes of meetings; records. Instruments. Process evaluation checklist.	RPL system which reflects context specific issues that further shape it.

Figure 4.4 A framework for the Implementation phase

4.4.3.1 Sample description

In Institution A, there were four campuses, but only three campuses participated in this study. The fourth campus had problems with manpower and could not participate and there was also no suitable candidate for selection from this campus.

There was one coordinator for all the campuses. Two assessors covered all the campuses.

Table 4. 4: Sample description for Institution A

Characteristic	Campus 1	Campus 2	Campus 3
RPL advisors	2	2	2
RPL assessors	1	1	0
RPL candidates	3	2	3
Coordinator	1	0	0
Moderators	0	1	0
TOTAL	7	6	5

120

N= 18

The coordinator coordinated the RPL pilot for the whole institution, although she was based on one campus. The moderator was the principal from one campus who was not involved with either advising or assessing the RPL candidates (See table 4.3).

In Institution A five nurse educators took part in the pilot project The vice principal played the role of the coordinator and the four other nurse educators were involved with both advising and assessing the candidates. (See table 4.4)

In Institution B, the RPL team played both roles of advising and assessing the candidates The person who advised a particular candidate did not assess the same candidate. Candidates were divided among the advisors. During assessment, the nurse educators formed a panel of assessors. Institution B, used the services of an external moderator who was an experienced nurse educator

Table 4. 5: Sample description for Institution B

Sample characteristics	Participated
RPL Coordinator	1
Advisors	4
Assessors	4(as above)
Moderator	1(external)
Candidates	10
TOTAL	16

As table 4.6 shows, in institution C there was no coordinator. There was one officer responsible for the administrative side of the project. One advisor who was a nurse educator employed on a part time basis for the purpose of the pilot project only, was from one of the

institutions around the project site. and had received the one week training for RPL facilitation. The moderator was the same person who moderated in Institution B and she was also a nurse educator. As table 4.6 shows, there were 14 candidate.

TABLE 4.6: Sample description for Institution C

Sample characteristics	Participated
RPL Officer	1
Advisor	1
Assessors	2
Moderator	1
Candidates	14
TOTAL	19

4.4.3.2 Data collection methods of the process evaluation

As figure 4.4 shows in page 120, the focus during this stage of data collection, was on whether the implementation process occurred according to plan. Following the RPL guidelines that dealt with process. quality assurance. assessment and credit granting. The source of data was records which included minutes of meetings. candidates' performance records and RPL coordinators' reports. The coordinators from the three institutions submitted reports about the process.

4.4.3.3 Data analysis

Data was analyzed by reading and annotating. The aim of reading through the data was to prepare the ground for analysis or to gain focus. A checklist was developed as a measure to

interrogate the data. The next step was to make memoranda attached to the data. The researcher used separate paper and clipped them on to the record to write freely whatever meaning was attached to each section of the reports as these were read and reread.

A comparison was made among the three institutions to ascertain the extent to which each adhered to the RPL guidelines. This comparison was done through a process of transposition. The reports from the three cases were compared for similarities and differences. To eliminate bias, and the inhibiting effect of the checklist, shifting the sequence of analysis was done. This was done by reading through the reports using various sequences and not only following the linear order of the checklist. This technique was especially useful when the focus was of the problems that each case experienced during implementation. A comparison was also made on problems experienced by each institution and how each dealt with the problems.

4.4.4 Product evaluation

4.4.4.1. Focus: Recycling decisions

Level of evaluation	Objective	Research question	Sample	Data collection	Outcome
Product	To measure the ability of the RPL candidates to access nursing program	How comparable were the RPL candidates with other candidates?	Two groups of candidates in specific programs in the three institutions	Records; Test scores analyzed using non parametric tests.	A refined RPL system emerges.

Figure 4.5 A framework for the Product evaluation phase

123

4.4.4.2 Sample

During this evaluation phase, the same samples as were used in the process phase were used. A sample was drawn from both RPL candidates and those that accessed the program through traditional routes in each institution. The independent variable was the route of access into the program and the dependent variable was the candidates' performance. Duration of training and previous experience were other variables considered. For instance in Institution C, the duration of training was two years for the traditional route candidates whereas that of the RPL candidates was one year. In other words it was assumed that RPL was to be equated to the one year additional training received by the traditional route.

Table 4.7 Samples of the three institutions

Route	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C
RPL	8	8	11
Traditional	37	25	21
TOTAL	45	33	32

4.4.4.3 Data collection and analysis

The coordinators from the three institutions kept accurate records of the candidates' performance. These were in the form of monthly test scores over a period of three months. The focus during this evaluation was on the ability of the RPL candidate to access a nursing program based on their prior learning assessment. The success of this access was measured by the RPL candidate's performance in comparison with those candidates that accessed the program through the traditional routes. The mean scores of the two groups were compared. The focus of the analysis was to ascertain the comparability of the two samples. The

124

appropriate test was found to be the Mann-Whitney U test. This is a non-parametric test used to compare two samples to find out if there is any significant difference between the two sample scores. When means of two small samples are to be compared the most powerful treatment would be the t test. Since the test scores were not normally distributed and since they had not been randomized because the two samples were too small, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was more appropriate. Other treatments would be the t test with a transformation, Mann-Whitney U, Wilcoxon tests and others. A non parametric test is a hypothesis test that does not require any specific conditions concerning the shape of populations or the values of any population parameters. The null hypothesis made was that there would be no difference between the two samples. The SPSS statistical package was used to determine the relationship between the candidate's route of access and the candidate's performance in class as measured by the monthly test scores. Testing the significance was considered important to measure the strength of the evidence which supported the proposition that there would be no difference between the performance of the two groups of candidates.

4.5 ACADEMIC RIGOUR

4.5.1 Validity

The very nature of qualitative research methods does not lend itself only to statistical or empirical calculations of validity. Although the qualitative researcher seeks basically the same ends as the quantitative researcher results are arrived at through different methods. The issues of validity and reliability of the data collection instruments were dealt with during the description of the instruments.

4.5.1.1 Confirmability

The issue to be considered was confirmability. This requires repeated direct and documented evidence from a thoroughly observed source of data. In the sense that this concept is used in qualitative research, it is concerned with the objectivity or neutrality of the findings. This concept means that another researcher would arrive at the same findings given similar situations and contexts. Since the study employed different types of evaluations in a systemic and coherent manner, opportunities for verification data collected with the participants were possible during each evaluation before proceeding to the next evaluation. Using the stakeholders for the refinement of the system and reporting findings back to the EDCO before they were implemented were measures to ensure that the decisions taken were confirmed before they were implemented. Verification, which means establishing the truth about the data was continuously done during all the phases of study.

4.5.1.2 Threats to validity

The major threat to validity, especially in evaluation studies, is error, which can originate from the researcher, the participants, the instrument or the context. The researcher may be biased, or lack experience in conducting research. For this study, the fact that the researcher maintained different roles depending on the different phases, for example, that of a technical consultant during the development phase and as observer during the implementation and testing phases, ensured that bias was limited. The fact that this was a supervised research study helped to enhance objectivity and assisted with the process.

Collaboration of the evaluator with the stakeholders may also pose a risk to validity. This error is also possible in evaluation studies where the decision makers are people at the macro level of policy making. The other stakeholders may view the role of the evaluator

negatively. The evaluator can build in safeguards against this bias by adapting his/her role accordingly. For this particular study the different roles assumed by the evaluative researcher were attempts to eliminate this error. The use of different stakeholder groups for different phases also limited bias. The social context may also be a risk to the validity of the study. Participants may respond differently depending on circumstances. For example, in the presence of the researcher, participants may give different information from what they would in privacy. Another risk to representatives of data results from the researcher's absence or non-continuous presence. To balance this risk, the researcher was continuously present in all meetings, especially during the Input phase to ensure that data was collected accurately and not to rely only on minuted data (Denzin, 1978:102)..

4.5.2 Triangulation

Triangulation, or combining of two or more methodologies, leads to a greater understanding of the area under study and greater depth and richness in the study, especially when the variables under study are complex. Since Recognition of Prior Learning is a multidimensional concept, triangulation was appropriate Cohen and Manion (1989) suggest that using the triangulation approach yields a more complete understanding of the phenomena. Triangulation may be used for different purposes for example the following:

4.5.2.1 Confirmation

Researchers use more than one method of data collection to measure similar variables for the purpose of confirmation. This is done to counteract the threats to validity that have been identified in each method. According to Denzin (1978), by triangulating the instruments, the uncertainty of data interpretation is greatly reduced.

127

4.5.2.2 Completeness

Triangulation is also used to capture a more complete, holistic and contextual portrayal of the units under study. This will add to the researcher's depth and breadth of understanding of the phenomena (Fielding and Fielding 1986:101). According to these authors, when triangulation is conceptualized as a means of achieving convergent validity, it has only limited relevance for qualitative researchers who are seldom concerned with the measurement of a discrete concept. For qualitative studies, multiple triangulation is important where data sources, theories and investigators can be combined in order to reveal the varied dimensions of the given phenomena. They do not expect the multiple sources of data to confirm one another but rather to contribute a part of the whole. Those multiple sources are combined for their uniqueness in addressing the research questions and not because they counterbalance each other.

For this study, triangulation was used for the second purpose. During the context (development) phase, the researcher used consultative workshops and during the implementation phase, case studies were used. Design triangulation was done for completeness. This study also used investigator triangulation, since the researcher worked closely with the Education Committee of the South African Nursing Council who were regarded as the policy makers. During the site workshops too, the sample was carefully selected in such a way that representatives from all sectors were represented.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.6.1 Permission

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the following:

Directors General of the Departments of Health from the three regions, namely the Free State, KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng. Permission was also sought from the then Acting Registrar of the South African Nursing Council.

4.6.2 Invitations to participate

The Executive Directors of the four identified organisations namely HOSPERSA; DENOSA; SADNU and NEHAWU were invited to send representatives to participate in the workshops. The Principals of the twenty-two institutions were also invited to send personnel to the workshop. Since workshop attendance was voluntary, there was no need for participants to sign consent forms. For the RPL candidates however, it was agreed that the registration forms be taken as agreement to participate in the research pilot project.

4.6.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

The use of the workshops for data collection ensured that the participants remained anonymous. With the protocols of the pilot groups, use of proper names of the institutions was avoided and they were referred to as Institutions A, B, and C. The Questionnaires were used as a self-assessment instrument for the RPL facilitators; participants were instructed not to write their names.

4.6.4 Respect for human dignity

This principle includes the right to self determination which means that participants had the right to decide voluntarily whether or not to participate in the study They also had the right to terminate their participation.

4.7.CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the approach used to gather the relevant data needed to provide the information for the development of the Recognition of Prior Learning model. The purpose of the study influenced the choice of the research design. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), the complexity of the task at hand determines the choice of the methodology. For the present study, the task at hand was the development and testing of the RPL model. Therefore, since the task was twofold, the methodology chosen would take into consideration both development and testing. Evaluation research design was the most suitable design for the study. The different phases of Stuffelbeam's CIPP were used to guide the study development. During each phase of evaluation, the objectives of the study were used as the basis for making decisions.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT PHASE

.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, all data collected and analyzed during the development phase will be reported. While the research questions guided the collection of data, the context evaluation dimension of Stuffelbeam's evaluation model formed the basis for data analysis. The results of this evaluation phase were analyzed to highlight their influence on the next phase. According to Stuffelbeam, the decision to proceed to the next evaluation is determined by the information gathered proving insufficient to make sound decisions (Stuffelbeam, 1992:136). This chapter therefore, presents the manner in which the RPL system was developed.

5.2 CONTEXT EVALUATION

Context evaluation will be discussed on three levels, namely, literature review or information processing level, policy makers' level, and stakeholders' level.

5.2.1. Literature review

Part of the evaluation process according to Stuffelbeam (1969) is the process of delineating and obtaining information for those responsible for making decisions. As mentioned in chapter 3, the first step involved the evaluator's undertaking an extensive literature review to identify RPL approaches that had been used internationally. The review of relevant literature also helped in identifying problems experienced in other countries and to identify models for implementation of innovation and change from an educational perspective. This identification was necessary because RPL is viewed as an educational policy innovation with potential impact for change in the whole education system. Models for implementing this change had

to be extensively explored. All information obtained was analysed and compiled into a document to be used by the decision makers through all the steps of decision-making. This discussion document contained theoretical information about RPL, its principles, benefits, the processes involved and the different assessment methods. This document formed the basis for discussion during the context evaluation .

The following formed the major focus in selecting information from literature:

(a) The different contexts of RPL, namely the political, economical and educational contexts.

(b) The theoretical basis of RPL including the identification of basic concepts and their meanings in different contexts, and the different assessment methods.

(c) The historical basis of RPL internationally and locally.

(d) The different approaches to its implementation.

(e) Problems that were experienced by other countries and how they dealt with the problems.

(f) Implications for nursing, including the driving forces to RPL implementation.

5.2.2 The discussion document for the development of the RPL implementation model

The information presented in boxed throughout this section indicate responses from the policy makers and the stakeholders.

5.2.2.1 Rationale for the RPL implementation model for nurses

In 1996, the Health Science Working Group recommended that, in order to enhance mobility, provision should be made for multiple entry points within horizontally and vertically integrated system of education and training for health professionals through the

132

development of the National Qualifications Framework. Recognition of Prior Learning is the major principle of the National Qualifications Framework.

The Minster of Education's public statement in 1999 for South African citizens to mobilize and build an education and training system for the 21st century. emphasized the application of procedures for the recognition of prior learning as part of the restructuring process.

The South African Nursing Council took the initiative in recognizing RPL as a vehicle for transformation of the nursing profession in South Africa. Early in year 2000 the SANC resolved that the present enrolled nurses and nurse auxiliaries should be given access into the four year comprehensive program using the principles of RPL. (SANC Doc 1/2000:13)

5.2.2.2 The guiding frameworks for RPL implementation

(a) National Education Policy Act (Act No. 27 of 1996).

The National Education Policy Act (NEPA). was the first education and training law passed by the present government in order to change the education and training system. This Act lays the foundation for all national education policies as it gives the guidelines for developing all educational policies. This Act lays the basis for RPL by its reference to the acquisition of equitable education opportunities and the redress of past inequalities in the provision of education. NEPA encourages institutions to recognize aptitudes, abilities, prior knowledge and experiences of learners. NEPA also states that all educational policies should be based on public participation and that all stakeholders must be represented during such policy developments.

(b)South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (Act 58 of 1995) and the National Qualifications Framework.

The National Qualifications Framework aims at facilitating access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths. The NQF also aims at accelerating the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities and thereby to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large. During the implementation of the model for RPL implementation, the committee used the Exit Level Outcomes of the programs the candidates sought to access to ensure that assessment of their Prior learning was in line with the NQF.

(c)Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998).

The major purpose of this act is to do away with unfair employment practices and to ensure redress. It aims to promote at all occupational levels, greater and more equitable representation of women, black people and people with disabilities. This act moves away from only recognizing qualifications and argues that persons must be promoted or employed if they are suitably qualified. This act describes a suitably qualified person as one who qualifies as a result of formal qualifications; prior learning; relevant experience and the ability to acquire competency in a reasonable time. According to this Act, affirmative action should ensure equal opportunities on all levels for historically disadvantaged citizens.

(d)Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998).

The major purpose of this Act is to develop skills which relate to the needs and demands of

the economy, society and each learner, and to do this in a manner which links with the South African Qualifications Act and the National Qualifications Framework. The Skills Development Act takes a holistic view of where and how people learn, including the development of people for a range of work environments, not just formal the economy. This Act has the aim of improving vocational skills of all employees. According to this Act, learning occurs through work experience. Therefore this Act seeks to create a framework for education and training that leads to qualifications or part-qualifications. The Skills Development Act has also made provision for the establishment of the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to develop and implement appropriate education and training plans to meet the economic and social development agendas. Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies will be established by the SETAs to accredit and monitor the quality of education and training provision within their sectors. The providers of education and training together with their ETQAs are required by the SAQA to implement RPL so as to ensure that the goal of education for social development is achieved. This Act is of particular relevance to the South African Nursing Council. The involvement of the Education Committee of the South African Nursing Council is appropriate.

The Education Committee agreed that the following are key issues addressed by the above Laws/policies:

(a) Social transformation by redress of past imbalances

(b) Educational programs should be made flexible for access through RPL

(c) Holistic view of learning, in terms of where and how people learn

(d) Learning opportunities should be made available to all

135

5.2.2.3 Theoretical concepts

The key concepts extracted from literature were explored with reference to their meanings, in the context of the South African Education and Training system, and in terms of their relevance to social transformation. The participants defined these concepts in the sense in which they understood the concepts.

5.2.2.3.1 *Recognition of Prior learning*

Recognition of Prior learning (RPL) means the comparison of previous learning and experience of a learner, howsoever obtained against outcomes required for a specific qualification, and the acceptance for the purpose of qualification of that which matches the requirement (SAQA 1998:34).

> *It was agreed that, RPL is based on the notion that how people learn and have learned should be recognized and used to help them progress as learners. However, for maintenance of academic standards, assessment of that learning is important before it can be recognized through credits.*

5.2.2.3.2 *Recognition of Prior Learning process*

The process of recognition of prior learning involved the identification, documentation, assessment and recognition through awards or credits of that learning that was submitted and found to be relevant and current. The currency of experientially acquired learning would be determined by its relevance to the specific program for which recognition was sought. RPL was understood as a means towards an end which might be access into advanced nursing programs or gaining of an academic qualification in nursing for the individual and societal growth and development for the country.

136

5.2.2.3.3 R PL Advisor

The person who assists the candidate with preparation for assessment.

5.2.2.3.4 RPL Assessor

The person who assesses the candidate for RPL. In this case, the person would be a qualified nurse educator and registered with the South African Nursing Council.

5.2.2.3.5 Exit level outcome

A learning outcome is the end product of a learning process. According to SAQA (1998) a learning outcome is the contextually demonstrated end product of the learning process. The exit level outcome, therefore should ensure consistency in assigning a standard or qualification to an NQF level, thereby providing criteria for each level so that various forms of learning can be made equivalent in terms of complexity.

5.2.2.3.6 RPL bid

An offer that RPL candidates make when they apply for RPL.

5.2.2.3.7 Prior Learning

Prior learning is learning acquired through formal and informal study. This may include work and life experience, training, independent study, volunteer work, family and any life experience. Therefore, prior learning can be experiential, non formal or formal, uncertificated learning. The currency of experientially acquired learning will be determined by its relevance to the particular program for which recognition is sought.

5.2.2.3.8 RPL and credit transfer

RPL was distinguished from the academic transfer process, in that RPL focuses on the assessment of prior learning rather than the determination of equivalency of formal educational program and or courses.

1. In RPL an institutional credit is awarded, in the academic transfer process, an exemption is provided.

2. In RPL, it is not how or where learning has occurred that is important but the emphasis is on the outcome of that learning.

3. A program for RPL would be a program structure with its own administrators and advisors whose objective would be to help candidates who present themselves for assessment gain credits towards a qualification or exemption from a program or a particular aspect of the program.

4. Credit transfer deals mainly with previous formal learning.

5.2.2.4 Types of Recognition of Prior Learning

5.2.2.4 1 RPL for award of credits

In this type of RPL, the candidate seeks recognition for prior learning so that formal credits can be obtained towards a specific qualification. For instance, a nurse who has worked for a number of years in an operating theatre and now seeks to gain some credits towards the diploma in operating theatre program, without repeating skills that she/he has already acquired. An enrolled nurse who may wish to persue a degree in nursing is another example.

5.2.2.4.2 RPL for access

An example would be a case where matriculation or its equivalence is the criteria for admission, as is the case in the South African institutions of higher education. The candidate would have to submit evidence of accomplishment of that learning which can be equated to matriculation standards. This type of RPL may give the candidate access into programs.

5.2.2.5 The process of Recognition of Prior Learning

It was agreed that the process as described by Willingham and Geisinger in their model was to be used, whereby the candidate:

(a)The candidate makes contact with the advisor

The candidate is given all the necessary information about the RPL system available, fees payable and the requirements for registration. Then the candidate selects the type of RPL she/he wishes to register for.

(b)Preparation for making a claim

The candidate first engages in systematic reflection on previous experience. The advisor helps the candidate during this stage. Though reflection, the candidate is able to isolate those incidents when it seemed that experience resulted in learning. Psychological support by the advisor is necessary during this stage, especially because most of these adults may be from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. For these candidates, the process of reflection might open up 'old wounds' caused by the previous system of government which denied them access to basic human rights like education.

(c) Evidence collection

Whatever claim is made should be supported with documented evidence. There should be a direct connection between this evidence and the claim being made. The form or content of

this evidence will depend on the purpose of the assessment, whether for accreditation or for access.

(d) Assessment of evidence submitted and giving feedback.

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5.2.2.6 Approaches used for RPL

Having examined each approach, the Education Committee decided that each approach had particular implications for RPL, especially in the South African context. Given the driving force behind the development of the model, it was agreed that matching of previous learning against exit level outcome was in line with the outcomes based approach philosophy of education, which forms the basis for the National Qualifications Framework. The strengths of the competency-based approach were the notion of the market relatedness of the previous learning. On the other hand, the developmental approach was favored for its process-focused approach. If RPL were to be viewed from a social transformation point of view, then the reflective process would enable candidates to gain new knowledge, new perspective, the candidates might even develop during the reflective process. It was for this reason that the developmental approach was chosen by the Education Committee, with the addition of one step from the competency based approach, that of assessment. The steps of the RPL process from Willingham and Geisinger's model were analyzed in an attempt to draw up guidelines for each step. Participants decided that the guidelines be used in accrediting institutions which offered Recognition of Prior Learning. This was important since the South African Nursing Council will remain as the Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) for nursing programs.

