



**TTVET Reform Project
Bangladesh**

**Interim Report
Recognition of Prior Learning
Mission 2**

14th October – 12th November 2009

John Arthur

**A Sub-component of Component 5
Increased Access of Under-privileged Groups to TTVET
Result 5.4.1
5.4.2
5.4.3**

International Labour Organisation

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TVET experience in Developing Countries

John Arthur is a Head Teacher employed by TAFE NSW Hunter Institute. He is the RPL Approving Delegate for all Teacher training and Management areas for Hunter Institute and is responsible:

- For the Training of all new teachers and the Professional Development in Teaching and Assessing for all existing staff (5000)
- For working with all Head Teachers to help them develop RPL procedures and templates
- As part of Hunter Institute team that developed RPL processes/instruments for a variety of subject areas
- As Manager of the Frontline Management Training/ Recognition program. This program is built upon developing workplace Recognition or Evidence Guides to enable participants to gain Certification of their informal or work based skills.

International TVET Projects include:

- Develop and manage Workplace Learning and Recognition programs and Trainer Education in PNG. Projects funded by Aus Aid 2002 ongoing
- Manage TAFE projects in Iran (2004 – Ongoing). Responsible for policy/procedures and Teacher Training including Assessment and RPL. Part of team advising Iranian Government (ongoing) on Iranian TVET restructures.
- Manage Hunter Institute projects in India (2006 – Ongoing). Responsible for policy/procedures and Teacher Training including Assessment and RPL.
- Worked with representatives from Philippines Government on RPL, Assessment policies and procedures and Teacher Training (2005)
- Manage Hunter Institute projects in Sri Lanka (2008 ongoing). Responsible for policy/procedures and Teacher Training including Assessment and RPL
- In 2008 responsible for mapping Teacher training competencies of Singaporean TVET system against the Australian Certificate IV qualification in Training and Assessment. At the completion of the mapping exercise designed and delivered Gap Teacher Training
- Advisor to Sri Lankan Minister for Higher Education(2006) on:
 - Establishment of TAFE NSW Trade Programs
 - TVET Teacher Training
 - Recognition of Skills gained in informal Industry

- Presented paper on Assessment and RPL in TVET at the first Pan African TVET Conference at Cape town in 2008 on behalf of the University of Newcastle
- Conducted TVET Teachers Professional Development workshops on RPL and Assessment in 2008 in Freetown Botswana.
- Currently working (2009-10) in Dhaka - Bangladesh for United Nations as part of their TVET Reform program – Component 5 – Access for the underprivileged – specifically RPL in both Formal and Informal sectors
- Working for Luxembourg Agency for Development Cooperation in implementing Project NAM 347 in Namibia (2009-2011). The TOR is as follows
 - Develop the content of the newly proposed qualifications on Levels 3, 4 and 5 and the relevant unit standards for submission to the NQA in a provisional format.
 - Consider all the recommendations of the Comparative Study for inclusion in the TVET Trainer qualifications
 - Analyse the proposed qualifications and compare the new recommendations to determine what needs to be developed.
 - Undertake background research on the qualifications and unit standards available internationally to use as possible benchmarks for the proposed new qualifications.
 - Develop the content of the qualifications and the outstanding unit standards for submission to the NQA
 - Participate in a workshop with stakeholders to ensure that the proposals comply and to obtain feedback and inputs into the proposals
 - Revise the qualifications and the unit standards considering the feedback.
- Currently working (2009-2010) with Polytechnic of Namibia to reform Namibian TVET Teacher Training system. The TOR is as follows
 - A prioritised capacity development plan for Teacher Training, Assessment and RPL in the TVET Sector
 - The reform of Namibian Teacher Training Institutions and the establishment of Competency Based Teacher training programs aligned to International standards
 - The development of National Policy and procedures on Recognition of Prior Learning
 - A Database of sample workplace assessment tools developed.
 - Pilots of RPL and new Teacher training qualifications to be designed and implemented.
- Presented paper on TVET in Australia at the First Education Australia TVET Conference in Bangkok in 2009

- Presented paper on TVET in Australia at the Austrade TVET Conference in Hanoi in 2009
- Presented paper on TVET in Australia at the Austrade TVET Conference in Ho Chi Minh City in 2009
- Conducted TVET sector training in United Arab Emirates, Tuvalu and Fiji.

