THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

AN ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITY POLICY RESPONSES IN THE WESTERN CAPE TO GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

A Mini-thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
Magister Commercii Degree in Management

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DATE: **November 2005**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this study "An Analysis of National Government Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and the University Policy Responses in the Western Cape" is my own work. This work has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university and all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references. The literature review covers the period 1994 to 2004.

KAASHIEFA MOBARAK   **SEPTEMBER 2005**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No written work belongs to one person entirely, and that is certainly true in the case of this mini-thesis. I acknowledge and express deep appreciation to the many people who have made this project possible:

- to Professor Douglas Blackmur, my supervisor.

- to my children, Rushan, Faiek and Rushana who into their teenage years, tolerated the long hours allocated to my studies, and supported and afforded me the 'peace of mind' that many parents, with teenage children wish for.

- to my colleagues, especially Charlene, Shamim and Hennie who always offered support and encouragement. Someone who needs a special mention is my manager, Arthur Crook, who tolerated me while working on this project during working hours.

- to my fellow students.

- lastly, to my mother - without her support I know this project would not have been possible in more ways than this space will ever allow me to say.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated in memory of my grandmother, a true woman of substance, who unfortunately, as a young person, found herself in a country that did not afford her the opportunity to be and share who she was. Until her death at the age of 92, life's challenges kept her too busy to enjoy this country she loved so much. Intelligent, independent and proud – she rose above all life's challenges with dignity.

ABSTRACT

The South African government plays a direct and active role in facilitating the development of a skilled workforce. The effective mobilisation, development and utilisation of South Africa's human resource capacity are critical for the success of the economy, institution building and the transformation process. In this context, the development of a system of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is one of the government's significant initiatives.

This research examines whether the policy documents of the universities in the Western Cape comply with the requirements of the National Government RPL policy. The thesis considers the range of definitions of RPL that are to be found in the literature. It then examines the particular meaning given to RPL by the South African government. Policy development within this framework is considered. The thesis explores the extent of compliance of the RPL policies of the University of the Western Cape, The University of Cape Town and the University of Stellenbosch with the RPL policy requirements of national government. The research concludes that government policy requirements are not properly reflected in several important respects at the respective institutions.

KEY WORDS

Access

Accredited Learning

Assessment

Barrier/s

Curriculum

Formal Learning

Learning Outcomes

Partnership

Policy

Providers

Recognition of Prior Learning

Redress

DEFINITIONS

ACCESS: entry to learning programmes.

ACCREDITED LEARNING: structured learning activity/ies that are accredited by the appropriate body, such as an educational institution or a professional association, as meeting the standards of the award to which it leads.

ASSESSMENT: a structured process in which evidence of performance is gathered and evaluated against agreed criteria.

BARRIER/S: an obstacle that hinders or obstructs access.
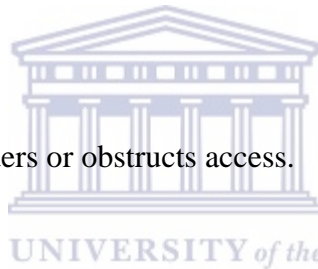
CURRICULUM: A defined course/programme of study at an educational institution.

FORMAL LEARNING: learning in a directed and prescribed form/content/subject environment.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: the contextually demonstrated end products, which meet the objectives of the learning process.

PARTNERSHIP: the state of sharing/being associated with others for specific purposes between a number of people.

POLICY: a course of action or administration recommended or adopted by a party/ies in pursuit of an objective(s).

PROVIDER/S: all types of institutions offering education and training, including universities, colleges and workplace-based training centres.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING: the formal certification through a process of assessment of the previously formally unrecognised skills, knowledge and capabilities of an individual.

REDRESS: to remedy or to make reparation.

ACRONYMS

ABET   Adult Basic Education and Training

APEL   Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning

CHE   Council on Higher Education

COSATU   Congress of South African Trade Unions

CTP   Committee of Technikon Principals

DoE   Department of Education

ETQA   Education and Training Quality Assurance

FET   Further Education and Training

HE   Higher Education

HEI   Higher Education Institution

HEQC   Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education

HET   Higher Education and Training

JET   Joint Education Trust

LET   Learning from Experiences Trust (UK)

NCHE   National Commission on Higher Education

NLRD   National Learners Records Database

NQF   National Qualifications Framework

NWG   National Working Group

QAA   Quality Assurance Agency (UK)

RPL   Recognition of Prior Learning

SAQA   South African Qualifications Authority

SAUVCA   South African Universities Vice Chancellors' Association

SERTEC   Certification Council for Technikon Education

SETA   Sector Education Training Authority

UWC   University of the Western Cape

UCT   University of Cape Town

USB   University of Stellenbosch

INTRODUCTION

The South African government defines RPL to mean "... the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner howsoever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specific qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements" (*Government Gazette*, 2003: 8).