Using the strengths from the three seemingly opposing modelss to RPL, an eclectic approach selected those aspects appropriate to develop a suitable system. This eclectic approach

140

ensured that while the RPL practice was oriented towards social transformation and process based, it maintained the credit based or competency based focus.

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5.2.2.7 Standards development

The participants brainstormed various issues concerning the RPL process. They looked at how the proposed system would address issues like the approval of RPL providers, how fees would be determined, how RPL would be marketed to nurses and issues pertaining to administration. The aim of this discussion was an attempt to avoid exploitation of prospective candidates. The participants resolved that the EDCO had a mandate to develop certain standards, based on their values and goals with regard to RPL implementation. The following standards were developed:

(a) Process standards, which included standards for approval, marketing, application, fees determination, those for advising the RPL candidate, notification of results and those for the appeal procedure in case of failure or unfair treatment during assessment.

(b) Academic standards which included standards for assessment and credit granting,

(c) Administrative standards

(d) Access standards

Access for candidates without Standard 10 (at the beginning of the course):

The EDCO members resolved that nursing Standard 10 equivalence would involve the four basic components namely: numeracy; literacy; social/ contextual knowledge and ethics as set out in the South African Qualifications Authority document (SAQA, 1995). For those candidates with prior nursing knowledge, for example nurse assistants, ambulance training, first aid or any health related experience would have to be assessed and recognised as an equivalent to matriculation or standard 10.

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Access at an advanced level

Those candidates, like enrolled nurses with a number of years experience, instead of being granted access into the diploma programme, would also be credited with Nursing as a first year nursing course. These nurses might access at second or even third year, depending on the amount of evidence of competence. The Council resolved that they would endorse the development of the model and that once it had been developed and tested they would use it as an evaluation tool for accrediting institutions offering RPL. Participants were assured that the proposed model would be sent back to them for their verification before it was taken out to the stakeholders. The committee decided that these were only proposed standards, as they still needed to be taken to the stakeholders for further refinement during the next stage of development.

The committee resolved that to maintain its role of quality assurance in the education and training of nurses, it was important to translate the standards into guidelines for the implementation of RPL.. The members placed value on the standards and they saw the EDCO as responsible in ensuring that standards were maintained.

5.2.2.8 RPL implementation guidelines:

Marketing:

• RPL should be marketed so that the community knows that it is available and that students can proceed quickly through a degree or a diploma.

• RPL should be available to all individuals practising or not currently practising as nurses, registered or not currently registered with the South African Nursing Council (the latter with an aim of registration)

Application:

- All applicants should receive adequate information as well as orientation with regard to fees, duration, evaluation methods and exit level outcomes for the particular programme they wish to gain credit for.

- All applicants should receive an application form for registration into the program.

- Registration forms should be user friendly.

- Registration forms should act as a contract between the RPL provider institution and the prospective RPL candidate.

Fees:

- RPL candidates should pay the following fees: registration; advising; assessment fees.

- Fees payable should be determined by the service provided and not by the number of credits.

- Fees charged should not exceed the fees payable for the particular programme for which RPL is sought.

- Fees should be predetermined and valid for at least one academic year.

- Registration fees should be partially or wholly refundable

Advising/ Advisor role:

- Gives basic career guidance on pathways open to the candidate.

- Is responsible for operational side of the RPL process.

- Assists candidates with the development of the educational plans.

- Should have knowledge of basic career guidance.

- Works in close liaison with the personnel of respective programs (subject specialists).

- Advises and supports candidates with portfolio development.

- Refers candidates to subject specialists.

- Verifies authenticity of evidence submitted.

Assessment:

- Provider should have the following available for the candidates: examples of portfolios. evaluation methods to be used and the stipulated assessment fee amount to be paid by the candidate .

- Assessment methods chosen should depend on the learning outcomes to be assessed.

- The assessor will decide on the appropriate level of structure of the chosen assessment method. For example, high structure will entail an oral examination and a low structure will entail a loosely structured interview.

- There should be clear identification of evidence required.

- Assessment is to be done by experts in the particular field of study.

Notification of results:

- Candidates have to be informed about the results within a month of final assessment.

- Candidates must to be given particulars about failure.

- Opportunities for post failure counselling should be available.

Quality assurance:

- Reliability should be ensured by using a variety of assessment methods. Multiple assessors should be used until experience indicates that learning can be judged with acceptable consistency.

- Validity will be ensured by using clearly defined learning outcomes identifying performance criteria including any critical factors and standards necessary to meet the learning outcomes.

- Competent assessment will be ensured by providing training for the assessors; use team approach to assessment; emphasize quality and not quantity.

- Credit awards and their transcript entries will be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same performance.

144

- Policies and procedures applied to assessment, including provision for appeal will be fully disclosed and prominently available.
- Assessment programs will be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served by assessment.

Academic standards for assessing learning for a credit granting:

- Learning to be credited must fall within the kind of creditable work congruent with the mission and goals of the institution.
- Learning should be applicable outside the specific context in which it was acquired and must serve as a basis for further learning. The person must be able to apply the knowledge and skills in more than one setting.
- Institutional credibility must be maintained throughout the RPL process.
- Learning must be relatively current.
- Learning must shows some relationship to the goal of the degree or diploma program.
- Awards will result from technically sound assessment, taking into consideration of validity and reliability.

Standards for credit granting:

- Credit will be awarded for learning and not experience.
- Credit will be awarded only for learning that has a balance, appropriate to subject, between theory and practice.
- Credit will be given for learning that is appropriate to the academic context in which it is accepted.

The above guidelines were incorporated into a document. which was presented to a member of the Committee for verification, after which it was deemed ready to be submitted to the full Council for approval. After the Council approved the guidelines, they were ready for use during the workshops with the stakeholders. The proposed guidelines were divided into: RPL process; assessment guidelines and guidelines for granting credits. The policy makers had set the boundaries for RPL for South African nurses, based on what they viewed would be best practice but they were then faced with another set of decisions to make. The question whether the proposed guidelines for RPL implementation would be accepted by the stakeholders of the profession had to be taken to the next level of evaluation.

5.2.3 The context evaluation at stakeholders' level

The focus of this level of evaluation was to ensure that all the stakeholders who were going to be affected by its implementation accepted the proposed guidelines.

5.2 3 1.Data analysis

Proceedings were carefully analysed and the following categories emerged:

a) *RPL principles of institutional autonomy versus the rights of candidates:*

All stakeholder groups(KZN; FS; Gauteng) felt that the guidelines gave too much autonomy to the provider with little or no attention to the rights of the candidate. Hence the stakeholders strongly recommended that the rights of the candidates be included in the guidelines.

(b) Rights of the RPL candidate:

Information:

The candidate has a right to adequate information about the fees payable; the duration; form of assessments available and other relevant information.

Assessment and results thereof:

The candidate has the right to fairness during the assessment. He/she also has a right to be notified about the results early (within 30 days) after assessment.

Post failure counselling

The candidate has a right to post failure counselling where he/she will be given adequate information with regard to the specific areas of weakness in his/her performance during the assessment

Reassessment

The format that this will take will depend on the policy of the provider institution, but the candidate has a right to this information.

Appeal procedure

The procedure is to be decided by the provider institution, but the candidate has a right to know what procedure is to be followed.

Support

The candidate has a right to adequate support during preparation for assessment. This support includes assistance during the preparation of evidence to make a claim as well as support during identification of deficits in knowledge and planning to close them.

c) Breakdown of the fee structure

The stakeholders realised the problems involved if fees were standardized, therefore they recommended that the amount charged for RPL should not exceed the amount charged for the programme that the RPL candidate was challenging. It was agreed that in this way, exploitation of candidates by RPL providers would be eliminated (especially in private institutions). One group recommended that the fee structure be broken down in such a way that the candidate would only pay for the services rendered and not the amount of credits. In other words, if the candidate had sufficient evidence and was well versed in the profession for

example by portfolio development, he/she should be only charged for registration and assessment.

d) Qualifications of advisors

After extensive discussion on this issue, stakeholders agreed that advisors should at least be qualified nurse educators although working in the clinical settings. This recommendation was well received since it would mean a closer working relationship between the service and the colleges/ universities.

e) RPL assessors

There was a general consensus that assessors should be qualified nurse educators with adequate skills in assessment and currently involved with teaching nursing.

f) Human resource development

The stakeholders supported the Education Committee's recommendation that people involved with RPL should receive adequate training

These recommendations were incorporated into the proposed guidelines document in boxes under each section and this document was presented to the Education Committee of the South African Nursing Council for further comments and refinement. Responses from the Education Committee were incorporated and a final guidelines document was presented to the full Council and endorsed by the SANC. In summary, this phase of the model development culminated in the refinement of the RPL guidelines.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This phase culminated with the refinement of the RPL guidelines that were to be used by the institutions implementing RPL. These guidelines were to form the basis for decision-making in the successive phases. The key elements that emerged during this phase were:

❖ The purpose of RPL (personal and societal growth and development) was accepted.

❖ Rights of RPL candidates were added to the guidelines by the stakeholders.

❖ Decisions were made collaboratively, including all stakeholders.

❖ Standards were set for implementing the process.

❖ Assessment standards were accomplished

❖ Basic concepts identified were: change; knowledge; context; standards; participants and decision making . These are described in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 6

THE RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND TESTING PHASES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in Chapter one, the purpose of the study was to develop and test the model for RPL implementation for South African nurses. During the development phase when the evaluator conducted workshops in the three identified regions, a number of nursing education institutions expressed interest in taking part in the project. Three institutions met the criteria for inclusion, as set out in chapter four. These three institutions formed the main focus of the discussions during these phases. The implementation phase was divided into two stages, according to the dimensions of evaluation, that is, input and process evaluations. Input evaluation involved decisions about what structures would be put in place and how these would be organised. Input evaluation was also concerned with the development of human resources to implement the RPL system. Process evaluation, on the other hand, dealt with the actual implementation process. Process evaluation involved issues like whether the implementation of the system was going according to plan, whether there were problems with implementation and the steps each institution took as alternatives to the proposed guidelines for RPL implementation. Product evaluation was concerned with the actual testing of the system. Each case will be discussed separately, except for the discussion on Human Resource Development, which will be dealt with as a single case because it was done simultaneously. This chapter will be arranged in the following manner, first the Input evaluation will be discussed, results from this evaluation will be summarized and then the Process evaluation will be discussed, with a summary of the results. Lastly the product evaluation results will be analysed and the chapter ends with a summary of the process and product evaluation.

6.2 INPUT EVALUATION

This phase dealt with two main activities, the formulation of institutional policies and human resource training

6.2.1 RPL policy formulation

The focus was also on whether the institution managed to develop its own policy for implementation of RPL. This analysis was done to measure the extent that each institution followed the guidelines and also to report alternative measures that the institution took, where the guideline was inapplicable. A comparative analysis of the three institutional policies was done. The criteria used for the analysis was described in Chapter 4.

6.2.1.1 Data analysis

All three institutions followed the RPL guidelines as closely as possible. Each institution had a committee in place for the planning of RPL. Recruitment was done in conjunction with the clinical side in two colleges. In Institution C, though the service was not part of the recruitment, they were informed about the project and agreed to send nurses. The project was not advertised in the three colleges, because a consensus was reached between the institution and the service that, since this was a pilot project, it would not be advertised. The selection criteria were stipulated according to the programme to be accessed. All three institutions required a minimum of two years experience as a nurse for candidates to take part in the project. The group sizes differed in all three colleges, according to the availability of manpower. Though Institution C charged fees for the RPL process, the cost was to be spread throughout the duration of the programme the candidates were to access (which was two years). This institution took into consideration the unique situation of the institution whilst considering the candidates' financial backgrounds. The candidate/ advisor ratios were not similar in all the colleges. In Institution C, the ratio was 14:1 owing to the shortage of

manpower. In the other two institutions, the ratio was 2:1 which made advising easy and fewer problems arose as will be seen later. According to the policy formulation framework agreed upon by the evaluative researcher and the participants, the following was observed:

Purpose of RPL

The committees of all three institutions clearly stated the purpose of RPL for their institutions. Institution B gave a detailed framework for RPL implementation. The other two institutions A and C did not give a detailed account of this. In Institution A, the College Senate had resolved that the pilot project policy was to be reviewed after the project.

Definitions and scope

All three institutions dealt with this section of the policy guidelines. The following observations were made: in dealing with this section, the three institutions focused mainly on the rights of the institutions which they also referred to as responsibilities of the candidates. In other words, the three institutions focused on their protection as providers with very little consideration of the candidates' rights to protection.

Procedures for implementation

This was one section of the policy framework that was adequately covered by all three institutions. Institution A gave a detailed description of their plans for moderation, the other two institutions also had plans for this. Credit granting was also described clearly by Institution A, while the other two institutions mentioned this only briefly in their policies. All three institutions realized the need to send personnel to the RPL training workshop.

Quality assurance

This area was adequately covered by Institution A.

The RPL facilitator training workshop helped the committee members to review their decisions and to formulate a realistic policy for their institutions. Where certain aspects of the guidelines were difficult to follow, alternative steps were used.

Key issues emerging from this evaluation

(a) There was a need for a wider consultative process for policy formulation

(b) The rights of RPL candidate had been omitted.

(c) The rights of the provider were emphasized.

(d) RPL procedures were adequately addressed.

(e) Quality assurance was addressed.

6.2.2 Human resource development

6.2.2.1 Data analysis

Seventeen participants responded to the self-assessment tool, as described in Chapter 4. Their responses will be reported as averages under each function. As mentioned in chapter 4, Function 1 had three activities. Activity 1 had 5 questions, activity 2 had 8 questions and activity 3 had 6 questions. Figure 6.1 is a depiction of the respondents' weighted averages for the three activities under function 1. They were to rate their abilities to perform the different activities as laid down in the tool, on a scale of 1-5 with 1 denoting experience in performing the activity and 5 denoting being capable of performing the activity without assistance (See Annexure 9 for the Self Assessment tool).. It is apparent from the figure below that participants were confident about their ability to help the RPL candidate in preparing for assessment. Activity 1 (helping the candidate to identify relevant learning and gaps in previous learning), had the highest average score of 3.9. Activity 2 (helping in drawing up of an action plan), had an average score of 3.7. Activity 3, (helping to prepare evidence for assessment) which included helping with portfolio development, had an average score of 3.7 as well. The overall average of 3.8 on all activities was indicative of this. The results showed after the workshop, the respondents felt they could participate in helping the candidate to prepare for RPL assessment. Although the respondents felt they would participate in helping the candidate prepare for assessment, none of them felt they would do this without

assistance. This uncertainty was reflected by their average scores of below 4.0, which according to the scale denoted a cut off point with ability to perform the function ranging from 3.0 – 3.9 and competence from 4.0 upwards.
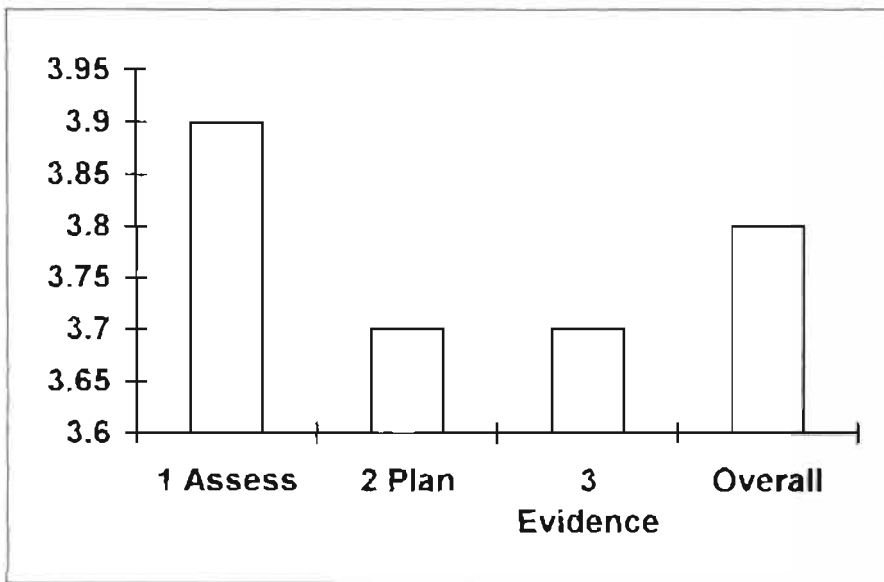
FIGURE 6.1 : Function one: Preparing for assessment

Function two: Assessment of the candidate's evidence of prior learning

There were three activities under this function . Activity 1 had 8 items, activity 2 had 10 items and activity 3 had 8 items. All 17 respondents answered all the questions under this function. Figure 2 is a depiction of their weighted averages for the three activities under this function. It is apparent from Figure 6.2 that the respondents were confident about their abilities of assessing a candidate since their overall score for this function was 3.6.
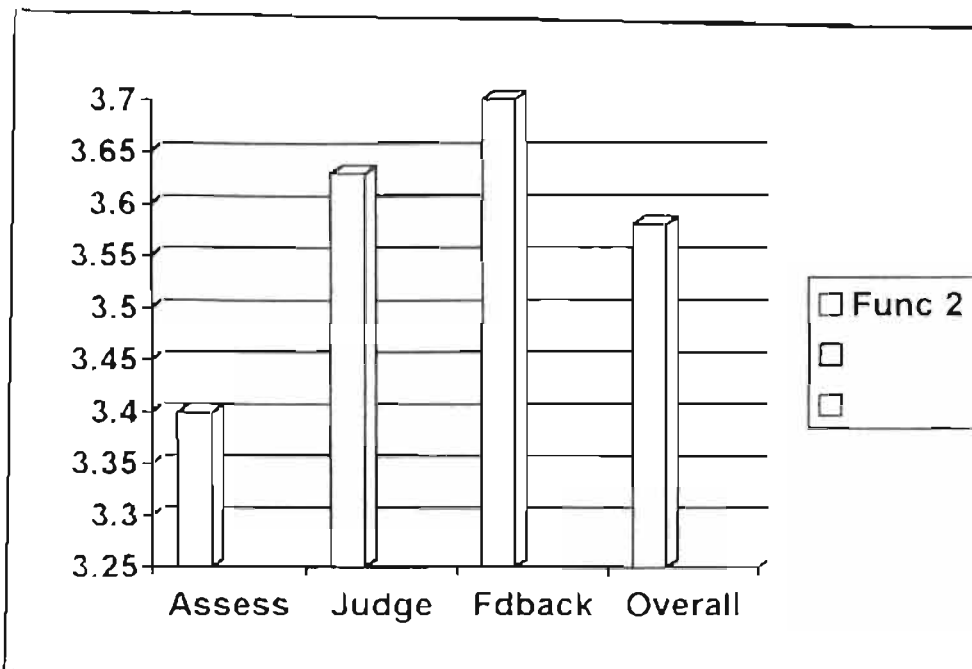
FIGURE 6.2 : Function two: Assessment of the candidate

Activity 1 (make an assessment on the given evidence) had an average score of 3.4. According to the scale, this meant that all 17 respondents felt they could perform this acitvity but needed guidance and assistance. This need was particularly evident under the item that dealt with portfolio development, where all 17 respondents felt that they still required guidance. On Activity 2 (assessment candidate and make judgement), the average score was 3.63. With this activity too, respondents felt that though they could perform it, they required guidance and support. Activity 3 (provide feedback on the assessment) had a higher average score than the first two activities. This activity had a score of 3.7.

In summary, the respondents felt that the workshop did help them by exposing them to the different activities in which they would be involved. The role-playing of the activities under guidance and the various class exercises did help to prepare them for the task at hand. However, according to the results of their self- assessment, the following emerged

1. The duration was too short.

2 Continuous guidance and support especially in activities like the portfolio development and assessment, would be necessary.

3. More workshops would be required for future RPL implementation.

6.3 THE RESULTS OF PROCESS EVALUATION

6.3.1 Implementation at Institution A

The RPL committee decided to use the exit level outcomes of the first year of the 4 year diploma programme. These were compared with the exit level outcomes of the programme for enrolled nurses according to R2176 SANC, as the candidates were all enrolled nurses. From this comparison, the committee identified deficits between the two curricula. These were in the following disciplines:

Anatomy and Physiology, Community Health, Social Science, Biophysics and Biochemistry. The committee realized that the curriculum for the enrolled nurses did not cover these adequately. They therefore designed a special program for the RPL candidates. See Figure 6.3. The committee decided that the assessment methods to be used were: a theory paper; practical examination (OSCE); a workbook; and case presentation. This institution resolved that the portfolio would not be used for assessment but a compilation of evidence for credit granting. In other words, they saw the Portfolio as a product and not a process of learning until such time as the people involved like advisors had more confidence in portfolio assessment. Eight candidates were selected from four out of the five campuses of the institution. Two candidates were selected from each campus. The service managers were responsible for selecting candidates. This was important as it was the service managers who were to release them from their duties, since this program was to be an on duty process.