Acronyms

ADB	– Asian Development Bank
BMET	– Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
BTEB	– Bangladesh Education Board
CBT	– Competency Based Training
C5	– Component 5
DTE	– Directorate of Technical Education
GO	– Government Organization
ISC	– Industry Skills Committees
ILO	– International Labour – Manpower, Agricultural, Workshop and Training School
MoWOE	– Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment
NCC	– National Coordinating Committee
NGO	– Non Government Organisation
NTVQF	– National Vocational Qualification
OJT	– On-the-job Training
PRSP	– Poverty Reduction
PWD	– Persons with Disabilities
RPL	– Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	– Registered Training Organisation
SAW	– Stakeholder Action Workshop
TOR	– Terms of Reference
TOT	– Training of Trainers
TSC	– Technical Schools and Colleges
TTC	– Technical Training Centres
TVET	– Technical Vocational Training and Education
TVQF	– Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework- Underprivileged Children’s Educational Programs
UNDP	– United Nations Development Programme

Background

This project is a Sub-component of Component 5
Increased Access of Under-privileged Groups to TTNET
as a key contribution towards development of Bangladesh.

The project is designed to provide a background paper that will assist all stakeholders in moving forward on RPL.

The particular scope includes:

Outputs to be delivered by the expert: 2nd mission

- a. Written summary of findings from Consultations with key stakeholders, for example, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Expatriates Welfare & Overseas Employment, Bangladesh Technical Education Board, Directorate of Technical Education, Bureau of Manpower Employment & Training and Industry Associations;
- b. Develop a draft for a system of RPL for Bangladesh that would cater for Skills gained both formally and informally;
- c. Develop a draft RPL methodology manual for TVET in Bangladesh;
- d. Brief to CTA & project staff on recommendations for a system of RPL for Bangladesh that would cater for skills gained both formally and informally;
- e. Provide input in a workshop on RPL.

1. Critical Issues impacting upon the design of an RPL system for Bangladesh

Critical Issue	Potential Reform	Advantage	Challenges to Implementation
Lack of National Standards	Developing of a Qualifications Framework (NTVQF).	NTVQF will provide a uniform framework for establishing course assessment requirements and course entry points. It will provide the base for an effective RPL process.	Incorporating both Government and NGO providers into a National System. A key in the overall success of an NTVQF will be the role of Industry advisory groups in the development process.
RPL Methodology and tools	RPL Tools that are not based exclusively on central set examinations.	The RPL Project must develop tools and processes that fit within the proposed NTVQF and adapt methodology and planning tools that can become standards for determining assessment requirements. Centrally set Challenge Tests will be for Moderation	The major challenge will be in maintaining the integrity of a system in its infancy and not being based on centrally set and controlled examinations
Institutions have few incentives to respond to market needs especially in the informal sector.	Allowing public and publicly financed institutions greater autonomy - deciding on training and assessment programs, hiring of assessors, and generating revenues by selling these services	Allowing the private sector a key role in management of TVET institutions will lead to greater market responsiveness to the needs of the informal sector	The government will need to provide incentives for NGOs to initially provide RPL services to the informal sector
Strategies for improving access for the disadvantaged - including funding	Put appropriate incentives in place to ensure that NGOs (and other public/private partnerships) expand the provision of RPL and other support services to the informal sector	80% of employment is generated in the informal sector. Support mechanisms need to be put in place that will enable access to RPL by the disadvantaged.	Cost, location and literacy issues need to be addressed. Acceptance of Reasonable Adjustment criteria required.
Quality Assurance/Record Keeping	The PRSP has identified a reform roadmap that encourages public – private NGO collaboration in the management of TVET. There are existing models of GO-NGO collaboration in project implementation. The RPL project should build upon collaboration between all participants of the future TVET system including representatives of the informal sector.	Collaboration should produce a series of checks & balances (ensuring QA) built into the RPL system.	There should be a single Autonomous VET body. This entity will be responsible for coordinating the overall training system, overseeing, financing of training, curriculum development, supervising skills testing, RPL certification and accreditation. The major challenges will dissolving the current structure and adequate resourcing of the new body

Limited or negligible Assessor skills/processes currently available	Develop an Assessor training program as part of the development of an RPL Methodology Manual. Several levels of Assessor Training proposed – to reflect varying roles of Assessors	Targets - selected NGOs, TTC's, TSC's, Master Craftsperson (Rural and Urban) trained in process of Workplace assessment as well as training future Assessment Trainers. Towards a Best Practice model including Rules of Evidence, Design Assessment Instruments, Plan and organise Assessment, Assess Competency, Reasonable adjustment, Validation of Assessment Instruments and Appeal processes.	Verification, validation and recording of the process
Lack of an Appeals process	Every RPL decision can be appealed	Appeals Committee will help promote transparency and integrity of the system	Developing a culture where an Assessors decision can be appealed against
Pilot Implementation	<p>Linked with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Component 2 in terms of the pilot of an NTVQF • Component 4 in terms of industry skills committee involvement • Component 5 in terms of informal apprenticeships 	It would be seen as an integral component of a new NTVQF system. Initial target RPL would be against National Pre-Vocation Certificate 1 and Certificate 2 (NPVC 1 and NPVC 2). It would incorporate training for assessors/trainers and be limited to four industry groups already identified. Could also target an industry group suggested by Industry skill committees	The validation and recording of assessments conducted in the Informal Sector

2. Summary of Consultations with key stakeholders

Summary of Consultations of
John Arthur with

Name of the Institution	Key Elements required in an RPL system	Issues/Concerns regarding RPL	Issues to be addressed in developing an RPL system
DTE	Greater role for industry to input into Curriculum development	Credibility	Training of Assessors
Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) Mr Md. Ahasan Habib - Director (Training)	Policy guidelines to identify and support an RPL process as an integral component of overall skill development Policy to drive sustainability after ILO process is finished Incentives to encourage TTC's, TSC's, NGOs, Polytechnics, employers and workers to be involved.	The documentation certifying the attainment of skills needs to be recognized by industry, NGOs, TTC's, TSC's as well as BTEB Maintenance of the Data Base to contain RPL information Sustainability long term of RPL process as result of the cost Resistance by employers as recognition of higher level of skills in employees will require higher remuneration.	Has concerns with a NTVQF Wants to participate in a Pilot for workers going to Oman Pilot will involve two occupations from Construction
TTC _ Chittagong Principal	RPL has to be incorporated into TVET Policy for long term sustainability An agreed upon NVQF ADB project to establish 40 Skill Centre's to provide opportunity for RPL for those employees in the informal sector. Should commence with a Pilot in selected areas – Electrical, Plumbing, Welding	Funding to establish mobile RPL workshops Teacher training	NGOs to provide some funding support Procedures developed as part of RPL Methodology Manual Provide resources such as assessment kits
Various Master crafts Persons in Chittagong			Very keen to a participate in Trial
MAWTS MB Gomes – Director MD Atiar Rahman – Manager T & D	Training needed to be focused on developing practical skills	Acceptance of RPL Standards used in RPL process	Keen to participate in the Pilot of RPL

UCEP		Currents variations in courses & standards used	Keen to participate in RPL trial
Industry Skills Committee - Transport		Need more time to review proposals. Will report back through Component 4	
Industry Skills Committee – Food		Need more time to review proposals. Will report back through Component 4	
Industry Skills Committee - Leather		Need more time to review proposals. Will report back through Component 4	Keen to participate in an RPL trial in Leather Sector

3. A Definition Of Recognition of Prior Learning for Bangladesh

In order to determine an appropriate definition for Bangladesh it is necessary to define the meaning of learning and clarify the different forms of learning.

The acceptance that learning can occur in different ways and not only through a process of study is integral for an RPL process.

We can differentiate learning into three different forms. These are

- formal learning
- non certified formal learning and
- informal learning

Today, Australia, amongst many countries use an additional term - lifelong learning.

In 2007, the OECD produced a landmark report on qualifications systems called *Bridges to Lifelong Learning* which aimed to find a link between national qualifications systems and lifelong learning.¹ The Report reviewed the qualifications systems, policies and practices of many countries to identify mechanisms to improve lifelong learning agendas and outcomes.

Learning can be considered as comprising a number of different forms including formal learning, informal learning, incidental learning, problem-based learning, situated learning and so on.

- *Formal* learning takes place in situations where there is a curriculum and a sequence of planned teaching and learning activities—what we associate with classrooms in their various forms.
- *Non certified Formal Learning* arises when an individual follows a learning program but it is not usually assessed and does not lead to certification.

In the Bangladesh context, this would currently include the vast majority of industry training undertaken in enterprises and industry bodies.