6.3.1.1 Orientation

Candidates were given the information brochure a week before the date of orientation, to familiarize themselves with the project and the process involved. They were to sign an agreement form before commencing. Orientation was done at campus levels by the RPL advisors. They were informed about the various subject specialists and their contact numbers. They were to make their own arrangements with the subject specialists, either to join the lectures or for individual sessions with them. Advisors were to help the candidates in drawing up their learning plans.

6.3.1.2 Advising

The duration of this process was four months. In all the campuses, candidates met with the advisors for three hours per week for ten weeks. Candidates were also expected to make arrangements with the subject specialists to sit in during the lectures or to arrange for individual sessions or assessments. The advisors acted as liaison between the RPL candidates and the subject specialists.

AREAS OF WEAKNESS	MODULES	ASSESSMENT METHOD	WEIGHT/ DURATION
Physiology	Applied physics and Chemistry	2 hr theory exam 60% pass	15 periods / 30 notional hrs
•Community Health	Environmental hygiene and Comprehensive health care systems	Practical: Workbook for site visits One case presentation	40 notional hrs
Social Science	Developmental stages	Assignment Case presentation to identify milestones and influence on socialization	20hrs
•Fundamental Nursing Science	All first year competencies	OSCE	

Figure 6.3 RPL program for Institution A

6.3.1.3 Assessment

It was mentioned earlier, that the eight candidate at Institution A were drawn from three campuses that took part in the pilot project. All eight candidates who sat for assessment passed. The emphasis on the use of standardized examinations (OSCE), continuous emphasis by advisors that candidates had to be self directed, and the actual formulation of the RPL

158

program in terms of the exit level outcomes, meant that this implementation of RPL was based on the competence model.

Results of assessment:

As Figure 6.3 shows, the following assessment methods were used for the different areas identified as gaps in the candidates' previous knowledge:

Test one was a theory paper on Applied Physics and Chemistry

Test two was a case presentation on "Comprehensive Health System"

Test three was an assignment on the developmental stages.

Test four was a practical examination (OSCE) based on the first year nursing competencies

According to Figure 6.4, for Test one, candidates scored an average mean of 62, 40per cent with a standard deviation of 0,07. Test two candidates scored an average mean of 63per cent. For test three, candidates performed better with an average mean of 68,37per cent while the mean for test four was 72per cent. From these results, it was apparent that the candidates' overall performance was good especially for the last two tests namely, the OSCE and the assignment

6.3.1.4 Notification of results

The results were given to the principal, who in turn submitted them to a Senate meeting for their approval. Thereafter, they were dispatched to the service managers of the various institutions from which candidates were selected. The service managers in turn informed the candidates.

Key
Theo = Theory paper
Case = Case presentation
Assign= Assignment
Clin= Clinical examination (OSCE)
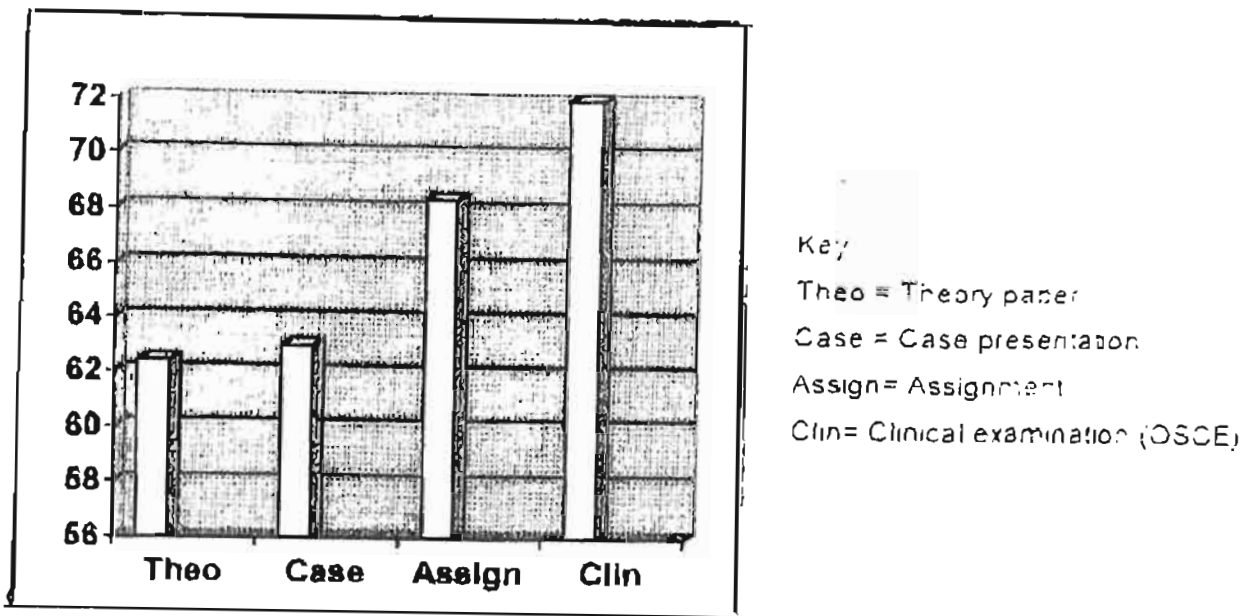
FIGURE 6.4 : Assessment results of RPL candidates

6.3.1.5 Quality assurance

This institution ensured the validity of the assessment by using more than one assessment method. The assessment results were also moderated amongst the four campuses, for instance, Campus A sent their scripts to Campus B and Campus B was moderated by Campus C and C by D and D by A. The fact that this institution developed a well structured program for the RPL candidates made assessment easy and also helped in enhancing the validity of the assessment since the competencies, and the assessment criteria were clearly defined prior to assessment.

160

6.3.1.6 Problems expenenced by the advisors

a) Time for advising was problematic

The fact that in all but one campus, candidates had to make time during their off duty time posed a problem for this institution. This was due to resistance from some service managers to release candidates during on duty time. The second problem was the fact that some candidates were either on leave or on night duty and hence it became a problem to schedule contact sessions with the advisors and/ or the subject specialists.

b) Lack of support from subject specialists

In all but one campus, the subject specialists viewed the program as an additional workload for them. They were reluctant to see the candidates individually, and as a result, the advisors ended up taking the role of 'experts' by helping the candidates with various aspects according to their identified gaps in knowledge. The advisors became the only persons that the candidates interacted with.

c) Reflection as a step in the process

Since contact sessions were difficult to schedule because some candidates were either on night duty or on leave, it became difficult for the advisors to guide the candidates properly through the process of reflection, as in one of the other institutions. Candidates in this institution were, however, very self-directed.

<u>6.3.1.7 Problems experienced by the RPL candidates:</u>

a) Isolation

Since they were selected from different campuses, they felt isolated from each other. One candidate had this to say: *We could have done better if we had a support group. but there was no time to meet with the other candidates who were also involved in this project.*

b)Traveling

One campus was situated at a distance from the clinical setting where these candidates worked and travelling to the campus to meet with the advisors was a problem.

c) Different expectations

Candidates expressed the view that their expectations of the project were totally different from how the process occurred. The candidates expected close guidance and supervision from the advisors and the subject specialists. They were not well versed in the concept of self-directed learning. According to one candidate: *There was no format, no proper structure. we felt very uncomfortable at first. Later, with the help from the advisors we were able to cope.*

Candidates also expressed concern about the fact that the subject specialists they were often referred to had no time for them. *They were very uncooperative and unfriendly towards us.* There was also lack of support from their colleagues and seniors in the clinical setting

6.3.2 Implementation at Institution B

<u>6.3.2.1 Orientation</u>

Orientation was very intensive and lasted for five days. Candidates were taken through each step of the portfolio development process as a group. Each step was dealt with each day and

candidates role-played each step, from identification of learning from previous experience, the development of learning outcome statements, right through to evidence collection. The different assessment methods were also discussed. Thereafter, candidates were allocated to advisors. Two candidates were allocated to each advisor. They were to make individual arrangements for one hour contact sessions with the advisors.

6.3.2.2.Advising

Further guidance and support was given on measures to fill in the gaps in knowledge that were identified during orientation. This was done during on duty time. This preparation for assessment lasted for three months.

6.3.2.3 Assessment

Case presentations to demonstrate evidence of having filled in the gaps in knowledge were used as formative assessments. Nurse Educators formed a panel of assessors during the case presentations. The portfolio evaluation was used for summative assessment. Advisors exchanged the candidates' portfolios in such a way that they did not evaluate portfolios they had assisted in developing. All ten candidates were successful.
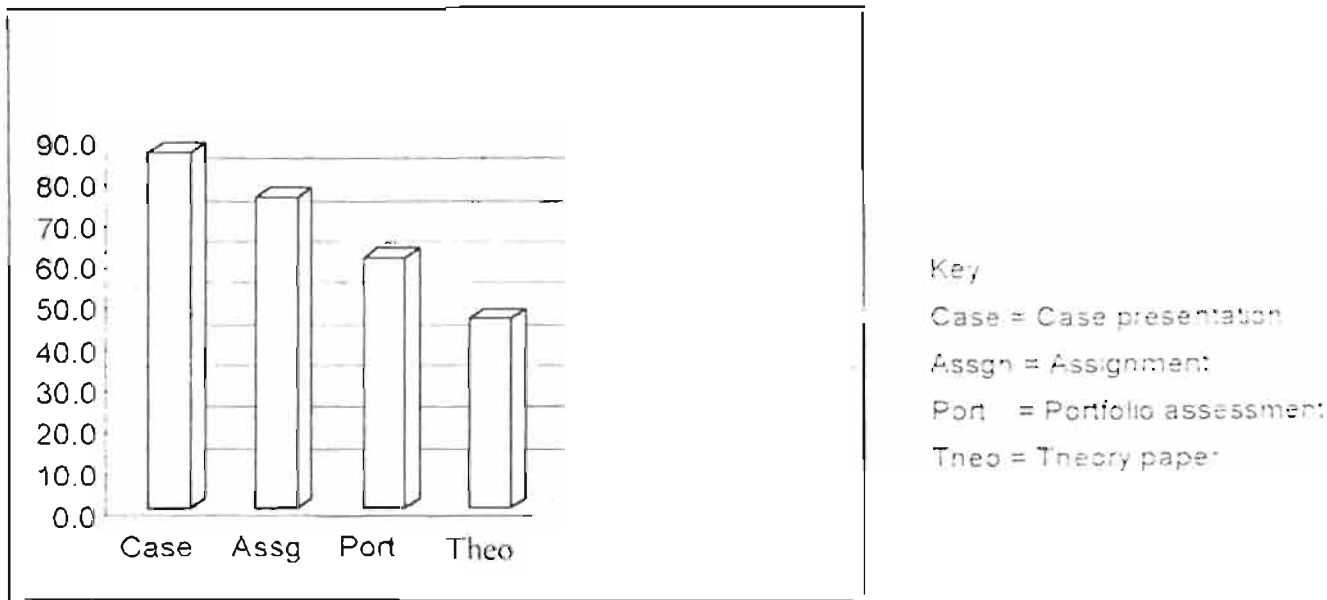
FIGURE 6.5 : Results of RPL assessment in Institution B

According to figure 6.5, the candidates in this institution scored highest in test 1 which was a case presentation. Candidates presented these cases to a panel of assessors. Test 2 was an assignment and test 3 was the portfolio assessment. Test 4 was a theory paper which focussed mainly on Anatomy and Physiology. As in Institution A, candidates in this institution scored lowest in the theory test. The portfolio assessment scores were also relatively low compared to the other scores.

6.3.2.4 Advisors' problems at Institution B

Initially in this institution, fifteen (15) candidates were selected, but five dropped out after the orientation. Each gave personal reasons for dropping out. These reasons ranged from prior career plans, plans for early retirement, to plans for leaving the country One candidate reported

164

that she/he felt overwhelmed by the whole process and did not think she/he was ready for the amount of work. The staff complained about the additional workload as they had to play the role of both advisors and subject experts for the candidates, owing to staff shortages.

6.3.2.5 The Candidates problems

The candidates reported lack of clear guidelines as to what was expected of them during the initial stages of programme. The candidates also expressed the view that there was too much work within a short space of time, especially because some of them had been out of school for a long time. The assessment methods were challenging to them though they had guidance from the advisors.

6.3.3 Implementation at Institution C

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6.3.3. 1 Orientation

Candidates attended a two day orientation programme and thereafter they had to attend once a week for five hours.

6.3.3.1 Advising or preparation of the candidate

In total the program continued for 8 weeks. Contact sessions were done in a group. The whole group was taken through each step of the portfolio development. During the week, candidates were expected to work independently at each stage and report back on this during class sessions. Through the process of reflection, candidates first had to map their previous experience and then identify learning that had resulted from this experience. Thereafter, they

had to match the learning they had identified with the exit level outcomes of the programme for enrolled nurses (R2176) that they were 'challenging'. They also identified gaps in their existing knowledge. The advisor helped them to plan on how the gaps were to be filled in. Candidates were encouraged to form support groups and to meet within their small groups at least once a week. They were referred to relevant resources like books to read, in preparation for filling in of gaps.

6.3.3.3 Evidence gathering

Towards the end of the programme, candidates were given two weeks to collect the evidence for assessment, since they were using the portfolio as one of the assessment methods.

6.3.3.4 Assessment

The assessment methods were decided in consultation with the candidates. They opted for a challenge exam; a practical exam; and portfolio assessment. The portfolio was viewed as summative assessment for both new learning and for assessment of their previous learning. The first assessment was conducted at the end of the eight weeks through the challenge exam and OSCE. Thereafter candidates had to gather evidence in preparation for the portfolio assessment. A second person who had not been involved during the preparation of the candidates helped with the practical assessment (OSCE). All forms of assessment were moderated before and after.
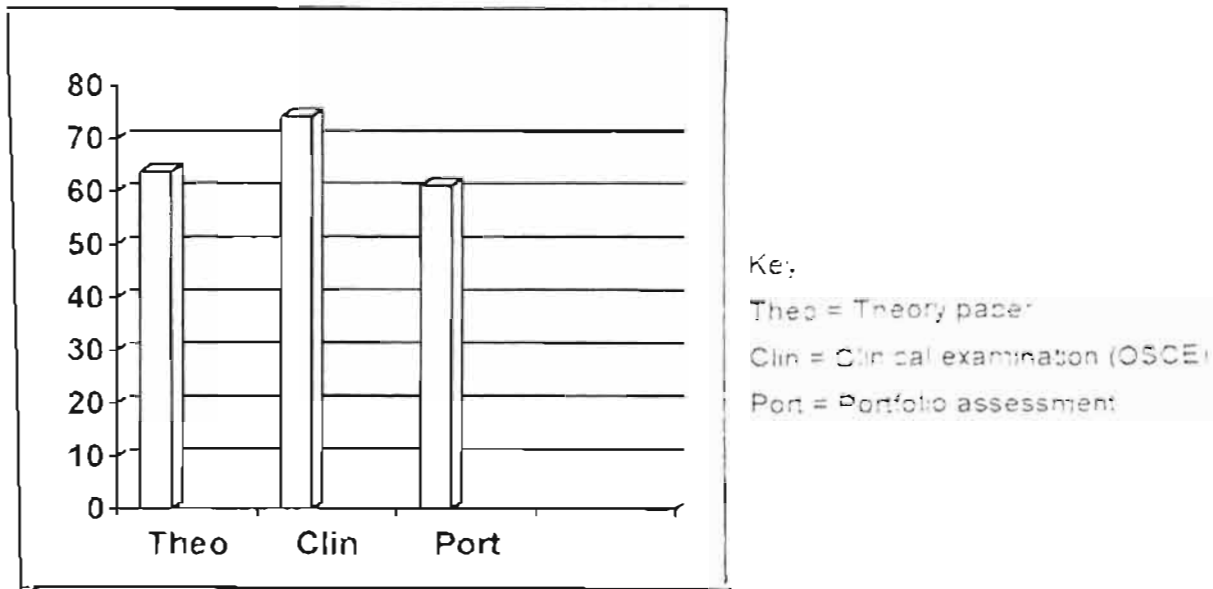
FIGURE 6.6 : Assessment results in Institution C

Figure 6.6 contains the bar chart which reflects the overall performance of the candidates on all three assessments. The mean scores were as follows: 63,7per cent for the challenge exam, 74.2per cent for the clinical exam and 61,1per cent for the portfolio assessment. According to these results, candidates performed better in the clinical exams as compared to both the challenge exam and the portfolio. This confirmed the concerns of the nurse educators during the development phase. The nurse educators raised concerns about the assessment of performance skills only and basing the judgement on credit granting on performance as evidence of effectiveness in rendering quality care. They were also concerned about the integrated nature of the diploma program which the RPL candidates would be challenging. The use of more than one assessment tool was a measure to resolve this problem

6.3.3.5 Problems with implementation at Institution C

a)*Staff shortage*

There was only one RPL Advisor for a group of 14 candidates. It became difficult to render individualized support and guidance to the candidates. The fact that the advisor was employed on a part time basis made it difficult for the candidates to secure appointments even during the week.

b) *Assessment*

According to the moderator's report, the authenticity of the evidence brought forward was identified as a problem. The validation letters brought by most candidates were of poor quality, ranging from unclear signatures to unsupported statements by the people validating the evidence.

6.4 A cross case analysis of the implementation phase results

The focus of this comparative analysis was not on determining similarities in the process of implementation between the three institutions, but the comparison was on how the contextual differences between the three institutions shape the process of implementation. The fact that each institution used a different type of candidate and for different programs highlighted the contextual differences between the three institutions. It is for this reason that the assessment results were not compared between the three institutions. The analysis was done on the two levels of evaluation of this phase which was Input evaluation and Process evaluation.

6.4.1 Policy formulation

The RPL guidelines document that was used by the institutions described the different sections of policy development. Institutions followed the framework as closely as possible, but it was observed that the committees of the three institutions were superficial with regard to the scope of the RPL policy. This section of the policy is one aspect that may have to be looked into by institutions during future RPL implementation. Although the target group was clearly stated by all institutions, the rights and obligations of all the stakeholders were not clearly stated. The committees emphasized only the obligations of each stakeholder. All three institutions emphasized the procedural areas of policy development. Other areas like quality assurance and evaluation and monitoring were briefly mentioned by one or two institutions but were inadequately developed. All three institutions followed the RPL guidelines as closely as possible and where this was not possible, reasonable steps were taken. Differences were observed in the following:

6.4.1.1 Adequacy of information provided to candidates

All three brochures were analysed to ascertain the adequacy of information given to the candidates prior to commencement of RPL. According to the RPL guidelines, candidates were to be given adequate information. The following topics were covered by the brochures: duration; targeted group; contact details of the person who would provide RPL. Information about fees payable was only included in the brochure for Institution C. None of the three brochures covered the background information about the project. This was however addressed during the orientation.

6.4.1.2 Marketing

This aspect of the guidelines was not done by all three institutions, since they felt that this was a pilot project. Not advertising the project, however, had some adverse effects. Other nurses who were not selected felt that they were being discriminated against and the evaluative researcher had to be called in to address the nurses in two of the three institutions. The labour representatives were not satisfied by the manner in which the service managers conducted the selections. After the open meeting with the evaluative researcher, the nurses were satisfied.

6.4.2. Process of implementation

6.4.2.1 Orientation period

In Institution B, the orientation period lasted for one week, whereas in Institution C it lasted for two days and in Institution A, it lasted for one day and was done at campus level. This meant that candidates from Institutions A and C did not receive the same quality of orientation as those in Institution B.

6.4.2.2 Advising the candidate

The duration of the program was four months in all three institutions. In Institution A and C this program took place during the candidates' off duty time. This meant that candidates had to make their own arrangements for the contact sessions with the advisors. This created some problems as was mentioned earlier. In Institution B, where the contact sessions with the advisor were done during the on-duty time, there were fewer problems.

170

6 4.2.4 Assessment

Each institution used more than one assessment method. All three institutions used the methods with which they were most familiar. The case presentation method was used by Institutions A and B while the theory paper was used by all three institutions. Practical examinations were used by two institutions. Portfolio assessment was used by Institutions B and C, while in Institution A, the portfolio was used as a product of assessment. The portfolio development process was not assessed since the advisor closely worked with the candidate during this process. The portfolio was taken as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the RPL program only.

6.4.2.5 Quality Assurance

By using more than one assessment method, all three colleges enhanced the quality of the assessments. All institutions had their assessment moderated externally which further enhanced the quality of the assessments. Institution B made use of the facilitators from different campuses during assessments and the assessment results were all moderated by two independent moderators.

6.5 RESULTS OF THE PRODUCT EVALUATION PHASE

As in the previous phase, information from each of the three institutions will be analysed separately .

6.5.1 Product evaluation in Institution A

6.5.1.1 Phase description

Type of program

The access program at this institution was second year of the Diploma in (General Nursing, Community) and Midwifery. According to R425 SANC leading to registration as a professional nurse. The entry requirement was to have passed the first year of the four year diploma.

The group size

The group consisted of eight RPL candidates who were all enrolled nurses, and 37 candidates who were student nurses from the first year level of the same programme. The total was 45

Continuous assessment

Within a period of six months, the students were continuously assessed in the different aspects of the programme. A total of three formative assessments were done. These scores were used to compare the two groups of candidates. Test one was a theory paper; test two was an assignment and test three was also a theory paper.