- *Informal* learning is not normally associated with classrooms or structured learning, but is largely under the control of the learner setting out to learn something. It is achieved through observation, discussion with others, asking questions, and even making mistakes and learning from them.
- *Incidental* learning is learning that happens as the by-product of some other activity.
- *Situated* learning occurs when the knowledge being acquired is to be used in the same situation in which it was gained.
- *Problem-based* learning occurs through the activities associated with solving a problem—and could take place in a formal setting where the set problem is designed to result in particular learning outcomes, or the learning may be

¹ OECD, *Qualifications Systems, Bridges to Lifelong learning*, 2007, p3.

achieved quite informally through working on a real-world problem in a context such as a workplace.

Workplaces are rich contexts in which to learn since they provide other people, processes, equipment, workplace cultures and deadlines. Although the site for apprentice learning for centuries, workplaces as rich learning environments only began to be recognised and legitimised in the late 1980s.

Informal learning occurs as a natural outcome of everyday work, community based activities and everyday life experiences. We are constantly learning. In the Bangladesh context, the vast majority of learning is informal, once schooling is completed.

Workplace Learning can be either formal or informal learning.

For Bangladesh, such definitions appear relevant and appropriate. It is particularly important to conceive of formal learning as inclusive of workplaces, as long as they have met some quality assurance requirements such as accreditation. Learning can take place in any setting and through different approaches and processes to learning. Recognition of Prior Learning is then about the recognition of these three different forms of learning – formal, non-formal and informal.

Within the Australian context the definition now includes formal learning. Countries that have qualification systems based on unit credits as a measure for defining the value of specific learning within their qualifications may not include formal learning in their definitions of RPL. This is because recognition of formal learning can be undertaken through credit accumulation or credit transfer, articulation and credit recognition. They tend to use terms such as Non Standard Recognition to manage formal learning. As Bangladesh's qualifications are not yet fully determined this is an important issue to be debated.

A perhaps more practical approach is to consider RPL as capturing all forms of learning including formal learning that has not been recognised through any pre-arranged credit transfer arrangements. This is the current approach in Australia. In the TAFE system it is also referred to as a Non-Standard exemption.

Therefore it would appear that scope of RPL in Bangladesh needs to encompass:

- all forms of learning - formal, non-formal and informal learning until such time as formal learning is recognised through other mechanisms such as credit transfer/recognition and credit accumulation arrangements

There are three potential outcomes for the individual from an RPL process.

These are:

- access pathway into formal learning
- credit towards formal learning.
- Advancement of employment opportunities – especially for those workers intending to work overseas and those returning from overseas with enhanced skill sets (potential ladderisation)

Access means that the individual is granted entry or admission into a particular course or qualification without necessarily meeting some of the standard prerequisites – such as Year 8. RPL enables demonstration of the necessary knowledge/skills to undertake the course or meet the prerequisites. This is a particularly important potential outcome for 80% of the working population of Bangladesh.

With the development and implementation of a;

- Competency Log Book evidence accumulation recording process
- involvement of some master crafts persons, TTC's, TSC's and NGOs as assessors
- Use of Reasonable adjustment processes for informal sector employees

The RPL process should result in the recognition of competencies gained but not previously recognised in the informal sector of the Bangladesh economy. This should provide some of these participants with opportunities to enter formal sector employment that had been previously not available.

Therefore RPL in the proposed Bangladesh NTVQF must be used to both access qualifications (especially in the light of Year 8 requirements to access TSC courses) and the award of credits towards qualifications.

Having an RPL process that covers all qualifications in Bangladesh's NTVQF is needed to support:

- access into formal learning
- greater overseas working opportunities
- increased participation in formal learning
- improved technical qualifications of Bangladesh people
- people being qualified more quickly
- inclusiveness and acceptance that people learn in different ways and may not have had access previously to the formal education system
- funding/financial efficiencies in not paying for existing knowledge/skill but only to develop new knowledge/skills
- improved learning process for individuals in not repeating what is already achieved.
- Perhaps most importantly for Bangladesh an opportunity to move into employment in the formal sector

While RPL is the most common term in most TVET systems, some other terms have been used in the TVET context including Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) and Skills Recognition but most definitions focus on a process of assessment.

In the UK, the Qualifications and Curriculum and Development Authority (QCDA) uses and defines RPL as:

A method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.

The QCDA (previously the QCA) is responsible for a range of qualifications across the UK Qualifications and Curriculum Framework (QCF) but does not include higher education.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education does not use the term RPL, preferring Accreditation of Learning but nevertheless refers to the process as including assessment in relation to experiential (informal) learning.