6.5.1.2 Data analysis

Their mean ranks were compared for each of the three tests given. A null hypothesis was formulated stating that there would be no difference in the candidates' performance between the two groups of candidates.

Results of candidates' assessment

According to Table 6.1, the test scores for Test 1, for the RPL candidates' mean rank was slightly lower than that of the traditional route candidates. According to the results of the Mann-Whitney U test there was no significant difference between the two means (traditional and RPL means). The RPL group's performance improved however. as displayed by the second and third test scores Since the p values in the first two (2) tests were higher than 0.05, the results indicated that there was no significant difference in the scores of both groups. In other words, the results failed to reject the null hypothesis In the last test however, (Test 3) the RPL group had a higher mean and the p value for this was .000 indicating that there was a significant difference between the scores of the two groups in favour of the RPL group. These results showed that, once in the program there were no differences in the performances between the RPL route candidates and the traditional route candidates. In fact, the candidates from the RPL group worked harder than their counterparts, as was indicated by their occupying the higher half of the score distribution.

TABLE 6.1 : Test scores for both groups (RPL and Traditional entry) in Institution A

Mann-Whitney Test Ranks

ACCESS ROUTE		N	Mean	Mann-Whitney U
TEST 1	Traditional	37	23. 57	
	RPL Group	8	20.38	,533
	Total	45		
TEST 2	Traditional	37	22.05	
	RPL Group	8	27.38	,298
	Total	45		
TEST 3	Traditional	37	19.72	
	RPL Group	8	38.19	,000
	Total	45		

6.5.2 Product evaluation in Institution B

6.5.2.1.Phase description

Type of program

The access program at this institution was the Bridging Course leading to registration as a general nurse according to R618 SANC. Entry requirement was an enrolled nurse qualification with matriculation.

The group size

The group consisted of eight (8) RPL candidates who were enrolled nurses without matriculation, and 25 candidates who were enrolled nurses with matriculation. The total was 33.

Continuous assessment

Within a period of six months, they were continuously assessed in the different aspects of the programme. A total of three formative and one summative assessment was done. These scores were used to compare the two groups of candidates. Test one was a theory paper; test two was an assignment and test three was also a theory paper. Test four was a major test which was more comprehensive and comprised all the aspects that had been covered up to that time.

6.5.2.2 Data analysis

The mean scores of the two groups were compared. The focus of the analysis was to ascertain the comparability of the two samples. Their mean ranks were compared for each of the four tests given. A null hypothesis was made that there would be no difference between the two groups of candidates. According to the score, the traditional group performed better than the RPL group in the first two tests as well as in the last test. The RPL group managed to perform better in the third test. When the scores were tested for significant difference, as the results indicate, there was no significant difference in the scores from both these samples.

Results of assessment

Table 6.2 reflects the results of both groups at this institution. Since the p values in all four (4) tests were higher than 0.05, the results indicated no significant difference level. In other words, the results failed to reject the null hypothesis.

175

Table 6.2:Test scores of both groups (RPL and Traditional entry) in Institution B.

Mann- Whitney   Test Ranks

ACCESS ROUTE		N	Mean	Mann –Whitney U
TEST 1	Traditional	25	17.34	
	RPL Group	8	15.94	.720
	Total	33		
TEST 2	Traditional	25	17.46	
	RPL Group	8	15.56	.628
	Total	33		
TEST 3	Traditional	25	16.66	
	RPL Group	8	18.06	.721
	Total	33		
TEST4	Traditional	25	18.16	
	RPL Group	8	13.38	.222
	Total	33		

6.5.3 Product evaluation in Institution C

6.5.3.1 Phase description

Type of program

The access program at this institution was the Bridging Course leading to registration as a general nurse according to R618 SANC. The entry requirement was an enrolled nurse qualification with matriculation.

176

The group size

The group consisted of eleven RPL candidates who were all enrolled nurse auxiliaries with matriculation and 21 candidates who were enrolled nurses with matriculation. Three candidates who had been successful during the RPL program, could not get permission from their employers to commence with the Bridging Course immediately owing to staff shortages. The total was 32 candidates.

Continuous assessment

Over a period of six months, the candidates were continuously assessed in the different aspects of the programme. A total of three formative tests were done. These scores were used to compare the two groups of candidates. All three assessments were theory papers.

6.5.3.2 Data analysis

The mean scores of the two groups were compared. As in the previous institutions, the focus of the analysis was to ascertain the comparability of the two samples. The Mann- Whitney U test was also used. Their mean ranks were compared for each of the three tests given. A null hypothesis was proposed stating that there would be no difference in the performance between the two groups of candidates.

Results

As shown in Table 6.3 the p value in Test 2 was higher than 0.05, the results indicated no significant difference. In other words, the results failed to reject the null hypothesis for Test 2. For Test 1 and Test 3, the p values were lower than 0.05. Test 1 had a p value of .007 and Test

177

3 had a p value of .000. According to the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for these two tests, there was a significant difference between the two means (traditional and RPL means) in favour of the RPL group.

Table 6.3 : Test scores of both groups in Institution C

Mann- Whitney Test Ranks

ACCESS ROUTE	N	Mean	Mann–Whitney U
TEST 1 Traditional	21	13.48	
RPL Group	11	22.27	,007
Total	32		
TEST 2 Traditional	21	14.64	
RPL Group	11	20.05	,101
Total	32		
TEST 3 Traditional	21	12.36	
RPL Group	11	24.31	,000
Total	32		

6.5.4 A cross case analysis of Product evaluation

6.5.4.1 Candidates' performance

In all three institutions, the performance of the candidates who accessed nursing programs via the RPL route were comparable to those who accessed programmes through traditional routes. In Institutions B and C, the test scores for the RPL candidates were higher in all three tests.

Candidates' problems:

The candidates, especially those from Institution C, expressed problems during their clinical accompaniment. The preceptors continued to supervise them on competencies for enrolled nurses and not on those for professional nurses. In other words these candidates lacked adequate exposure to clinical competencies relevant to the program they were following. This was due to lack of communication between the lecturers and the preceptors. This problem was discussed with lecturers together with the service managers from their placement areas and was later resolved. RPL candidates from the other two institutions were better off since they were already enrolled nurses and once in the access programs they received adequate support from their colleagues as well as their preceptors.

Lecturers' problems/ concerns

The lecturers in the different access programs, reported no problems with regard to the RPL candidates' performance. The lecturers all reported that the candidates had settled in well into the program. In fact, some lecturers could not identify which of their students were from the RPL project.

179

6.5.5 Summary of the product evaluation

According to the results, there were no significant differences in the performances of both groups of candidates. Once into the selected programs, the RPL candidates continued to perform as well as the traditional entrants. In fact, the RPL candidates performed better than the traditional entrants in some tests. For instance in Institution A, the RPL candidates had higher mean scores in the last two tests (See Table 6.1). According to the Mann Whitney U test, for Institution A, the null hypothesis for test 3 was rejected in favour of the RPL candidates. The mean score for the RPL group was 38.19 while that of the traditional group was 19.72. In Institution C, the RPL group had higher mean scores in all three tests. As in Institution A, there was a significant difference in test 3 in favour of the RPL group (See Table 6.3). The following reasons may be attributed to the higher scores for the RPL group:

(a)The process of RPL, which encourages self-directedness, might have benefited the RPL candidates. The reflection process could have motivated the candidates to take control of their learning process.

(b)The RPL candidates were selected from a pool of people who had waited a long time for training, and therefore may have been more enthusiastic. Once in the programs this group (RPL) seized the long awaited opportunity for continuing education.

(c) The traditional entrants may have been over confident of themselves because they 'met the entrance criteria, and they became more relaxed than the RPL candidates.

The null hypothesis that there would be no difference between the two groups was not rejected for the first tests only but for successive tests. It was rejected in favour of the RPL group.

The positive results of the RPL candidates confirmed those from other studies (Freers 1994; Pearson 2000; Portier et al 1999) all conducted studies to evaluate the effectiveness of prior learning assessment to the students' progress and persistence in advanced programs. According to these studies, students from RPL programs progressed at a faster rate than those from traditional routes of entry.

6.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the results of the study have been presented. The presentation was based on the conceptual model used for data collection. The RPL guidelines that were developed by the SANC's EDCO were used as the basis to implement the model, therefore the focus of the analysis was on whether the guidelines had been followed or not. The focus was also on the alternative steps that were used by each institution where guidelines were difficult to implement. Problems that were identified during the implementation and testing of the model were also presented. Each institution followed as closely as possible the RPL guidelines and each institution had problems unique to its own context. The different phases of evaluation resulted in the refining of the RPL guidelines and hence the shaping of the RPL system. The next chapter will explore the findings in light of how the different phases of evaluation formulated, refined and shaped the RPL system. Thereafter the emerging RPL system is presented.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of evaluation research is to seek answers to particular questions and the goal of evaluation research is to evaluate the success or the effectiveness of a particular phenomenon. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), the results of evaluation should provide practical knowledge, which has been empirically justified, about the worth of a particular phenomenon. For the present study, the RPL system needed to be tested in an attempt to judge its worth. The purpose of the study will be used as a basis in reporting the findings. The purpose of the study was to develop and test an appropriate model for implementation of RPL that could be used for nurses who followed certain programs of training other than the Comprehensive Basic Nursing Program. The study adopted a multiphase decision-oriented evaluation research design for which Stuffelbeam's educational evaluation model was used to guide data collection and analysis. The research questions were incorporated under each evaluation phase according to the model. The findings are presented under the different phases of evaluation, although the purpose of the study forms the main focus of the discussion.

7.2 DISCUSSION ON THE RPL IMPLEMENTATION MODEL DEVELOPMENT

The basis of the RPL implementation model development was current policies which regarded RPL as intrinsic to transformation of the higher education system. These policies were presented in chapter five as guiding frameworks.

182

7.2.1 Change or redress was the point of departure

In South Africa, redress is the point of departure for any policy on transformation. For the Education Committee members, redress meant that the nursing profession had to be reflective of transformation. In the education and training of nurses, this change was to be achieved by a system that is more adult learner friendly, more sensitive to the needs of those learners from historically disadvantaged groups of the society. In Chapter two a background of the education and training system for nurses in South Africa was discussed. It is against this background that the policy makers have to ensure redress. This redress would afford access to Black nurses who were previously denied because they failed to meet the entry criteria. Redress would also mean that while affording them access, the system becomes sensitive to their conditions and their needs. For instance the issue of language, and that of the context under which knowledge was constructed would be considered. These needs formed the basis of the discussions between the policy makers and the stakeholders. The concerns raised by the stakeholders were all rooted in redress. The stakeholders wanted to ensure that the model served this main objective of implementing RPL in the education and training of nurses in this country.

7.2.2 An eclectic approach used

The approach used to develop the RPL system was an eclectic one where the strengths of both the competency based, the developmental and the process based approaches were combined. From the developmental approach concepts like equality and growth were used in developing the guidelines. From the competency based approach, concepts like objectivity, quality and competence were also incorporated during the guidelines development. From the process based model, process was regarded as an important strategy in implementing the RPL model.

These new concepts formed the basis for the development of the model.

7.2.3 Collaborative decision making

The success of any innovation depends on the way that innovation is introduced or disseminated to the implementers. As was mentioned in Chapter two, change is a process which is aimed at development. During the planning stage of any innovation, experts gather to brainstorm ideas on how best to introduce the innovation. This was an important stage in the development of the model since its acceptance would depend on how the stakeholders perceived it. In Chapter two the problem of 'tissue rejection' when change was not properly disseminated to all those involved was discussed

7.2.4 The context was used as a basis for development

During the development of the system, the uniqueness of the South African context of RPL was taken into consideration. This issue of context influenced the purpose of RPL in the country. Context also influenced the policy makers and the stakeholders during the development of the guidelines. The choice of an eclectic approach to RPL implementation was an indication that the decision makers were concerned about the context in which the system would be implemented. The contributions made by the stakeholders also highlighted the importance of context consideration when implementing RPL .

7.2.5 Standards formed the basis for the RPL system

During the development of the system, maintenance of standards was regarded as an important aspect of the system. The policy makers formulated standards which were translated into guidelines which were to be used by institutions implementing RPL.

7.3 DISCUSSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MODEL

7.3.1 Institutional policy development

The importance of context was also highlighted during the implementation of the model development. The three institutions while using the guidelines to formulate policies, took into consideration issues that were important in their own specific contexts, where certain aspects of the guidelines were not adequately covered in the policy documents. For instance, the issues of g RPL practices caused a problem. According to the results, the RPL committees felt that, if the RPL pilot projects were made available to all individuals, they would attract large numbers of candidates and this might deplete service delivery to patients.

7.3.1.1 Cost analysis

The two institutions that did not charge any fees for the pilot project (Institutions A and B), proposed that for future implementations they would charge R300.00 per level or year of training since that would be the equivalent to the fees paid by the normal entry learners. Although this was in line with the RPL guidelines, charging such low fees might have negative effects on the quality of the RPL program offered by the institution. The amount of work involved and the

185

possibility of large numbers in the RPL program would make it impossible to run effectively. Institution C charged R2000.00 per candidate for the whole program. According to the budget in Annexure 12, even this fee did not cover the cost, although the fact that a special arrangement was made by this institution for the RPL candidates to spread the fee over two years without any interest charged. The fact that the other two institutions did not do a cost analysis of the RPL programme limits the effective implementation of the 'fee' aspect of the RPL guidelines since there were no comparisons among the three institution. This has implications for future RPL implementations in the public service sector. The concerns of the nurse educators about the increased workload may further aggravate the problem of making RPL programs available in the absence of realistic fee structures. This concern may be an inhibiting factor to the whole RPL process. Clark, Ivanistkaya and Goodwin (2000) in their RPL cost analysis study, warned against implementation of RPL practices based on estimated budget. According to them, the reality of costs involved during implementation might lead to problems that might affect the credibility of the RPL program.

That institutions A and B felt that for future RPL implementations they would charge only R300.00 is unrealistic. One would argue therefore that, institutions should consider carefully the cost involved in RPL implementation. According to the guidelines, fees should be determined by the service provided. The advisors expressed the view that helping the RPL candidate was a very challenging task. The problems experienced by the institutions concerning the involvement of subject specialists are further indications that personnel felt that RPL implementation increased their workload. Nursing education institutions might need to consider carefully the costing of future RPL implementation. Given the lack of funds to employ more personnel,

186

institutions might have to consider the alternative of group approach to RPL implementation as was done by Institution C. The fact that candidates at Institution C performed as well as those from institutions A and B points out to the value of peer support that can be offered by members of the group to one another. This group approach could also prevent the sense of isolation that was felt by the candidates from the other two institutions.

7.3.2 Reflection as a process of learning

Reflection as a process of learning is an important component of the developmental approach to RPL. The traditional view puts more emphasis on book knowledge or content learnt during class sessions and thereby underplays the role of previous experience. During the system implementation, the step of reflection could not be accommodated easily by Institution A. At Institution A, the candidates received minimal support and guidance from the advisors, and then only when they requested help. The advisors emphasized the fact that candidates had to demonstrate ability for self-directedness during the process. In institution A, if RPL practices were to be successful, candidates had to' fit' into existing structures with minimal adjustments made by the institution. In other word RPL implementation was embraced only if it did not change the status quo. Rogers (1983), asserts that getting an innovation accepted, even when it has obvious advantages. is very difficult as the innovation may not be compatible with existing values and the previous experience of those affected by change in the system. Nurse educators, are challenged by RPL to rethink their educational value and, though some might have embraced the idea, there remained elements of resistance. This resistance was not surprising since, during the model development, the nurse educators had expressed concern about *the integrated nature of the Basic Nursing Program* and they did not see how the RPL

187

candidates could be accommodated in this program. This concern was probably due to the traditional approach to teaching and learning that many nursing education institutions still use. This traditional approach focuses more on the content to be covered than the process of learning and does not work with modules or units, but with large volumes of content taught during the year. This concern was also raised in a study to introduce RPL in the Open University in Britain, which was conducted by Butterworths and Edwards in 1999.Amongst the problems identified, was that of support during the initial stages of preparation for assessment. According to them, the RPL candidate required a great deal of support during the initial stages of assessment especially with the process of reflection.

Gawe (1999) also cautioned educators about the threat presented by RPL to academic standards. Unlike Gawe, Michelson (1996) argued that RPL specific assessment instruments were required because if prior learning assessments were based on the western academic assumptions about objective, universal knowledge, problems were bound to occur. Michelson noted that educators are challenged to change their value systems about the form of knowledge known as the academic curriculum because this form of knowledge attached importance to some knowledge and viewed other forms of knowledge as unimportant. RPL challenges the only kind of power academics tend to have, which is what counts as knowledge and how that knowledge should be demonstrated. According to Michelson, educators need to enter into the discourse of the worker who may be their new learner and understand the form of knowledge from the worker's perspective. In this way, through RPL the curriculum could be informed. In her words:

We have a lot invested in the gate-keeping function of the university. Some of that investment is the loyalty to honourable traditions of thoughtfulness and learning. But some of it is

defensiveness. a wish to hold our social privilege and our own comfortable habits of mind. Our challenge in learning is to tell the difference between the two (Michelson, 2000 :31).

One would therefore appreciate the reasoning behind the model of the First Nations Technical Institute that required that programs 'fit into the candidates' needs and not the candidates into the requirements of the programs. This developmental approach to RPL would seem to challenge educators to redesign their programs in such a way that they are flexible enough to allow for access at different levels. For them, learning is conservative, abstract and not easily transferable to real life situations, although learners are being prepared for real life practice.

7.3.3 Resistance to change observed

The problems associated with innovation were briefly discussed in chapter two. When the ideals of the central planners are not accepted by those who are expected to implement them, this may result in the rejection of the innovation by those who are the implementers. In all three institutions, the RPL committees decided that subject specialists should be used for helping candidates in preparation for assessment with regard to the gaps in knowledge that were identified. This proved difficult to implement because the subject specialists were not part of those decisions. This difficulty raises the question of involving people during all the steps, especially during planning. In a study to examine the factors related to the acceptance of prior learning assessments, Wolf found that among other reasons, lack of clarity of duties and job descriptions for those involved led to problems and hence lack of acceptance by personnel (Wolf 1996; 167). Since the subject specialists were not involved during the orientation, they saw RPL as an imposition on their already heavy workloads. The subject specialists, over and above giving advice and guidance to the candidates, had to accommodate the RPL candidates

189

during lectures. According to one of them. *We had to cater for this group of students. who were at times reluctant to do their share of the work.*. Since the study focused on the generalist levels, the advisors were able to resolve the problem themselves by giving the support that candidates needed. Sach (1980) also argued that all members should be involved during planning and not just during implementation.

For future RPL implementations, especially for the post basic nursing programmes, the subject specialist role will be an important one, because the RPL advisors might not be competent in all disciplines. Nursing education institutions would have to consider carefully the involvement of all personnel during the planning. It would also be advisable to ensure that RPL is part of the mainstream work of each institution and not treated as a separate process.

7.3.4 Portfolio assessment was a problem

The problem that was identified during assessment was the difficulty of authenticating the evidence brought forward for portfolio assessments, which was a general problem in all three institutions. This problem was caused by inexperience and probably inadequate information given to the people who validated the candidates' evidences. It appears that the RPL advisors did not give clear guidelines to the candidates about authenticating evidence. In all three institutions, the moderators commented on the lack of authenticity in the evidence collected. In spite of this drawback, the institutions all used portfolio assisted assessment ensured a balanced assessment. Institutions will have to consider carefully the importance of quality standards during portfolio assessment. More in-service training on portfolio development and assessment will be necessary. It might also be useful to develop written guidelines for people

approached to provide evidence, to ensure that they fully understand what is required. According to Koenig and Wolfson (1994), although portfolio assessment work best for those disciplines with a practice base, of all the assessment methods, portfolio assessment attracted the most resistance. It would appear therefore that, for nursing, because it is also practice based, the portfolio should be considered as an important method of assessment.

7.3.5. Multiple assessment methods used as 'surveillance'

In all three institutions multiple assessment methods were used. While this may have been good in terms of enhancing the validity of assessment, one might argue that from a developmental perspective, the use of multiple methods of assessment will be viewed as a gate keeping measure. For South African RPL candidates, while assessment methods used should be relevant to the competences being assessed, care should be taken that their selection is done in consideration of the context as a source of prior knowledge. For instance, in Institutions A and C, the use of the OSCE as a method of assessment was not justifiable given that the RPL candidates had never been exposed to this method during their training.

Problems with RPL assessment were also reported by Butterworths and Edwards (1992) in their study. According to the results, discrepancies were identified between the results of the assessors and those of the advisors or counsellors. The South African institutions that have experimented with RPL have also reported problems during assessment. Unlike the problems identified in the present study, the problems identified in other institutions ranged from inappropriate methods of assessment to inappropriate standards of assessment as well as the lack of experience of people involved during assessment (Butterworth 1992; Gawe 1999; Valla

1999). For the present study, during the development phase, stakeholders were unanimous about the fact that only people who were qualified educators should be involved during assessment.

7.3.1.6 Access was achieved

According to Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 which contain the assessment results from all the institutions, all candidates were successful during the assessment and accessed the programs they aimed for. The nurse educators involved in the study, like most researchers from the United States of America, have all reported positive results of the candidates after assessment. Students gain academic and organisational skills through the portfolio development process (Freers 1994; Dagavarian and Walters 2000). These results confirmed Keeton's (1993) assertion about the relationship between an adult's previous experience and the manner the adult processes information. One can argue that the process of reflection is a necessary step for prior learning assessment.

It was also observed that in all three institutions, candidates scored higher in the assessment of their clinical competencies than in other forms of assessment. The reason for higher clinical scores may be attributed to the practical nature of the curriculum for the enrolled nurses and also the amount of clinical experience that the candidates possessed. The developmental approach used during portfolio development also help the candidates to incorporate old and new learning. This integration was revealed by the fact that candidates did acceptably well in the theoretical forms of assessment, since the combined mean scores in all the three institutions were above 50 per cent. Portier, Stanley and Wagemans (1995) in their study to ascertain the

effects of prior knowledge in enhancing the students' learning process also revealed that prior knowledge was more pronounced in behavioural dimensions than in knowledge dimensions. According to these authors, and others (Freers 1994; Pearson 2000) the developmental approach used during portfolio development contributed to this high performance in clinical skills. Although the RPL candidates scored higher marks in clinical assessment compared with the other forms of assessments that should not be interpreted to mean that the candidates did not possess the capacity to improve in their cognitive abilities. In fact, the RPL candidates continued to perform better than the others who were in the same programs. The results of the implementation process in all the three institutions revealed that previous learning can be recognised and with adequate advice and support, RPL candidates can successfully identify, analyse and submit evidence of previous learning from experience for assessment. The results also revealed that with support, candidates can learn new skills to make up for the deficits in their prior learning.

7.3.7 Some candidates dropped out of the pilot project.

In institution B five students dropped out, immediately after the orientation week. Two candidates said that they planned to leave the service and therefore could not continue with the program. The other three said that they were overwhelmed by the amount of work and owing to other commitments they were not ready to commence the program. This lack of readiness was also due to the fact that the pilot project was not marketed according to the guidelines. Service managers selected candidates from their lists without proper consultation to find out if they were interested in further training at this time. Adequate information will have to be made available for applicants before registration. For future RPL implementation, institutions will have to conduct

pre-selection interviews to ensure that people selected are well informed about the whole process of RPL.

The implementation phase aimed at testing the effectiveness of the RPL system by measuring the extent to which the institutions selected could successfully implement the guidelines formulated by the policy makers and the stakeholders.

In summary, the implementation phase shaped or refined the proposed RPL system in several ways. The guidelines were used mainly as surveillance rather than developing the adult learner. The three institutions placed too much value on protecting their own institutional situations. This was revealed by the continuous insistence on the fact that *this is a pilot project*. Protecting own policies was more important than adapting the policies to meet the needs of the RPL candidate. In some institutions candidates had to attend the sessions during their own time. This may be viewed as an act of resistance to change where the candidate has to fit into the program without any attempt by the institution to make programs flexible enough to meet the needs of the mature adults

7.4 THE DESCRIPTION OF THE RPL IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

The ultimate aim of the model was to guide policy makers and RPL providers in implementing RPL in nursing education and training in South Africa. While the development was based on other existing RPL approaches, the emerging RPL implementation model was unique and eclectic in the sense that it was based on the strengths of both the developmental process, and the competence approach

194

7.4.1 Levels of development

(a) Tier one: The foundation of the model is the standards set by the policy makers (EDCO) and refined by the stakeholders. These standards were used as the guidelines to the development of the institutional policies that guided the implementation of the RPL process.

(b)Tier two: The standards were formulated for each of the steps involved during the RPL process. Each standard spelt out what criteria would be used to judge the worth of each step of the RPL process from admission to credit granting.

(c) Tier three: At institutional level the guidelines are used to formulate institutional policy. The institutional policy in turn forms the basis for the RPL process in each institution. It usually addresses similar categories to the standards.

(d)Tier four: The RPL provider process is composed of six steps administration; orientation; preparation of the candidate; assessment of evidence; decision making and lastly credit granting.

(e)Tier five: The candidate's process is described in this tier. The candidate applies for RPL; receives orientation; engages in the process of reflection; gathers evidence; submits evidence for assessment. The only difference between Tiers four and five is the role players in each tier.

(f)Tier 6: This is the last tier in the model. It describes the route that may be taken by the RPL candidate after the results of assessment.

7.4.2 The description of the various processes in the model

7.4.2.1 The provider's process

Step 1: Administration of RPL(recruitment, selection, administration)

This step of the process spans the total process from recruitment to post assessment counseling. Depending on the availability of funds, an administrative officer may have to be appointed to ensure the smooth running of the administrative process. The following activities are involved during this step:

- preparation of application forms and an introductory brochure of information. management of fees paid by candidates and recording such fee payments accurately.

- maintenance of records of the advising done.

- maintenance of assessment records of candidates, kept in individual candidate's files,

- keeping record of prospective candidates,

- communication between prospective candidates and RPL advisors,

All queries regarding the RPL program should be handled by the administration officer and therefore direct telephone access is important .

Selection of candidates is done according to predetermined criteria . The fact that the candidate may have followed a different program with a different curriculum needs to be considered. According to the results of the study, service managers were involved in the selection of candidates. This helped during the release time of candidates to schedule appointments and to attend sessions with the RPL advisors. For future RPL implementations, nurse educators will have to ensure that they do not lose control with regard to the selection of candidates for RPL programs. What needs to be emphasized is collaboration among the different stakeholders during the process of implementation. If this is not done, the nurse education institutions may be providing the type of RPL that works against its goal, which is access.

Step 2:Orientation

This involves giving candidates an opportunity for direct interaction with the providers. This is done to ensure that all the candidates' concerns, queries, questions and anxieties about the RPL process are addressed in an informal non-threatening environment. This may take the form of a workshop, depending on the size of the group or it may take the form of interviews. During orientation:

- The candidates are given all the necessary information about the RPL system. This should include orientation to the whole process ahead.

- The candidates are assisted with planning for attainment of personal action plans according to the exit level outcomes of the specific program.

- Candidates may also have to be orientated to the different assessment methods that will be used.

This orientation allows candidates to plan their own RPL bid and make informed decisions about their chances for success, and their need for assistance.

Step 3:Preparation of the candidate for assessment

For the advisor, this is a two-fold task, since it involves helping the candidate to identify previous learning from experience and also to identify gaps in knowledge based on the exit level outcomes of the specific course that the candidate is challenging. During this stage:

- The RPL advisor helps the candidate to identify and describe previous experience in relation to the outcomes s/he is bidding for.

197

- Through reflection, the candidate is able to analyse and isolate those incidents where it seemed that experience resulted in learning.

- Through the guidance and support of the advisor, the candidate begins to match previous learning with the particular programme's specific or exit level outcomes.

- RPL advisors need to offer support and guidance to the candidates during the reflection step. Psychological support may be necessary since reflection sometimes opens up old wounds.

- There are two outcomes of the reflection process, (a) gaps in knowledge may be identified and (b) previous learning from experience. If gaps were identified, available options to fill in the gaps are analysed and a decision is taken.

- If previous learning is identified, evidence is collected to prove that learning took place and a portfolio is developed to support the claim being made.

- The candidate identifies strategies for filling in of the gaps or to collect evidence of previous learning. For example, to fill in the gaps, the advisor may suggest more reading, more consultation, working or he/ she may give the candidate a project or assignment.

- The candidate is also assisted with writing of learning statements so as to ensure that they are easily measurable against the exit level outcomes of the particular programme being challenged.

Adequate support and guidance is also needed because the candidate may experience problem/ difficulties with evidence gathering from previous employers

Step 4 : Assessment

This step involves the assessment of old and new learning, that is assessment of evidence brought forward to qualify for previous learning as well as assessment of whether gaps in knowledge have been successfully filled. This usually takes the form of portfolio assessment. If a portfolio is used for assessment, the following should be considered:

- Currency of the evidence brought forward: is evidence up to date and relevant to the outcomes or competencies of the particular program?

- Validity of the evidence: is the assessment based upon the required outcome or competencies and their associated criteria?

- Sufficiency of the evidence: is the evidence sufficient to meet all the criteria within each specified exit level outcome?

- Authenticity of the evidence: Can evidence be directly attributed to the candidate?

Triangulation of assessment may also be used where the assessor decides that more forms of assessment are necessary, over and above the portfolio assessment. These may take the form of written examinations, oral examination, interviews, case studies or practical examinations. Whatever assessment method is used it will have to be based on the standards for assessment as laid down by the RPL committee as well as on the relevant outcomes of the program being challenged.

Step 5 : Decisions about credit granting

The assessor makes a recommendation to the RPL committee based on the assessment results. The results of the assessment must be moderated before a decision is taken whether to grant credit or not. The RPL committee will make this decision. The results will be

communicated to the candidate within 30 days of assessment.

Step 6: Credit granting

The RPL committee may recommend that the candidate proceed to an advanced level of education or recommend that an additional qualification/ credit be granted. If access into a programme at an advanced level is given, the candidate will still have to make the necessary application for admission into that program. Succeeding in an RPL bid does not guarantee access to any program.

7.4.2.2.The candidate's process

Step 1:Application

The candidate's obligations during the process of RPL are as follows:

- The candidate makes contact with the Institution providing RPL by application and filling in the necessary documentation and providing the institution with all the required documents.

- The candidate will have enquired about the fees payable before commencement of the process and will make the necessary arrangements for payment of fees.

- The candidate will have to make enquiries about the type/s of RPL available from the particular institution and then select the type he/she wishes to register for.

Candidates can expect the following from the provider:

- Adequate information about the available options for RPL;

- Assistance with the registration process;

- Career guidance by the RPL officer, should this be necessary.

Step 2. Orientation

This is a very important step for the candidate since it is during this contact that all queries will be attended to.

The candidate's responsibilities during this step:

- Attendance during orientation is compulsory.

- Candidates will have to make sure that their action plans are realistic and feasible.

- An agreement on how the candidates and the advisors will meet will also be made.

Candidates can expect the following:

- All the necessary information about the RPL system will be provided This should include orientation to the whole process ahead.

- Assistance with planning for attainment of personal action plans according to the exit level outcomes of the specific programs will be given.

- Information will be given about the different assessment methods that will be used.

Step 3: Reflection on previous learning

The candidate wishing to submit a claim for RPL should first engage in systematic reflection on previous experience. Through reflection:

- The candidate is able to analyse and isolate those incidents where it seemed that experience resulted in learning. It is important for the candidate to make clear and unambiguous statements, as this will facilitate matching of the previous learning with the exit level outcomes of the particular program.

- Convert the statements about previous learning into prepositional learning statements.

- The candidate begins to match the previous learning with the particular program's specific or exit level outcomes.

- During reflection, gaps in knowledge will also be identified.

During this step the candidate can expect the following from the provider:.

- Assistance with identification of strategies for filling in of the gaps;

- Assistance with the writing of learning statements so as to ensure that they are easily measurable against the exit level outcomes of the particular program;

- Adequate support and guidance throughout the process of reflection.

Step4: Preparation for assessment

This step involves evidence collection for previous learning and filling –in of gaps in knowledge. Whatever claim is made should be supported by evidence. There should be a direct connection between the claim being made and the evidence collected. This step involves the development of the portfolio with the assistance of the advisor. The candidate identifies strategies for filling in gaps with the help of the advisor.

- The candidate has to write learning statements so as to ensure that they are easily measurable against the exit level outcomes of the particular programme being challenged.

- The candidate also has to collect and assemble evidence in preparation for submission.

Step 5: Submitting evidence for assessment

This is the assessment of the evidence submitted in the form of a portfolio. The assessor may

202
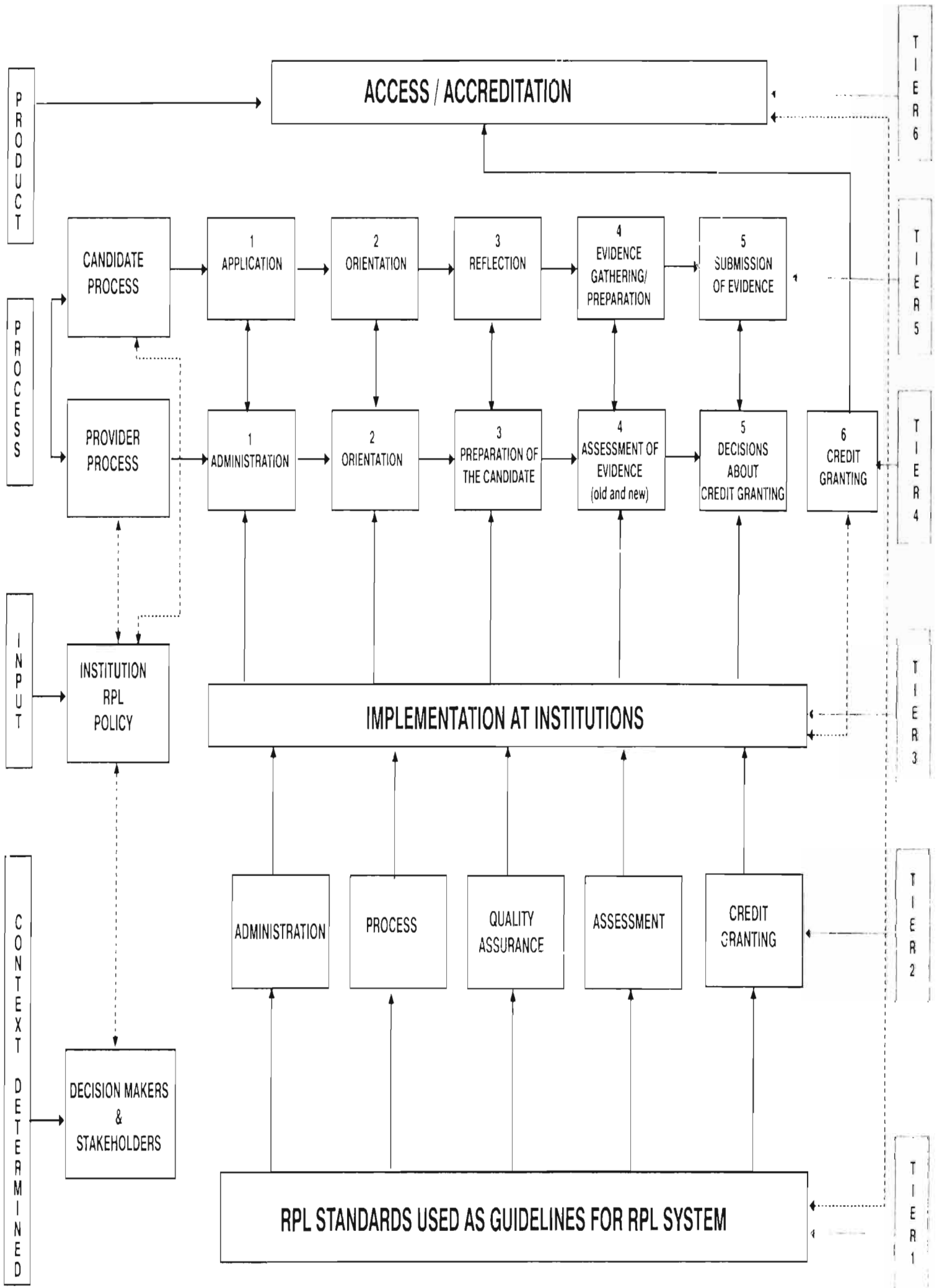
FIGURE 7.1: Model for implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning for South African nurses

Diagram text content:

PRODUCT

PROCESS

INPUT

CONTEXT DETERMINED

ACCESS / ACCREDITATION

TIER 6

TIER 5

TIER 4

TIER 3

TIER 2

TIER 1

CANDIDATE PROCESS

PROVIDER PROCESS

1 APPLICATION

2 ORIENTATION

3 REFLECTION

4 EVIDENCE GATHERING/ PREPARATION

5 SUBMISSION OF EVIDENCE

1 ADMINISTRATION

2 ORIENTATION

3 PREPARATION OF THE CANDIDATE

4 ASSESSMENT OF EVIDENCE (old and new)

5 DECISIONS ABOUT CREDIT GRANTING

6 CREDIT GRANTING

INSTITUTION RPL POLICY

IMPLEMENTATION AT INSTITUTIONS

ADMINISTRATION

PROCESS

QUALITY ASSURANCE

ASSESSMENT

CREDIT GRANTING

DECISION MAKERS & STAKEHOLDERS

RPL STANDARDS USED AS GUIDELINES FOR RPL SYSTEM

KEY

decide whether more forms of assessment are necessary, over and above the portfolio assessment. These may take the form of written examinations, oral examination, interviews, case studies or practical examinations. Whatever assessment method is used it will have to be based on the standards for assessment as laid down by the RPL committee as well as on the relevant outcomes of the programme being challenged.

(See Figure 7.1 for the diagrammatic presentation of the RPL implementation model).

7.5 PRESENTATION OF THE MODEL FOR RPL IMPLEMENTATION

The model that emerged is process-oriented and competence-focused. In Chapter 2 the characteristics of a processes were discussed and all these can be clearly distinguished in the model that emerged:

7.5.1 Basic assumptions of the RPL system

During the system development, the policy makers held these values with regard to what the purpose and the process of RPL implementation should be:

(a) Learning takes place anywhere and everywhere, and therefore regardless of its site, relevant learning should be recognised and accredited.

(b) RPL is based on the notion that how people learn and have learnt should be recognised and used to help them progress as learners, therefore RPL should lead to both personal and professional development of the individual learner. This development in turn should lead to the social transformation of the whole society.

(c) Since prior learning cannot be recognised before it is assessed and because not all prior experience leads to learning, it is important to design mechanisms carefully to identify, verify and assess prior learning before crediting it.

(d) Prior learning encompasses experiential, non-formal, formal certificated and non-certificated learning.

(e) Recognition of prior learning practices should be part of the mainstream of all education and training programs and should not be viewed as a separate activity.

(f) Recognition of Prior Learning practices should reflect transformation and therefore all RPL practices should ensure that access, progression and portability of credits are afforded.

7.5.2 Purposes and uses of the model

The model provides a practical and pragmatic way for users:

1. to identify the standards that will be used as the basis for the implementation of the RPL process;

2. to identify the different components of the guidelines or standards, for example the administrative, process, assessment, and quality assurance standards;

3. to recognize and understand the process that is involved during RPL implementation;

4. to make use of feedback loops to allow for evaluation of each step before commencing with the next step. In this way, the model allows for built in quality assurance.

7.5.3 Characteristics of the model:

1. Simplicity : the steps are easy to follow and are easily understood by users.

2. The duration of the process is short: if the process is too long the candidates may lose motivation.

3. Cost effectiveness, since candidates will pay only for services received. The fact that advisors receive adequate training helps the candidate to get value for their money.

4. The model also provides a pragmatic approach for the users because of its built- in flexibility. Providers are able to consider their own specific contexts, while following the steps to ensure that the implementation process works best for their own context.

7.6 THE THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND THEIR RELATIONAL STATEMENTS

7.6.1 Context

Context in this study was the boundary or the environmental factors that influenced the development of the RPL model. These were the political, economical and educational factors. In other words, changes from these boundaries influenced the development of the model. It was important therefore, during the development phase, for the policy makers to determine the circumstances that were prevailing during the model development. Context was therefore directly linked with all the other concepts in the model because it gave the perspective of how each of the concepts were understood. For change to take place, there must conditions in the environment that impact on the functioning of the system. The guiding frameworks discussed in Chapter 5, were the driving forces in the environment of the nursing education system which

necessitated the change that led to the model development. Context, therefore was the main source of change.

7.6.2 Change

Change is a process occurring over time and is directed towards a goal. Change leads to development. For successful implementation of change or innovation, those that are to be affected by the innovation should form part of the planning and decision making about how best to implement the innovation. Identification of those who are to be affected by the innovation is therefore important. For this particular project it was important during the development phase to involve all the stakeholders who were to be affected by the implementation of the RPL model. In the sense that the concept is used in the study it means transformation. Collaboration is therefore necessary for any innovation to succeed. Policy makers initiate change (EDCO) and communicate this change to the stakeholders. Stakeholders should have an input into the process the innovation should take.

Relational statement

This positive-ness helped in disputing the profession's traditional view of the Council's approach to implementation of change as being top down. The stakeholder involvement during the development helped to allay this fear.

The positive attitude shown by the South African Nursing Council's Education Committee towards the development of the model, as well as that shown by the various stakeholders revealed a sense of ownership of the model by the profession

The above statements provide a relationship between the role players in any change situation. They also highlight the relationship of the concept to others like decision making, stakeholders and to knowledge.

7.6.3 Knowledge

In South Africa, the discourse about knowledge and standards is riven by different concerns from the different conceptions about the nature and value of knowledge. While the educators question the value of experientially acquired knowledge, they are challenged by the demands of demonstrated knowledge required by the outcomes based philosophy of education that the country has accepted. Learning in higher education institutions is often abstract, conservative and not easily transferable. In the South African context, language plays an important role in determining the existence or non existence of knowledge. For instance there is a difference between academic language (discourse) and ordinary language. Knowledge is also culturally and contextually bound. For the South African RPL candidate, previous experience may be inextricably linked to unfair discrimination, and therefore, revisiting these experiences may lead to opening up of old wounds. This is the situated-ness of knowledge in the South African context. These candidates would therefore require understanding and patience as well as counselling as they revisit their prior knowledge.