The process in Canada (PLAR) is described as:

a systematic process which uses a variety of tools to help learners reflect on identify, articulate and demonstrate learning for the purpose of gaining recognition by educational institutions, workplaces, credentialing organizations, regulatory bodies and others.

In New Zealand, the term used most commonly is RPL and this is defined as:

assessment that makes use of indirect evidence of achievement and/or evidence from activities that are undertaken without first requiring additional learning; often called recognition or assessment of current competencies; the term 'recognition' is meant to imply that skills and knowledge will be recognised by some form of assessment against established criteria.

The definition previously proposed in the Draft Policy for RPL within the TVET Reform process also focuses clearly on assessment. The stakeholders in Bangladesh need to consider the nature of the process and the overall definition as one that will eventually meet the needs and requirements of all education sectors and providers operating in the NTVQF:

(Refer to the underlying principles supporting the proposed RPL Policy in my previous Report)

- is an assessment process of individuals
- relating to informal, non-formal and formal learning
- against learning outcomes and specified criteria, in some NTVQF qualifications expressed as unit standards
- to provide access and/or credits towards NTVQF qualification

A definition of RPL for Bangladesh:

Recognition of Prior learning requires the recognition and acceptance by any Training Organisation of the qualifications and statements of skills issued by other RTOs and Registered Assessors enabling individuals to receive national recognition of qualifications and statements of skills.

The Policy is underpinned by the following guidelines

- 1. The smallest educational unit granted through recognition is a unit of competency or a whole module. The maximum amount of recognition granted can be up to and including 100% of a Bangladesh TVQF course or qualification. Any units of competency successfully demonstrated by RPL shall be recognized by a Statement of Attainment within the TVQF.*
- 2. The aim of recognition is to reduce repetition of previous learning by acknowledging an individual's skills and knowledge acquired through formal and informal learning in Bangladesh and overseas;*
- 3. RPL is critical to the development of an open, accessible, inclusive, integrated and relevant post-compulsory education and training system, and is a key foundation for lifelong learning policies that encourage individuals to participate in learning pathways, that include formal, non-formal and informal learning;*
- 4. RPL should recognise learning regardless of how, when and where it was acquired, provided that the learning is relevant to the learning or competency outcomes in a subject, unit, module, course or qualification;*
- 5. RPL can be used for:*
 - a. access into a course when the specified prerequisites based on completion of a formal course of education and training have not been undertaken; and;*
 - b. the award of credit for the partial or completion of a qualification, within the relevant institutional guidelines that specify the maximum amount of credit that may be granted.*
- 6. RPL assessment should be based on evidence, and should be equitable, culturally inclusive, fair, flexible, valid and reliable, fair and transparent and provide for reasonable adjustment;*
- 7. RPL policies, procedures and processes should be explicitly included in quality assurance procedures within institutions to ensure that qualifications achieved in part or in full through RPL are of the same quality and have the same standing as qualifications achieved as a consequence of formal education and training.*
- 8. RPL assessment should be structured to minimise costs*
- 9. RPL decisions should be accountable, transparent, and subject to appeal and review.*
- 10. RPL information and support services should be actively promoted, easy to understand, recognise the diversity of participants and support participants with limited literacy skills.*

4. Review of RPL policy and practice in selected countries – lessons for the implementation of RPL in Bangladesh

Australia

RPL has been a major driver in the reform of Australia's TVET system. It originated as part of the policies to introduce competency based training into the Australian TVET system. However it is still well below the desired take up and is now included in the funding regime in TVET.

RPL became part of the policy of the Training Reform Agenda and various versions of RPL policy have emerged since the 1980s.

In particular this policy has application to all sectors – from schools sector to the Higher Education sector. In the current policy format RPL is focussed on giving recognition for informal and non-formal learning with formal learning addressed through other processes such as credit transfer and articulation.

Of significance in the design of a system for Bangladesh are the barriers and success factors identified in the take up of RPL in Australia

Success factors identified by Australian experiences with RPL

Based on Australian experiences the following characteristics appear essential for RPL success:

- A standardised set of Training and Assessment Competencies utilised by public and private RTOs
- Support mechanism for the candidate
- Improving assessor confidence and professional judgements by ensuring assessors can access and validate high quality assessment tools, engage Industry Skill Committees in validating and quality assuring assessment tools
- Establishing networks of assessors
- A National Qualifications Framework system that provides common language, standards, record keeping and quality assurance
- Cost effective system
- Fair and transparent processes including use of Reasonable adjustment and Appeals
- Significant involvement of Industry Skill Committees
- A credit transfer system to allow articulation between various levels of qualifications.
- Accreditation and auditing of training organisations to ensure training providers meet the required standards of delivery and assessment of NVQF programs.
- A system that utilises RPL to provide a pathway to
 - A Full Qualification
 - A Statement of Attainment

- Entry to a course
- Identify Gap Training requirements
- Licensing requirements

Registered Training Organisations identified the following barriers

- Not well understood by trainers– separated from good assessment practice
- In Higher Education institutions concerns that RPL is not of the same standard and therefore granting such credit may impinge on the university's reputation

Students identified the following barriers

- Limited understanding and awareness
- Discouragement by providers
- Complexity of the assessment process – difficult to follow, guidance and support inadequate, language often a problem
- Need for RPL applicants to have high literacy and language skills
- Being able to provide their documentary forms of evidence and meet evidence requirements.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand was the first country to adopt a qualifications framework based on outcomes standards. In the early 1990s there was considerable interest in RPL and a number of papers were developed but direct interest flagged as RPL was absorbed into general assessment policy.

RPL is addressed by providing guidance on two types:

1. RPL where the individual can provide verifiable evidence of prior performance and
2. RPL where the candidate cannot provide verifiable evidence - where a challenge test would be appropriate.²

The policy also identifies the need for support to people preparing their evidence through use of assessment facilitator who can explain the process what unit standards are, what is evidence, forms and how to collect.

The approach to RPL in New Zealand with its approach has led to mixed outcomes in practice.

There are some good examples from New Zealand's experiences that may be relevant for Bangladesh;

- Use of Challenge Tests where documentary evidence is not available
- industries that have never been part of the formal education system such as fishing and developing unit standards, qualifications and an RPL assessment together
- A number of polytechnics have Centres for Assessment of Prior learning that undertake RPL for entry or credit.
- examples of good projects for indigenous New Zealanders and Islanders.

² NZQA, *Learning and Assessment , A Guide to Assessment of the National Qualifications Framework*, 2001, <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/publications/learningassessment.pdf> p

The United Kingdom

The UK has recently announced a target of 100000 new Apprenticeships in a wide variety of industries. This is a key plank in its structural response to the longest recession they have experienced. TVET training and assessment is supported by a recently revised unit based qualifications framework covering schools, colleges and workplaces and effectively restructuring the existing standards based qualifications awarded. The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), not dissimilar to the NTVQF model proposed for Bangladesh, is based on eight levels with two underpinning entry levels and three types of qualifications across the levels – awards, certificates and diplomas, each differentiated by increasing size of different credit values.

It requires that RPL must be for a whole unit or groups of units (similar to that proposed in Bangladesh principles that underpin RPL) and recognizes that there are circumstances where limitations to RPL may be necessary, such as:

- health and safety requirements
- regulated professions
- where specific parts of a study programme need placements in a given setting

The policy is supported by the regulatory framework for the QCF which clearly establishes an obligation for all awarding bodies to have in place systems for RPL, and to ensure that learners have appropriate access to these systems.

5. The Model for Bangladesh – general principles

According to the World Bank, Bangladesh has a population of just over 150 million people, nearly two thirds of who live in rural areas. The population is relatively young with approximately 80% employed in the informal sector. There are few people in the labour market with technical/vocational qualifications. Labour Force Survey estimated that in 2003 there were less than 60,000 with technical/vocational qualifications. For each one of these there were 104 persons with either SSC or HSC.

A significant proportion of adult learning and education is undertaken outside the formal TVET system. Some workplaces provide internal training and skills development. At community levels there are various programmes and materials that provide various forms of public education on health, family planning, community development, rural development, environmental issues and Donor programs. This informal and non-formal learning has far more breadth in terms of the scale of the population involved but is usually unrecognised.

RPL can be a powerful tool to support and enhance formal learning and can provide a platform for further and ongoing formal learning. RPL can provide a mechanism to bring these people with unrecognised skills into a system that recognises their informally acquired skills and knowledge in a formal sense but RPL cannot address specific skills shortages.