Relational statements:

Nurse educators were concerned about the integrated nature of the basic nursing programs.

Organized labour was concerned about the assessment as well as the exploitation of the candidate.

Purpose

207

The purpose of the above statements was to show the different conceptions about what count as knowledge by the different stakeholders.

7.6.4 Decision making.

A decision situation exists when two or more objects need to be distinguished from each other. When the answer to one question lies between two or more than two alternatives, a decision situation exists. Usually when change is imminent, the policy makers are faced with a situation where they have to make a decision. This is especially true if change affects one part of the system for adjustments have to be made for the smooth functioning of the whole system. It is for this reason that decision makers place their decisions on their values and the goals. These values and goals present the ideal situation which they then use as criteria to measure the decisions taken. The process of selecting one best solution among alternate solutions is based on knowledge or experience. For the present study, it was important in developing the RPL model to first identify the decision makers since it is they who would be in a position to determine what is of value for the nursing profession. For decisions to be implemented, however, those who stand to be affected by the decisions should form part of the decision making process.

Relational statements

All the stakeholders were represented in all the three regions.

This representation was important since the project sought a collaborative approach to RPL implementation.

Participants were willing to respect the opinions of others, whilst explaining their differing points of view about what shape the model was supposed to take.

There was free communication and information sharing.

Nurse educators raised concerns about how the RPL guidelines were to be incorporated, given the 'integrated nature of the basic nursing program.

Organized labour expressed concern about the possibility of unfair treatment of candidates by advisors. Organized labour were also concerned about the quality of the assessment.

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7.6.5 Participants or stakeholders

As this concept was used in the model, it meant people who took part or who had a share or interest in the model development. These were the Education Committee members of the South African Nursing Council as policy makers, the nurse educators as providers, the service managers and the Department of Health representatives as consumers, organized labour as representatives of the nurses and nurses as candidates. From the systems perspective, the different parts influence the functioning of the system. For model development too, these different participants had different responsibilities that facilitated the successful development of the model. For instance, the advisors helped in preparing the candidates, their contribution facilitated the outcomes.

Relational statements:

All sectors are involved in the development of the institutional policy.

The rights of the provider, candidate and community have to be balanced.

Purpose:

The purpose of specifying the different categories of participants helps to ensure the adequate representativeness of future users. Acceptance of the model by all those who will be affected

was the most important function of the concept. Consensus during the model development between all the participants was another important function of the participants.

7.6.6 Standards

A standard is the required degree of performance against which action is measured and judged. A standard has to be recognised by all users. The decision makers take into consideration what they view as the ideal situation which they then use as criterion to measure the decisions taken. In other words they set standards against which they evaluate their decisions. In this model, standards would be used to protect that which the decision makers regarded as of value to the profession, for instance, protection of the RPL candidate against exploitation by providers. Standards are also used to protect the quality of the educational program which RPL may be used to challenge. Standards would also be used for accreditation of the RPL process.

Relational statements

Standards are set to protect the RPL candidate against exploitation by the providers.

Standards are set to ensure that the quality of the nursing programs is not undermined by the RPL process.

Purpose.

The purpose of the above relational statements was to inform the providers of RPL about the measure against which their activities would be judged by those accrediting such activities, in this case the SANC as an ETQA for nursing. It was logical for the Education Committee of the South African Nursing Council to develop standards for the providers of nurse education and training. The statements contain a descriptive definition of the concept 'standard'. The concepts

210

within these statements are theoretically valid since their meaning was clearly understood by all those involved, that is both the policy makers and the stakeholders shared the same meaning about the following: what standards are, how exploitation can occur, who the provider is, who the candidate is, and the quality of the nursing programme entailed. Both the statements were deductively developed as they emerged from the data of the development phase. The statements display sufficient relationship between the concept 'standard' and its uses, namely 'protection' of both the candidate and the educational programme. The statements show a positive relationship between the existence of the standard and the protection of those phenomena for which the standards will be used. The statements also show a relationship between this concept and other concepts. In essence this concept was a direct outcome of the development phase.

7.6. 7 Policy

Policy is a course of action to be followed by the users of standards in order to ensure that undesired circumstances are prevented. The policy is usually based on the standards. In this model, policy statements were developed to describe the course of action to be taken by each institution in order to ensure that the desired outcomes of the model were achieved given, the circumstances prevailing in each institution.

Relational statements

The institutional policy is in accordance with the RPL guidelines. and in line with the South African Nursing Council's guidelines on policy for RPL implementation.

Institutional policy forms the basis for all RPL practices in the institution.

Each institution takes into consideration its own circumstances in formulating the PRL policy.

211

Purpose:

These statements are useful because they inform the user of the model about important considerations to be taken in implementing the model. The model is based on a policy informed by the RPL guidelines and considers the context of the provider. The statements provide a clear direction to the model users, for example that the policy is based on guidelines which were developed from standards set by the policy makers and the stakeholders jointly. In other words, users of the model are clear about the standards that will be used by the policy makers when accrediting their RPL schemes. These statements also provide a clear relationship between the concept 'policy' and the previous concept 'standard'. The issue of ensuring that the policy is based on the guidelines provides the model with built in quality assurance.

7.6.8 Process

A process is the operational element of a system which involves a series of actions or steps that are taken to ensure that input in the form of energy or information (depending on the form of that system) is used for the achievement of the goal of the particular system. According to Bevis (1999), a process is the core phenomenon of all human knowledge and activities. As used in the model, this concept describes the various activities that are involved during recognition of prior learning to ensure that either access into nursing programs or credit for a particular nursing program is achieved. A process is a series of acts or progressive change towards an end or a goal. Any process is developmental in nature if its goal is change, innovation or improvement of the existing nature of a phenomenon.

Relational statements

RPL is implemented in a systematic, logical and rational manner.

212

The process is influenced by context-specific issues in each institution.

Purpose:

From these statements it becomes evident that the purpose of the concept in the model is to ensure that the model was implemented according to the standards or guidelines as set out by the policy makers and the stakeholders. The second purpose of this concept is to ensure flexibility during the implementation of RPL. Where steps are difficult to follow an alternative step can be included as long as it shows some relationship and progress between it and the other steps of the model. Orderliness during implementation is necessary to ensure that the goal of the model is achieved. By using these process statements in the model, the users are able to identify problems after each step of the process during implementation and thus provide solutions before the end of the process. The feasibility of the model for each provider will be measured by the extent of the ease with which the steps in the process are implemented.

7.6.9 Reflection on previous learning

During reflection learners are given an opportunity to engage with their previous experiences, critically analyze their previous experiences, reformulate them and therefore gain new perspectives and new knowledge based on the reflective process. Obviously this may be challenging for teachers who still value books, subject matter and class sessions as the only sources of learning.

7.6.10 Access or crediting

RPL is a means towards an end. which end may be access or granting of credits,

Access in the model meant that the RPL candidate gained passage or reached specific programs for which RPL was sought. Credit means acknowledgement of merit. This acknowledgement will give a value which is equal to that given to acknowledge achievement of a unit standard or a qualification. Both these concepts emerged from the basic assumptions of RPL, namely that RPL is a means towards an end. The end would be access into specific nursing programs or granting a credit. As has been mentioned earlier, any process is directed towards a specific goal. All the process steps described under Tiers 4 and 5 are aimed at either gaining a credit or access into programs for which RPL has been sought. Widening of access for individuals for whom access was previously denied is seen as the major contribution of RPL in the South African context. This concept had an influence in the development of the model, since all the stakeholders involved viewed this increased access as important. That gaining access or credits will offer personal or professional development and growth to an individual makes the process of RPL an important one. The outcome of the model implementation should be consistent with the desired goal.

7.6.11 Competence

During the system development, it became evident that competence or outcomes of learning were the major focus. This focus was in line with the outcomes-based philosophy of education that forms the basis of restructuring of the education system of which nursing education is part. The Education Committee also placed value on standards maintenance. In South Africa, the existence of the National Qualifications Framework, just like the National Vocational Qualifications and the National Academic Awards in the United Kingdom and the National Qualification Framework in New Zealand, emphasizes the importance of achievements from
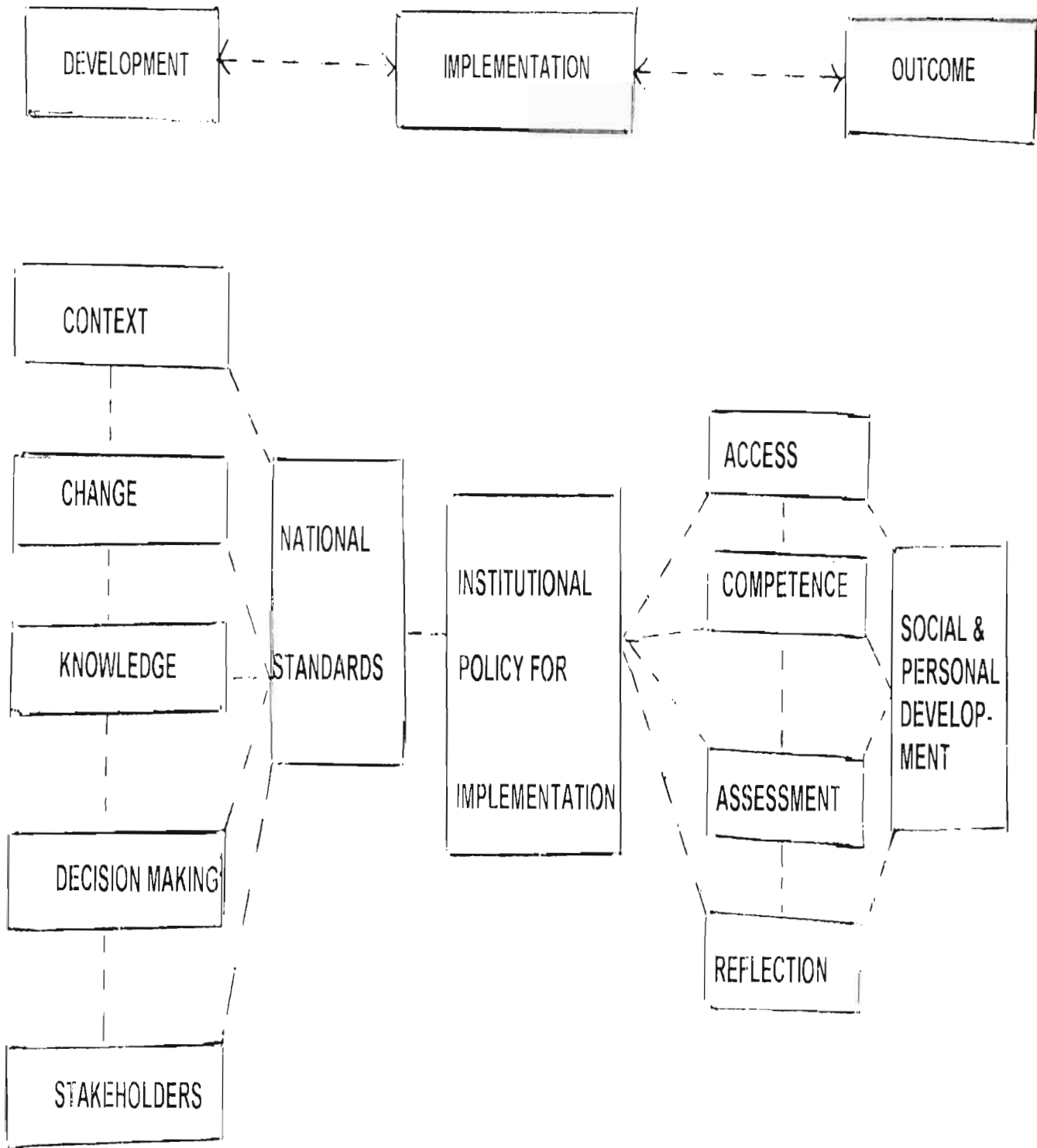
Figure 7.2 : The theoretical concepts used in developing the model for RPL implementation

learning and therefore assessment forms the basis of these frameworks. According to these frameworks, achievement from learning previously obtained is more important than that learning. What the individual can do with that learning is what is assessed (Trowler, 1999: 21). See Figure 7.2 for the conceptual framework of the study.

7.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

7.7.1 Exclusion of non-nurses.

The study focussed only on candidates who were already in the system and excluded those candidates who did not meet the entrance criteria for the basic nursing programme. Because of the complexity of the methodology chosen, including this variable of candidates would have made the study even more complex. The nurses already in the system had very little to lose if they were unsuccessful after the assessment. For non-nurses the study would have raised their expectations and this would have led to negative effects if they were to be unsuccessful. The other reason for excluding this category was the absence of the Learning Outcomes for matriculation, which during the development phase of the study were still not available from SAQA. It would have been interesting to include candidates without nursing experience but who possessed other experientially obtained learning that could be equated to the learning outcomes of the nursing programs.

7.7.2 Low numbers of candidates involved

A number of institutions expressed interest in taking part but because they did not meet the selection criteria which were drawn up by the evaluative researcher, only three institutions were

included. One of the criteria was the fact that these colleges were to be ready to implement the process within the time scheduled for the study, and as it turned out local policy implications excluded the others. The other criterion was funding. Institutions taking part were to fund the travelling and accommodation of their personnel during the Facilitator training workshops.

7.7.3 The gate-keeping imposed by the strict selection criteria

While the study sought to find a balance between standards maintenance and opening up access for candidates from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, the strict adherence to a carefully formulated criterion was viewed as a limitation. For selection, for instance, the two institutions who insisted on selecting a candidate with matriculation plus a number of years experience revealed an attempt by the academics to protect their standards. Fortunately for the target groups selected for the pilot projects, there were more than enough candidates who met the criteria. One of the campuses of Institution A, however, did not participate in the pilot project because the nurse educators in that campus could not find a suitable candidate. This issue of a strict selection criteria may give rise to problems, especially if other target groups are sought, for example for specialist levels of training. Nurse educators may be seen as gate keepers of the access opportunities that RPL can afford to individuals.

7.7.4 The duration of the study

After RPL assessments, candidates were followed for a specific period of time (six months) because of the time schedule. During this period all candidates in all three institutions performed well, however this picture might change after some time, it would be interesting to see if they

continued to perform well at completion of their training.

7.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for the different stakeholders will be discussed separately.

7.8.1 Recommendations for the providers

7.8.1.1 RPL should be made part of the mainstream functioning of every Nurse Education Institution

Earlier in this chapter, the context of the RPL model was presented. From this context, it is evident that in South Africa, RPL has been positioned as the major principle of most recent government policies to redress past inequalities. According to Michelson (2000) South Africa was the only country that has positioned RPL as a major social imperative. This study, through the RPL model developed, revealed the fact that, is possible to implement RPL in a way that does not threaten the standards of nursing education. According to the results of the study, the problems raised by subject specialists arose because they were not involved during the planning of the pilot projects. They saw the RPL program only as an additional workload. For future implementation, it is recommended that RPL facilitation be done within the institution by one or two staff members depending on the staff complement. In this way, there will be cooperation between the staff members because the one who deals with RPL candidates will have this responsibility incorporated into his/her workload. Since he/she will however, have to liaise closely with subject experts for assessment or further guidance of the candidate, all personnel should be involved from the planning to implementation of the RPL system.

According to Havelock, as cited in Kelly (1999), for an educational innovation, care should be taken to close the gap between the values of the policy makers and those of the implementers of the innovation. For effective RPL implementation, all the people who will be involved should be part of the decision making process.

7.8.1.2. Capacity building for all those involved

According to the results of the study, RPL facilitators felt that, though they were comfortable with the advising of the candidate, they were less comfortable with the assessment of the portfolio, even after they had received training in RPL facilitation. It is recommended that continuous training in the form of in-service education should be provided for all those involved. This in service training should not focus only on the facilitators, but all personnel involved including administrative officers, coordinators and facilitators. The study revealed that workshops as methods of in-service training were effective. It is recommended that more workshops should be conducted on a continuous basis for all those to be involved in or affected by RPL implementation. The following areas should be covered during the in-service training:

Portfolio development

Portfolio as an educational tool is relatively new in South Africa; therefore adequate training should be given. The following aspects of portfolio development should receive special consideration:

(a)Communication Skills and Interpersonal skills

Because RPL will mostly attract adult learners who may have been out of school for a long period, they may not be well versed with academic discourse and therefore will require assistance from people with good interpersonal and communication skills.

(b)The Reflective process

The results revealed that reflection was one of the problematic aspects of the model implementation. More in-service education is therefore necessary to ensure that all those involved with the RPL candidate are comfortable with this step of the RPL process.

(c) Verification of evidence brought forward for assessment

The results revealed that verifying the evidence brought forward by the candidates was another problem for the advisors and assessors. Tools to verify or validate evidence may need to be developed by the providers. More training in this regard is necessary.

The strengths of the portfolio during prior learning assessments cannot be overemphasized (Freers 1994; Koenig and Wolfson1994; Pearson 2000). The importance of training for those involved was also recommended by Lugg (1997) ; Michelson (1996); and Thomas (1989). According to these authors, adequate training for assessors would ensure the credibility of such assessments.

7.8.1.3 Outsourcing of RPL systems, especially for institutions in the public sector

The difficulty of implementing RPL in a cost effective way in public sector institutions can be addressed by these institutions making agreements or contracting with institutions like universities or technikons to conduct RPL for their candidates. The smaller institutions like nursing schools and nursing colleges, may also use the services of the bigger institutions like

the universities for implementing the advisory and assessment components of their RPL policies. The National Union of Mineworkers also experienced a costing problem in their RPL project to assess members at ABET Levels 1-3. They had to reduce the numbers of its members who qualified for inclusion in the project drastically from 16000 to 7,591 (COSATU 2000:15). The project leaders realized that the cost of implementing RPL was a huge challenge. The assessment was therefore outsourced to academic institutions since there was not enough money to train assessors.

7.8. 2 Recommendations for the nursing service

7.8.2.1 Joint ventures between service and higher education institutions

This means active partnerships between employers, labour, government and education sector. According to the results of the study, costing of the RPL process was a problem. It is recommended that the service sector enter into joint agreements with such institutions as universities and technikons for implementing RPL . These higher education institutions have the expertise and the capacity to ensure quality assessments. Those nursing education institutions that fall under the service sector can also benefit through such joint agreements. Learners can progress from the nursing colleges and transfer of their credits can be made possible through RPL. In Canada, RPL has been widely offered through such joint ventures.

CAEL saw this as the only solution to problems associated with RPL implementations throughout the world. In a project undertaken by the Central Michigan University and automobile industries, a unique Bachelor of Science with a major in Vehicle design was developed. The Nortel Networks in Canada also offered RPL processes by entering into agreements with

institutions of higher education for assessments of their workers. Charter (1986) reported such joint ventures spearheaded by LET in the U.K. Such agreements have also been practised in South Africa. The University of the Free State in 1996 entered into such joint agreements with the business sector and through this the Business Management and Leadership degree has since been offered by this university. The business sector sends their employees who have business management experience to access the degree through the portfolio development course. The University of Natal also offers a Bachelor of Social Science degree to learners in joint collaboration with the Workers College. These learners access the degree programme after completion of the diploma in Labour studies from the Workers College (Ralphs, 2000:45).

7.8.2.2 Capacity building workshops for all the stakeholders from the service

Since RPL has been introduced as a vehicle for putting into operation some important laws that have been introduced in the country, it is important for nurses to understand these laws so that they will appreciate how these laws will influence the manner in which RPL processes are implemented. The stakeholders of the profession should better understand the impact of the Skills Development Act the Employment Equity Act and the South African Qualifications Act, so that myths and misconceptions about how RPL should be implemented can be dispelled. If nurses do not understand the impact of these laws on the implementation of RPL processes, those in authority can use the situation for gate keeping purposes and the result would be that RPL would be used to fulfill the needs of those in authority and not the masses who have been previously denied learning opportunities. The Council of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) have conducted these capacity building workshops through their member unions and the results has been very positive. Through such workshops COSATU have managed to publish a booklet

that is used by all its members. This booklet has guidelines on how RPL should be implemented in the context of these new laws.

7.8.3 Recommendations for researchers

7.8.3.1 Research to focus on the specialist levels of RPL

The present study focused on the first two levels of basic nurse training. It would be interesting to see how the model can be implemented for more senior levels like the post basic programs. The issue of subject specialists was easily overcome by the advisors in all the three institutions, but this may pose major problems for RPL programs at specialist levels since the advisor may not have the qualifications to assist the candidate adequately.

7.8.3.2 RPL projects to focus on unemployed nurses

The present study focused on nurses already in the system. It is not clear to what extent future RPL processes would be possible to implement for those people from the rural areas who are not presently practising as nurses, but who wish to be given an opportunity to access nurse training. This is the category of South African society which faces both access and epistemological barriers since they do not possess matriculation and their prior knowledge might not have been obtained under conditions that would make it possible for them to fit into the academic discourse. More research studies should be carried out into the strict selection criteria presently used by higher education institutions, to ascertain to what extent such criteria restrict the already narrow access into education for these candidates

7.8.3.3 RPL costing studies

The two institutions that did not charge any fees for the pilot project (Institution A and B), proposed that for future implementations they would to charge R300.00 per level or year of training, as that is the equivalent to the fees paid by the normal entry learners. Institution C, charged R2000 per candidate for the whole program. The fact that the other two institutions did not do a cost analysis of the RPL program limits the effective implementation of the 'fee' aspect of the RPL guidelines since there were no comparisons among the three institutions. This has implications for future RPL implementation in the public service sector. The positive results from these two institutions were due to the dedication and commitment of the nurse educators involved in the pilot project who worked hard to ensure that the project was a success. It is not clear, however, to what extent future RPL processes would be viable and sustainable given the costing problems. Although Institution C did charge a fee, it is not clear whether future RPL processes in this institutions will be viable in terms of cost benefits, without any assistance in the form of 'grants' from the institution. The concerns of the nurse educators during the model development workshops about the increased workload may further aggravate the problem of cost effectiveness of the RPL program and may be an inhibiting factor to the whole RPL process. It is recommended that more research on the cost effectiveness of RPL implementation should be conducted.

7.8.3.4 Research to focus on the support given to RPL candidates

Candidates from Institution C were all practising enrolled nursing assistants who were the first recruits to the Bridging program to become professional nurses. The preceptors will have to ensure that these nurses are adequately exposed to the competences of the professional

nurses. Cooperation from service will be essential to ensure that in future these candidates receive adequate exposure to the competences required for a professional nurse.

7.8.4 Recommendations for organized labour

7.8.4.1 Engagement through support of RPL processes

The Council of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has been very supportive to its members in terms of active engagement through the capacity building workshops mentioned earlier. It is recommended that organized labour, as stakeholders of the nursing profession, organize such capacity building workshops for its members and encourage their members to attend such workshops when organized by other stakeholders. The results of the study have shown the contribution that organized labour can make to effective implementation of the RPL process. Their active participation in future RPL processes can greatly contribute to the effectiveness of those RPL processes. The results of this study have shown that although the stakeholders differ in their perceptions of how RPL should be implemented, the fact that there is consensus among them on the goal of RPL is a strength that should be highlighted in order to reach agreements on the process of implementation.

7.8.5 Recommendations for the South African Nursing Council

7.8.5.1 Revision of the standards

The South African Nursing Council as the Education and Training Quality Assurer should ensure that the standards developed for implementing RPL are revised continuously to reflect

and to accommodate the changes in other sectors that have an impact on quality assurance in the education and training of nurses. Such changes may be brought about by new policies.

7.8.5.2 Inspection of policies

The South African Nursing Council should inspect the RPL policies of the providers to ensure that they are in line with the guidelines that the Council sets out for the providers to follow.

7.9 CONCLUSION

While the different stakeholders in the education and training of nurses maintain their differing views about what shape RPL implementation should take, through this study it became clear that successful implementation will be developed through consensus building by all the stakeholders. Success with future RPL processes will be based on the following: guidelines as laid down by the SANC as policy makers, and, a sound institutional policy that will take into consideration the context of each institution. It becomes clear also that for effective implementation RPL should be process oriented while it is competence focused. The major concepts of the model have been described earlier in this chapter and the standards set will lay the foundation of future RPL processes. Nursing education institutions will have to develop policies which will be specific to their situation while based on the standards. The main participants will need to collaborate to ensure the smooth running of the process of implementation. According to Havelock, as cited in Kelly (1999), for an educational innovation, care should be taken to close the gap between the values of the policy makers and those of the implementers of the innovation. In other words, for effective RPL implementation, people who will be involved should be part of the decision making process. In conclusion, through this study

it becomes clear that the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning is a challenging but long overdue process for the nursing profession. The development of a model for implementing RPL for nurse has helped in moving the concept from praxis to action. It has also helped in illuminating problems that are inherent during implementation.

Nurse educators should realize that, after all had been said about the manner in which RPL should be implemented, 'the buck stops' with them. The government has imposed policies, philosophers have expressed their points of view about the shape the RPL implementation should take. Nurse educators, in taking up the challenge should always remember that:

Change comes from small initiatives which work, and if limited, become fashion. The nursing profession cannot afford this situation to happen, where RPL practices become fashion. On the other hand, nurse educators in South Africa, cannot wait for great visions from great minds, these are in short supply. It is therefore up to us to light up the small fires in darkness (Luddeke 1997:142).

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ANNEXURE 1

PERMISSION LETTERS

0331-952111
0331-42674

Private Bag   X9051
Ealdhwana Sepost : Pietermaritzburg
Premiosa.   : 3300

Enquiries: Mr G.J. Tros
Extension: 2761
Reference: 66/1 Vol 13

s T. Khanyile
epartment of Nursing
:culty of Social Science
niversity of Natal
rivate Bag X10
ALBRIDGE
014

26 AUG 1999

)ear Ms Khanyile

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

ermission is hereby granted for you to conduct a research study in the following
institutions in Kwa Zulu Natal: Natal College of Nursing and Prince Mshiyeni School of
Nursing during the year 2000- 2001 You are also adviced to liaise with the principals of
the above institutions. to make arrangements so as to ensure that service delivery is not
affected by the proposed research study

In addition. the research protocol must be passed by a recognised Ethics Committee of a tertiary institution

Yours faithfully.

SECRETARY- DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KWAZULU-NATAL
LTKhanyile

FAXED
26. 08. 99

1 November 1996

ATTENTION: Ms T Khanyile

Faculty of Social Science
Department of Nursing
University of Natal
Private Bag X10
DALBRIDGE
4014

Dear Ms Khanyile

PROPOSED STUDY: DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR NURSES

The South African Nursing Council has given permission for you to conduct the above-mentioned research, and also for the Education Committee to take part in the research

With warm regards

Yours sincerely

Mrs E KAYE-PETERSEN
SENIOR MANAGER: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SECTION
for ACTING REGISTRAR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SOUTH AFRICAN NURSING COUNCIL

24th March 2000

The Executive Director,
HOSPERSA
P O.Box 3286
Pretoria
0001

Dear Madam/Sir,

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A WORKSHOP .
Iam a PhD student registered for the University of Natal. The topic of my research is the
development of a model for recognition of prior experiential learning for the enrolled nurses to
access the four year diploma programme
Your organisation is kindly invited to take part in the development of an RPL model for the
nursing profession The researcher will make sure that people who will attend and participate
will be acknowledged in the final report. Permission for the project has been sought from the
Regional Director (Human Resources)
I will let you know the venue for the workshop and the exact dates as soon as it becomes
available However, it will be one within reach of all institutions/ organisations participating in
the region

Thank you,
Yours faithfully.
RESEARCHER
THEMBI KHANYILE

_____

phone · 031 2601541
fax : 031 2601543
email : khanyilet4@mtb.und.ac.za

ANNEXURE 2

CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP

SOUTH AFRICAN NURSING COUNCIL 'S

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Raad op
Verpleging

(Ingestel ingevolge die Wet op Verpleging, 1978)
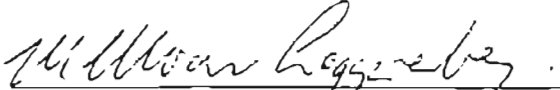
The South African Nursing
Council

(Established under the Nursing Act, 1978)

WD9/2000

DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR
LEARNING FOR NURSING

- - - - -ooOoo- - - - -

MS M VAN LOGGERENBERG
for: ACTING REGISTRAR
AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Education Committee June 2000   2000-06-02

ANNEXURE 4

REGIONAL WORKSHOP'S INVITATION AND

PROGRAM

CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP

CALL FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS OF NURSING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE REFINEMENT OF A RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING MODEL FOR ENROLLED NURSES.

Your institution/ organisation is hereby invited to participate in a three day consultative workshop which will be held in your region in August 2000. The aim of the workshop is for all stakeholders of the Nursing profession to give input into the development of such a model.
Proceedings from these workshops will be carefully analysed so that the proposed Recognition of Prior Learning system can be submitted to the South African Nursing Council for approval.
This is a second phase in the development of the Recognition of Prior Learning model. The first phase involved the South African Nursing Council Education Committee members.

Participants will be given material to read in preparation for the workshop.

Please note: ATTENDANCE IS FREE.

VENUE : UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

DATE : 9TH – 10TH AUGUST

PLEASE FURNISH ME WITH THE NAMES AND CONTACT NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WHO WILL REPRESENT YOUR INSTITUTION

1 ....   6. ....

2 ....   7 ....

3..   8 ....

4 ....   9 ....

5. ....   10 ....

Reading material will be sent to participants prior to the workshop date.

Should you require further information please feel free to contact me:

Phone: 031 2601541
Fax   : 031 260 1543
email :khanyilet4@mtb.und.ac.za

BACKGROUND

The Minister of Education 's public statement in August 1999 for South African citizens to mobilize and to build an education and training system for the 21" century amongst other things emphasized the application of procedures for the recognition of prior learning as part of the process of restructuring. On the other hand the resolution taken by the South African Nursing Council early this year that enrolled nurses should be upgraded through the process of RPL further increase the urgency for nursing education institutions to develop and implement RPL policies.

Literature has revealed however,

❑   For any RPL system, to be successfully implemented all stake holders should be involved during the planning as well as the implementation of such a system.

❑   The utilisation of international models for Recognition of Prior Learning can result in problems because of contextual differences

❑   In South Africa, Recognition of Prior Learning has been seen as an appropriate approach to offer equity and redress of past imbalances in the education and training system of the country. Institutions that have experimented with Recognition of Prior Learning, have reported a need to explore the concept further since the objective of R P L in South Africa is different from that of other countries (redress and equity)

❑   In South Africa, the objective of RPL is viewed differently by the different sectors viz economic. education and labour sectors.

❑   Prior Learning has to be assessed against clear standards.

Ideally a person who enters a specific nursing programme via RPL should function as effectively in the educational programme and during practice, as any person who followed the normal route . This is the challenge which all stake holders in the Nursing profession need to take up.

Therefore, through Consultative workshops with all stakeholders, the researcher hopes that a model will be developed which after being tested could be used by all Health Professional for all the programmes.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To develop an appropriate system that will be used for the Recognition of Prior Learning for professional nurses. To test its appropriateness, the system will be implemented in the form of a pilot study and its success will be evaluated in terms of a range of criteria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

1. To refine / add to the standards against which the competencies of candidates who come forward for assessment of their prior learning can be evaluated.

2. To refine the chosen model to ensure its acceptability to the users (both educational institutions, consumers and the potential students)

3. Appropriateness of the system will be explored in terms of the following:
- applicability to the different levels of the CBNP
- applicability to the National Qualifications Framework
- appropriate in terms of the Scope of practice for nurse at registration levels and in terms of learning outcomes to be assessed.
- in terms of its cost effectiveness

WHO HAS BEEN INVITED?

- *Representatives of nurses from all recognised organisations like DENOSA; NEHAWU;*

  HOSPERSA; SADNU and other interested groups (Not more than 3 three reps per organisation per region),

- *Nurse educators who are providers of education and training from colleges and universities offering the Comprehensive Basic Nursing Programme. (not more than 10 ten educators per college and not more than two 2 from universities).*
- *Service managers from institutions providing clinical experiences for student nurses (not mote than two per institution).*

- *Representatives from Human Resource Department of the Department of Health (not more than two per region)*

REGIONS TO BE INVOLVED

Gauteng, Kwa Zulu Natal and Free State

Reasons for excluding the others are:

- Distance from research setting

- Presence of other RPL or related projects in the region

-Financial constraints

WORKSHOP THEME

"RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR SOUTH AFRICAN NURSES"

AIM

To develop an appropriate system that will be used for the Recognition of Prior Learning for South African nurses

OBJECTIVES
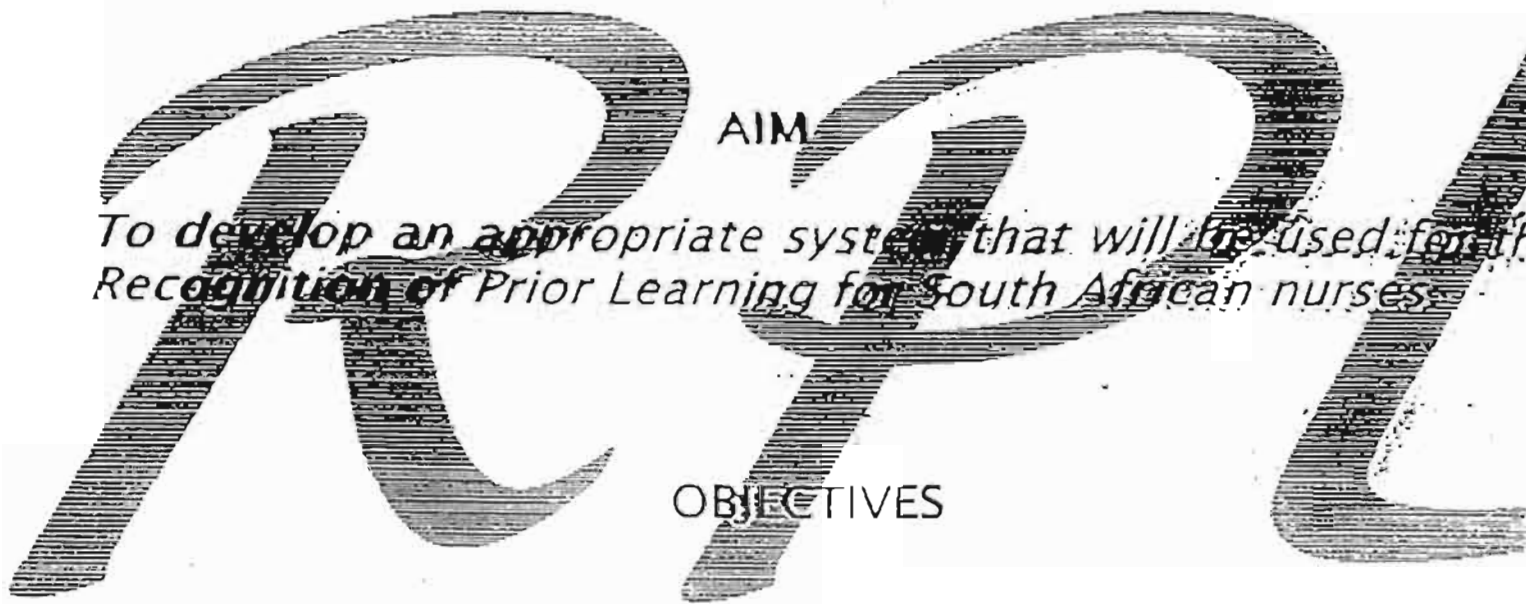
☺ To refine the proposed model to ensure its acceptability to the users.

☺ To add to the standards against which competencies candidates who come forward for assessment of their prior learning can be evaluated.

☺ To analyse and comment on the SANC's proposal Re-access requirements.

ANNEXURE 5

RPL FACILITATION TRAINING

PROGRAM

RPL FACILITATOR COURSE AT UND

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDA
08:30-09:30 09:00-10:00	Welcome Address RPL Theoretical Background Discussions	PREPARE CANDID. Identification of relevant learning Review of candidate's action plan	PORTFOLIO DEV The Process: Reflection Evidence colection	ASSESSMENT Assessment method Criteria for selection	GROUP WORK Review assessment plan Judge evidence & give feedback
10:00-10:30	T E A B R E A K				
10:30-11:30 11:30-12:00	RPL Policy development Barriers/ Constraints	Initial Self Assessment Class Presentations	Selection of skill/ knowledge set Matching learning to Outcomes	Challenge Examination	RPL Assessment Practical exams Role Play
12:00-13:00	L U N C H B R E A K				
13:00-1400 14:00-15:00	Reflection on own institutional issues Policy presentations Homework: Analyse article & Complete Exercise 1	SEMINAR BY NURSING EDUCATION STUDENTS! Homework Complete exercise for Unit 2	The Product: Viewing of sample portfolios Organising material Homework Complete exercise3 for class presentation	Practical Examination Homework Article appraisal	Fill in the foll: -Assessment Plan -Assessment checklist -Record of feedback -Evidence log

ANNEXURE 6

RPL FACILITATION TRAINING

COURSE OUTLINE

COURSE NAME: FACILITATION IN RPL
DURATION   : 1 SEMESTER OR 2WEEKS WINTER BLOCK
CREDITS   :
EVALUATION   :

FACILITATOR : T. Khanyile

CREDIT/ NOT HRS	UNIT STANDARD	PURPOSE STATEMENT	SPECIFIC OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
2 20	Develop an Institutional RPL Policy	This standard will help learners to gain experiential knowledge in Administrative issues involved in RPL practices	a) Theoretical background knowledge b) Relevance of RPL to Nursing c) Consideration of context specific issues during RPL implementation	a) Position paper on the relevance of RPL b) A complete Policy document for own Institution, discussed and verified by the H O D
3 30	Prepare the RPL candidate for assessment	To help learner RPL Facilitators with skills in offering guidance and support to RPL candidates	a) Help the candidate to identify relevant learning from experience b) Agree to and review the candidate's ACTION PLAN for demonstration of their prior learning c) Help the candidate to prepare and present their evidence for assessment	a) Completion and documentation of responses to exercises provided in the course guide b) Evaluation of the learners presentations during class sessions c) Successful completion of the self- assessment tool
4 40	3 Develop a Portfolio for RPL Assessment	To help learner RPL facilitators to gain experiential knowledge and skill in Portfolio Development so as to be able to appreciate the metacognitive processes involved during their involvement with RPL candidate	a) Material organisation to demonstrate achievement of exit level outcomes b) Skills in presenting learning acquired experientially to match exit level outcomes for specific courses c) Evidence collection	a) A completed Portfolio to be submitted b) A paper on Reflection as a process in RPL
4 40	4 Assessment of the RPL candidate	To provide a clear and explicit view of what is involved in the process of RPL Assessment	a) Agree to and review an assessment plan b) Judge evidence and provide feedback c) Make an assessment decision using different sources of evidence and provide feedback	a) Compilation of a file containing the following which must be completed and marked - an assessment plan -an assessment checklist -Record of feedback form - An evidence log
3 30	5 The different methods used during RPL Assessment	Knowledge and skills in this unit standard is essential to help learner facilitators in the selection of the most appropriate method for evidence brought forward for assessment	a) Describe concept like sufficiency, authenticity and currency of evidence b) Suggest criteria for selection of the various method used in assessment c) The role of the assessor in maintenance of quality assurance during assessment	a) A completed Record of Learning provided in class b) Appraisal of articles related to Assessment in RPL(To be provided) c) Assessment of peer's portfolios

ANNEXURE 7

CHECKLIST FOR INPUT EVALUATION

PHASE

INPUT PHASE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. GROUP SIZE:

How many candidates were admitted?

Was this according to plan?

If not, give reasons for this size.

What was the advisor:candidate ratio?

2. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION:

How were they selected?

Who was involved with the selection of candidates?

Was this according to plan?

If not, give reasons for this.

Were there any problems?

How were the problems overcome?

3. FUNDING/ FINANCING

What was the source of funding?

Was this according to plan?

If not, give reasons.

4. TARGET GROUP:

What was the target group?

Was this according to plan?

If not, give reasons.

5. PREPARATION OF PERSONNEL INVOLVED:

Did they receive any training?

What aspects were covered?

How many were involved, give reasons for this number

ANNEXURE 8

CHECKLIST FOR PROCESS EVALUATION

PHASE

CHECKLIST FOR PROCESS EVALUATION PHASE

1 ADMISSION OF CANDIDATES:
1.1 Who was involved?
1.2 How was this done?
1.3 How many candidates were admitted?
1.4 Were there any problems?
1.5 How were these managed?

2. ORIENTATION OF RPL CANDIDATES:
2.1 Was this done?
2.2.How was this done?
2.3 What was the duration ?
2.4 What aspects were covered during orientation

3. PREPARE CANDIDATES FOR ASSESSMENT:
3.1 How was this done?
3.2 What strategies/ approaches were used?
3.4 What was the advisor/candidate ratio?
3.5 How long did this take and why?
3.6.Were there any problems?
3.7 What alternative steps were taken to overcome the problems?

4. ASSESSMENT:
4.1 What method/s was/were used?
4.2 what was the rationale for the choice of the method?
4.2 Who was/ were involved?
4.4 Was this moderated?
4.5 Were there any problems?
4.6 Were there any problems?
4.7 How were the problems managed?

5 MAKING AN JUDGEMENT:
5.1 Who was involved?
5.2 How was this done?
5.3 Were there any problems?
5.4 How were the problems managed?

ANNEXURE 9

SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR RPL

FACILITATION TRAINING

Activity 1: Help the individual to identify relevant learning...

		1	2	3	4	5
a	The individual is given clear and accurate information about the reasons for, and methods of, collecting and presenting evidence of prior learning.					
b	The Individual is encouraged to review all relevant and appropriate experience.					
c	Outcomes or agreed-upon criteria which the individual may currently be able to achieve are accurately identified from a review of thier experience.					
d	The way in which support is given enourages self-confidence and self-esteem in the individual.					
e	If the individual expresses disagreement with the advise offered, possible alternatives are explained in a clear and constructive manner.					