There is no single 'best' model or approach for undertaking RPL assessment. Bangladesh will need to consider what is practical and feasible, especially given low levels of literacy, lack of a broadly based formal education culture and large numbers of people who may benefit from RPL.

The focus of RPL is to establish whether the learning a person has acquired reflects the learning outcomes and criteria of particular units/qualifications within the NTVQF, regardless of how, when or where such learning was acquired.

RPL assessment should be based on good assessment practice with the same integrity as the assessment process for participants undertaking training in a course.

RPL is assessment and needs to be seen to have the same integrity of other forms of assessment. RPL assessment can include:

- Completion and verification of the Competency Log Book
- participation in the same or modified approaches to assessment activities if the learner was participating in a training course
- the provision of a portfolio setting out documents, products or other tangible evidence of the individual – difficult for workers in the informal sector
- a demonstration of skills and/or work process – more likely initially in Bangladesh and used as a moderation/verification process
- third party reports especially from employers
- In-house certificates or work records.

RPL must be undertaken by qualified staff with relevant subject matter expertise or in conjunction with a subject expert.

The overview of current policy and practice in a range of countries reinforces that there are still many issues and very few of the countries reviewed could be considered to have embedded RPL into their educational and assessment culture.

At the same time recognition of the value of RPL for individuals, employers and industry, educational organizations and the community is embraced by all these TVET systems. For Bangladesh there will remain for some time a lack of incentives within the Informal Sector to support RPL.

In all the countries reviewed, there is recognition in recognising learning regardless of how it has occurred. There is also recognition that many people have not had equal opportunities to formal learning and this disadvantage can, in part, be addressed through provision of RPL.

The most appropriate RPL models appear to vary with the maturity of the TVET system. Some general barriers to a broad perspective RPL process identified were:

- Too expensive
- Language used in process is too complex with too much training jargon
- Lack of support for participants
- Lack of flexibility of the process
- Acceptance of the quality of RPL results
- Lack of knowledge of RPL by potential users

In an attempt to overcome some of the identified structural problems in implementing RPL Australia has for example linked policy on RPL to regulatory requirements and quality assurance indicators to manage the operations of RTOs especially Tafe Institutes. This included directly linking funding to the quantity of RPL undertaken by the institution.

For Bangladesh, these conclusions indicate that RPL will not be an easy or quick process to develop and more importantly, to effectively implement.

There is some limited knowledge of RPL as a term in Bangladesh and of its potential but limited understanding of what it is in practice. Bangladesh is in the middle of change that will lead to a unit standard based system governing the operation of its TVET sector and this transformation provides the opportunity to establish an acceptance of an RPL process.

In the longer term Bangladesh authorities should consider RPL in its higher education system – but that raises a multitude of issues well beyond the bounds of the ILO TVET Reform program.

At present Bangladesh is in a unique situation of currently being in the planning phase of the reform of its TVET system. RPL needs to be embedded from the outset in both policy and practices. The evidence from other countries demonstrates that funding has been a major barrier, particularly to sustainability. Any proposed model for Bangladesh needs to ensure this is addressed from the outset by making RPL an integral part of any long term TVET funding model.

An early priority area may be seen as those workers intending to work overseas or those who have returned from overseas with improved skill sets. This may help promote acceptance of an RPL culture by the tangible demonstration of its value to the workforce.

In consultation with Component 4 specific RPL projects (nominated by various Industry Skill Committees) could be identified as a priority because they have large numbers of skilled people without certification.

Planning will be very important and a relevant authority such as the BTEB will need to take responsibility for this role. Such a process should be undertaken in collaboration with other key players such as the MoWOE, BTEB, MTEB and DTE to ensure a whole of sector approach is used.

The Planning process will need to incorporate issues such as:

- the format of the NTVQF
- how will RPL be marketed to ensure there is a take up of the process
- will any specific group be targeted initially to create a market presence – e.g. potential overseas workers
- where the industry need is greatest – identified by Industry Skill Committees
- what are the initial and ongoing costs and how will it be funded
- initial training of assessors and the sustainability of this process
- what procedures need to put in place for the registration of RTOs
- maintenance of central register of units/qualifications
- audit and moderation functions
- Competency Log Book format

Industry Skill Committees will need to play an integral role both in the planning and implementation phases.

RPL cannot be seen as the domain only of Component 5 of the ILO TVET reform project. To achieve sustainability, effectiveness and develop internal capability it needs to be a major consideration in the planning phase of all components but in particular Components 2, 3 and 4.

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