Activity 2: Help the individual in drawing an action plan

		1	2	3	4	5
a	The individual is given accurate advise and appropriate encouragement to enable him or her to form realistic expectations of the value of his or her prior learning.					
b	Any outcomes or agreed-upon criteria to be achieved are appropriate to the individual's prior learning and furture aspirations.					
c	Advise to the individual accurately identifies outcomes or agreed-upon criteria which might reasonably be claimed on the basis of prior learning.					
d	Opportunities to use evidence from prior learning are accurately analyzed					
e	The individual plan agreed to, identifies realistic targets to collect and present evidence of prior learning as efficiently as possible.					
f	The Individual's motivation and self-confidence is encouraged throughout.					
g	If there is disagreement with the evidence given, options available to the individual are explained clearly and constructively.					
h	The plan is reviewed appropriately with the individual.					

Activity 3: Help the individual to prepare and present evidence for assessment...

		1	2	3	4	5

a   The individual is provided with suitable supprot to prepare a portfolio or other appropriate forms of evidence.

b   Guidence provided to the individual during evidence preparatio encourages the efficient development of clear, structured evidence relevant to the outcome or agreed-upon criteria being claimed.

c   Liason with potential assessors establishes mutually convenient arrangements for review of portfolio evidence, and maintains the individual's confidence.

d   opportunities are identified for the individual to demostrate outcomes or agreed-upon criteria where evidence from prior earning is not available.

e   Any institutional documentation, recording and procedutal requirements are met.

f   If there is disagreement with the evidence given, options available to the individual are explained clearly and constructively.

Activity 1: Assess the individual

		1	2	3	4	5

a Any possible opportunities for collecting evidence are identified and evaluated for relevance against the outcomes or agreed-upon criteria to be assessed and thier appropriateness to the individual's needs.

b Evidence collection is planed to meke effective use of time and resources

c The opportunities selected provide access to fair and reliable assessment.

d The proposed assesment plan is discussed and agrees with the individual and others who may be affected

e If there is disagreement with the proposed assessment plan, options open to the individual are explained clearly and constructively.

f The assessment plan specifies outcomes or agreed-upon criteria to be achieved, opprtunities for efficent evidence collection, assessment methods, and the timing of assessments.

g Requirements to assure the authenticity, currency, realiabliity and sufficiency of the evidence are identified.

h Plans are reviewed and updated at agreed-upon times to reflect the individual's development.

Activity 2: Judge evidence and provide feedback...

		1	2	3	4	5

a Advice and encouragement to collect evidence effectively is appropriate to the individual's needs.

b Access to assessment is appropriate to the individual's needs.

c The evidence is valid and can be attributed to the individual.

d Only the agreed-upon criteria and/or outcomes are used to judge the evidence

e Evidence is judged accurately against all the relevant outcomes or agreed-upon criteria.

f When evidence of prior learning is used, checks are made that the individual can currently achieve the relevant outcome or agreed-upon criteria.

g Evidence is judged fairly and reliably

h Difficulties in authenticating and judging evidence are referred promptly to the appropriate person/s

i When evidence is not to the agreed standard, the individual is given a clear explanation and appropriate advice.

j Feedback following the decision is clear, constructive, meets the individual's needs and is appropriate to his or her level of confidence.

Activity 3. Make an assessment decision using differing sources of evidence and provide feedback...	1	2	3	4	5
a	The decision is based on all of the relevant evidence available					
b	Any inconsistencies in the evidence are clarified and resolved.					
c	When the combined evidence is sufficient to cover the outcomes or the agreed-upon criteria, the individual is informed of his or her decision.					
d	When the evidence is insufficient, the individual is given a clear explanation and appropriate advice.					
e	Feedback following the decision is clear, constructive, meets the individual's needs, and is appropriate to his or her level of confidence.					
f	The individual is encouraged to ask for clarification and advise.					
g	Evidence and assessment decisions are recorded to meet any RPL requirements.					
h	Any documentation is legible and accurate, stored securely and referred promptly to the next appropriate stage of the recording/certification process.					

ANNEXURE 10

RPL POLICY FOR INSTITUTION A

RPL POLICY FOR INSTITUTION A

RPL Committee

At a special College Council meeting, approval was given for this institution to participate in the study. A small committee comprising of two campus principals, two service managers, and seven nurse educators selected from the 4 campuses was formed. This committee was to be involved with the planning and implementation of the study at this college. One of the principals on board was elected as the RPL project coordinator. Through a series of meetings that followed, the RPL policy was formulated and submitted to the College Senate for approval. At that meeting, the Senate resolved that the policy be used for the purpose of the pilot project and that for future RPL implementation this policy would be revised

RPL purpose

To open up access to the 4 year diploma program by using alternative routes of entry

To recognise non formal and informal learning of nurses

To enable enrolled nurses to access the 4 year diploma programme at second year level.

RPL Target group

Enrolled nurses with matriculation to be prepared to access the Comprehensive Basic Nursing Program (R425) at second year

Recruitment and Selection

During the development phase, service managers expressed concern about the release time of candidates and the numbers that could be released without jeopardizing the quality of the service rendered to patients, the committee decided that the selection be left to the service managers. However, the committee as a whole did the criteria for selection of candidates The service managers felt that if the project was to be advertised, it would attract more candidates than could be managed given the fact that this was a pilot project. However, the committee, agreed with the guidelines with regards to advertising RPL for future practices. These nurses were selected from the three campuses since one campus did not find suitable candidates that met the criteria. Their service managers selected Eight (8) enrolled nurses. Selection criteria

- The candidate met the institutional criteria for continued education, that is, the next person on the service manager's list.
- The candidate has passed English at matriculation
- The candidate was willing to participate in the pilot study

- The candidate was employed with a minimum of two years clinical experience during the period of the study
- The candidate passed matriculation with a minimum of 15 points
- He/she would be ready for release in July 2001.

Commencement date

The committee had planned to commence with the preparations for Prior Learning assessment from January to April 2001 A brochure was developed with all the necessary information Candidates completed the registration forms Orientation was done, but unfortunately not all candidates were present. During the orientation day representatives from organized labor also attended Candidates signed contracts with the institution. It was explained to them that once in the diploma program, all rules as they apply to other students would also apply to them

Fees /funding

The committee resolved that since this was a part of a pilot study candidates would not be charged any fee but for future RPL practices, they identified with the RPL guidelines that

For this college the 4-year diploma programme fees during the time of this study were R1200 OR R300 per year x4 years What this would means therefore was that for future RPL practices candidates would have to pay R300 should they wish to access say the second year through RPL and a further R300 once in the second year

Responsibilities of the Coordinator

The coordinator was to keep the following records: RPL candidates files, application forms, records of assessments, and results of assessments The coordinator was to design these files and submit them to the committee for approval She was to work closely with the advisors, assessors, and to liaise with the service managers with regards to candidates release and progress. The coordinator was also expected to work closely with the evaluative researcher, submitting all reports on a regular basis and to schedule and chair all RPL committee meetings.

Responsibilities of the advisor

All advisors were to be qualified as educators and be registered with the South African Nursing Council, but not necessarily working at the college Advisors had to attend the RPL training workshop. The advisor was responsible for guiding and supporting the candidates during their preparation for assessment He/she was also expected to refer candidates to

subject specialists should there be a need for this and to verify authenticity of evidence submitted.

Responsibilities of the assessor

The assessor had to attend RPL training workshop and be a qualified educator currently teaching. The assessor was expected to be well versed with a variety of assessment methods to be used during assessment.

Responsibilities and rights of the candidate

The service was to keep their enrolled nurse posts while in the RPL pilot project. but as soon as they register for the diploma programme. the candidates were to loose their enrolled nurse posts and were to be employed as student nurses like all students on training Candidates were to maintain their SANC enrolment throughout the programme Once selected. candidate had a responsibility to attend orientation The candidates were expected to adhere to the contact session schedule that were prepared by the advisor in consultation with the candidate. They were expected to notify the advisor or coordinator immediately should the candidate encounter any problems during the preparation for assessment Candidates also had to acknowledge the fact that their registrations to the RPL pilot programme served as a contracts between them and the institution. Candidates could apply for reassessment. After receiving the results candidates were to apply to their service managers for training posts like all 4 year diploma student programme Candidates were to apply to the institution's principal to request exemption for the first year of the 4 year diploma. based on their assessment results They also had to apply to the institution's principal for accessing training.

Assessment

A variety of methods were to be used. the choice of the method was to depend on the competencies to be assessed Evidence submitted was to be relevant to the competency being assessed.

Moderation

Moderation was to be done between the campuses. The two campus principals were to act as external evaluators of the completed portfolios.

Credit granting

The committee designed a transcript document and submitted it to the Senate for approval The document consisted of two parts namely part one contained previous learning recognized and part two contained additional learning assessed and recognized Part one contained information about the candidate s matriculation results. SANC enrolment. clinical

experience and the first year Fundamental Nursing content of the 4 year diploma program. Part two contained the assessment results of those areas identified as gaps and for which the candidate was required to fill in.

Notification of results

Results were to be presented to the Senate before publishing. Written results were to be made available within 30 days of final assessment. These were to be dispatched to the service managers who in turn were to notify the candidates. Candidates were to receive copies of the assessment results. Candidates were also to receive transcripts of the pilot project results as described above.

Appeal procedure

The committee resolved that the existing appeal procedure for the institution would have to be used.

Quality assurance

The two campus principals who were members of the RPL committee were to be responsible for the quality assurance of the pilot project in this institution. After assessment, they were to inspect all the portfolios for validity of the evidence submitted; currency of the evidence, authenticity and sufficiency of the evidence submitted. They were to write a final report of the whole assessment process and submit this to the Senate (See Annexure 10 for Institution A 's RPL policy).

Specific problems /barriers

The huge backlog of candidates who met the criteria for inclusion posed a problem, but the evaluative researcher had to address these potential candidates to explain to them that this was a pilot project. This institution also experienced minor resistance from nurse educators who viewed the project as an additional work to them as they were experiencing shortage of personnel through early retirement and job opportunities outside the country. There was a general feeling of despondency by the personnel who thought that the future of the college looked bleak under the Department of Health. This posed a great challenge for those selected to implement the project. since it became evident that they would receive minimal support from the other colleagues. The other challenge for this college was the fact that during the time of the study. the institution was administratively under the Department of Health and hence this department manages student's fees. The committee expressed the concern that if RPL was seen as increasing the workload for personnel without an increase in staff, it was doubtful whether future implementation would be supported. The policy

document was submitted to the Senate for approval. The Senate resolved that this policy was for the purpose of the pilot project only and that another more detailed policy will have to be developed for future RPL implementation at this institution.

ANNEXURE 11

RPL POLICY FOR INSTITUTION B

RPL POLICY FOR INSTITUTION B

During the time of the study, this institution offered mainly the Bridging Programs for enrolled nurses and enrolled auxiliary nurses (Refer to Chapter 4 Table 5 for sample description).

RPL Purpose

The driving force that led this institution to take part in the project was due to the following

- The South African Nursing Council Circular 15/99 which notified institutions about the option of RPL that was to be used instead of applying for exemption on behalf of candidates without matriculation
- Pressure from enrolled nurses without Standard 10 but who wished to proceed with their training into professional nurses
- Pressure from organized labour after S A N C's withdrawal of the exemption clause

    RPL Committee

The committee was formed to steer the RPL project forward. The committee consisted of six nurse educators and one nurse administrator The decisions taken by this committee were the following: the committee proposed that some members of staff needed to attend a facilitator's workshop so as to prepare them for implementing RPL. Administrative issues like preparation of the brochure. application letter and preparation of the exit level outcome template were addressed The size of the pilot group was initially 20. but after attending the workshop, the committee realized the amount of work involved during preparation of the candidates. and decreased the group to fifteen(15). Unfortunately the service manager withdrew the one committee member from the service due to staff shortages. The School Board decided that five nurse educators will be involved It was agreed also that the nurse educators would each assist two RPL candidates As well as the evaluation instruments for level since the target group was candidates without standard 10.

Target group

Enrolled nurses without matriculation who could access the Bridging programme for professional nurses through RPL. was the target group

Marketing

Brochures were sent to all the catchment areas in region A and F The pilot project was announced in service managers and nurse educators meetings The pilot project was also advertised in categorical meetings

Selection/ recruitment

The criteria for selection of candidates was also laid down as follows

    I.   Enrolled nurses without standard 10 who had applied to access the Bridging programme to become professional nurses.

    II. Candidates were to be identified by their service managers

         -   They were to be from the Durban Functional region.

         -   They were to be from the 'catchments' areas for the campus.

Fifteen (15) enrolled nurses were selected for the pilot project.

Application and admission

All applicants received the RPL project brochure that was developed by the committee which contained the necessary information about the RPL project at this college. Orientation was done intensively and lasted for five days. Candidates filled in application forms and were allocated to advisors with their contact details. The ratio was three candidates per advisor.

Fees/ funding

Fees were not to be charged since this was a pilot project and the committee was in agreement with the RPL guidelines with regards to fees. As in Institution A, this college receives funding from the Department of Health and hence this Department administers student's fees. During the time of this study the fees for the Bridging programme were R300 per year of study. Therefore, for future RPL practices fees payable would not exceed this amount.

Responsibilities of the RPL coordinator

The coordinator was to keep RPL candidates' personal files, records of the candidates' performance during assessment. The coordinator was to arrange and chair all meetings of the RPL committee. The coordinator was to liaise closely with the service for example to arrange their release for assessments. The coordinator was also responsible for communicating the assessment results to the candidates and to their respective service managers. The coordinator was to act as a liaison person between the RPL team and the other policy making structures within the institution throughout the duration of the pilot project. The coordinator had a responsibility to handle the candidates appeals and submit these to the institution's board

Responsibilities of the RPL officer

The officer was to be the first contact person with the prospective candidates. The officer was to send out brochures to all applicants together with application forms. The officer was to be responsible for the initial screening of the prospective candidates. The officer also had to

send out learning packages to those candidates who have registered. These packages containing the course outline for the Bridging programme as well as the exit level outcomes, portfolio self assessment tool guidelines for evidence presentation and important dates for assessments. These were to be developed by the RPL committee.

Responsibilities of the advisor

The advisor was to help the candidate with basic career planning as well as the plan of action in preparation for assessment. The advisor was to give advice and support to the candidate during the portfolio development. The advisor was expected to refer candidates to subject specialists should a need exist for such services. Advisors were also expected to verify the authenticity of the evidence submitted by the candidates before final assessment

Responsibilities of the assessor

The assessor was to be responsible for planning of the appropriate time and method to be used for assessment. The assessor was to communicate this to the advisor of the candidate She was to be responsible for assessing the evidence submitted and provide feedback to the candidate and the coordinator.

Responsibilities of candidates

Candidates were to make the application directly to the institution for inclusion to the pilot project. Candidates were to fill in registration forms and submit these to the coordinator with all other necessary documents for example their SANC enrolment receipts and highest educational qualification results Candidates were expected to attend the orientation week and they were to keep to schedules times for contact sessions with their advisors thereafter Should they encounter problems in keeping the schedules sessions candidates were to notify the advisor or the coordinator five days prior to the session date. Candidate were responsible for keeping to the schedules dates for contact sessions and failure to do so was to result in disqualification from the pilot project

Assessment

The committee resolved that, in this institution the following assessment methods were to be used namely the portfolio, case presentation challenge examination and an assignment

Monitoring and evaluation

The coordinator was to conduct regular meetings with the advisors/ assessors for the purpose of developing consistency in the process of advising and assessment. The coordinator also had to consider individual needs of candidates and to ensure equal opportunities monitoring The coordinator also had to design and conduct continuous training

for administrative personnel, and all those involved with the process example the other colleagues. The coordinator was also responsible for monitoring of the whole pilot project especially with regards to assessment and was to submit the final report to the evaluative researcher and the institution's principal (See Annexure 11 for Institution B's RPL policy)

Specific problems

There were no specific problems reported at this stage. The policy document was submitted to the institution's Board and was approved.

ANNEXURE 12

RPL POLICY FOR INSTITUTION C

RPL POLICY FOR NISTITUTION C

This institution offers mainly post basic programmes at a decentralized mode. The institution is funded mainly by student fees.

RPL Committee

A small committee was formed at an Executive Board meeting where the proposal for the institution to participate in the research study was discussed. The committee was comprised of the following a financial officer and two academic personnel.

Through a series of meetings, that the committee held, the following was achieved

- A target group was identified
- The selection criteria was drawn up.
- Administrative issues were discussed and finalized for example the brochure. application forms, registration forms.
- The committee also determined the cost to the institution that such involvement would entail. All these were submitted to the Executive Committee for its approval.

Target group

It was decided that the enrolled nurse auxiliaries with matriculation were to be targeted for access into the Bridging programme for professional nurses.

Selection criteria

- the candidate had to have matriculation
- to be enrolled with SANC as a nurse auxiliary
- a minimum of two years of practice as a nurse auxiliary was required
- the candidates had to be from around Durban
- permission had to be obtained from their service managers.

Since this was a pilot project, it was not advertised. Fifteen (15) candidates were selected from a pool of 200 that had previously applied for a bridging programme to become enrolled nurses.

Application and admission

Candidates had to complete the application and registration forms A personal files were opened for each candidate The administrative officer was responsible for this.

Responsibilities of the RPL advisor

Responsibilities of the advisor

In this institution, since there was going to be only one person to deal with the advising aspect of the RPL process, the committee resolved that a group approach was to be used,

The advisor was to hold group sessions with the candidates. The advisor was expected to have received RPL training before commencement with the pilot project. The advisor was to give advice and support to the candidate during the portfolio development. The advisor was expected to play the role of both the advisor and the subject specialist for the candidates. The advisor was also expected to train the assessor on the appropriate assessment methods

Responsibilities of the assessor

In this institution, due to shortage of manpower, the committee resolved that during assessment, the advisor to help the assessor especially with regards to clinical examination Therefore the advisor also played the role of the assessor at this institution. Depending on the assessment method used the assessor was expected to be an expert in assessments. The assessor was also expected to have received training in RPL assessment.

The assessor was to conduct all the assessments

Responsibilities of the moderator

The committee resolved that the services of a moderator will have to be sought, especially since the assessments were to be conducted by two people only. All assessments were to be externally moderated The moderator had to be present during the clinical assessment to act as an inter-rater

Responsibilities of candidates

Candidates were to make the application directly to the institution for inclusion to the pilot project Candidates were to fill in registration forms and submit these to the coordinator with all other necessary documents for example their SANC enrolment receipts and highest educational qualification results Candidates were expected to attend the two day orientation workshop Candidates were to attend the RPL pilot programme sessions every Saturday from 0800hr to 1300hr. Candidates were expected to pay R300 for registration before commencement with the RPL pilot programme. Besides the group sessions, candidates were expected to make arrangements for individual contact sessions with the advisor at least once a week for one hour duration each session

Assessment

The committee resolved that in this institution the following assessment methods were to be used namely, the portfolio, a theory paper, a clinical examination and an assignment

Fees

The committee resolved that, since an additional personnel was required to run the project each candidate would pay a total sum of R 2000 .This was to be broken down according to the guidelines as follows:

Registration fee= R300 00

Advising fee   = R850.00

Assessment fee= R850 00

The registration fee was to be wholly refundable, should the prospective candidate cancel seven days before commencement of the RPL project at this institution, thereafter it was to be 50% partially refundable. 50% of the advising and assessment fee was to be paid before commencement of the access programme, and the rest to be spread out through the entire duration of the access programme. This was a special arrangement made by the committee in collaboration with the candidates

Specific barriers/problems

The committee raised concerns about the financial viability of future RPL practices in this institution. given the fact that funding was solely from students' fees. The second problem for this institution was the unavailability of personnel to run the RPL project. A nurse educator had to be employed on a part time basis for the duration of the research project and hence the candidates from this institution had to pay fees even though this was a pilot project. Payment of fees was a problem for candidates in this institution. The committee decided that for future RPL practices in this institution. a period of six month should lapse before commencement of the advanced programme to allow enough time for candidates to finish paying the RPL fees (See Annexure 13 for Institution C's RPL policy).

The RPL budget plan for Institution C

INCOME	R.	EXPENDITURE	R.
Registration fee @ R300/ candidate x14	4200.	Learning packages @R200/ cand. x 14	2800.
Development funds made available by institution	20000.	Advisor's guides @ R100 x 2	200
Estimated monthly payments@R75/month/candidate x 24 months x 14	25200.00	Stationery + resource material (suitcase library)	5000.
		Telephone @ R200/month x 10	1000.
		Equipment (computer. printer)	12000
		Advisor @ R100/ hr x 5 hrs x 10 weeks	5000.
		Assessor @ R130/cand x 14 x 2 days	1352.
		Moderator @ R200/cand x 14	2800.
		Orientation workshop @ R50 /person x 16	800
GRAND TOTAL	49000.		30925.
- Development funds	27400.	– Equipment	18925.

As the table shows. in this institution RPL candidates were to be charged for the RPL programme. The Executive Committee approved a budget and resolved that a sum of R20000 was to be used as seed money to get the programme running The estimated income from the candidates' fees was R28000 however. the candidates only managed to pay the R300.00 registration fee. This problem was discussed by the RPL committee who appealed to the Executive Committee to allow the candidates to continues with the

programme and to spread the balances throughout their training while in the Bridging programme. The Executive Committee of this institution resolved that candidates were to continue with the programme and were to pay R 75.00 per month towards the R1700.00 that they would be owing for a period of two years