RPL policy was introduced in South Africa with the intention of meeting the learning needs and aspirations of individuals (Forbes, 2003: 3) and thereby addressing the historical lack of opportunities for those people who had little or no formal education. Implementation of the RPL policy is designed to facilitate access to qualifications within higher education and may on this account increase the size of the formally skilled workforce in South Africa. The success of the government's policy will depend in no small measure on the extent to which education institutions adopt the government's RPL initiatives.

This mini-thesis seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the policies associated with RPL at the three Western Cape universities – the University of the Western Cape, the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Cape Town. The research examined the meaning given to RPL by the government and the extent of compliance of the RPL policy documents of the three universities with government RPL policy. Theory on the power dynamics that may exist amongst role-players during policy formulation at university level, are presented.

The research was conducted during the period June 2002 and December 2004. Given the dynamic nature of policy development (see Chapter 3) it is highly likely that there will be numerous, perhaps important, changes in policy formulation at the three universities since the completion of this document. The aim of this project was to stimulate discussion and further studies on RPL initiatives in order that access to RPL can be improved for those for whom the RPL initiative was intended i.e., candidates seeking access to further education possibilities, and those seeking redress.

This report ends with some recommendations, which it is hoped, will be imaginative but also practical and implementable within the current structures of the institutions and in accordance with national RPL policy requirements. Implementation of the recommendations will provide opportunities to South Africans with potential and/or experience, to develop and uplift themselves, and, in the process, make a worthy contribution to the economy in line with the government's human resources strategy. This strategy aims at, "…increasing access in career-focused programmes with prospective candidates able to choose from a wider range of programmes with different entry requirements; improved articulation between career-focused and general academic programmes thus facilitating student mobility between different programmes" (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 12).

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Outline

This study consists of five chapters.

Chapter One outlines the research design and approach applied in this study. An overview of the qualitative method is provided with briefings on the research problem, research question, aims of the research, advantages and disadvantages of the research method, research conduct, expected contribution and an ethics statement.

Chapter Two provides the reader with an overview of the concept of RPL internationally and in South Africa. This chapter highlights the importance of meaningful institutional RPL policy formulation related to transformation in education. The RPL initiative is structured into this educational transformation process and requires of educational institutions to form partnerships with other stakeholders for RPL progress and success. In this regard the relationship between the SETAs and HEIs is explained relative to the government's human resources development strategy.

Chapter Three provides the theoretical framework around policy formulation. This chapter outlines and discusses issues around the environment in which policy is developed and formulated. A review of literature related to the environment of policy formulation, as well as the power dynamics that may persist in this environment that influence the direction or shape of policy, concludes the chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four provides a matrix representation of the data collected. The chapter concludes with the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Chapter Five presents a summary of the research findings. Conclusions and recommendations are made based on these findings.

<u>CHAPTER 1</u>

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter outlines the research design and method of the study. An overview of the reason for the study as well as the selected approach to the research is provided.

BACKGROUND

The decision to research the RPL initiative arose out of personal experience by the researcher to access learning programmes for which experiential learning was achieved. The resistance as well as barriers to access learning programmes encountered at one institution brought about a curiosity to understand to what extent the government's RPL initiative was adopted by the HEIs in the Western Cape in the form of an institutional policy document. The starting assumption was that RPL, in certain professional programmes, was rejected because of the 'interference'[1] in the way things were done in the past.

FOOTNOTE 1: "Interference" - to intervene in a process where this is unwanted or deemed unnecessary

RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

RESEARCH PROBLEM

An investigation by the CTP (Committee of Technikon Principals)[2] (Du Prè & Pretorius, 2001: 1) into commitment to the RPL initiative, across public universities and technikons, showed the following results:

> Sixteen institutions did not have any policy or processes in place; twelve had initiated a process, ranging from investigating existing admissions policies to initiating the development of an RPL policy; six institutions had a documented final or draft policy; two were implementing RPL: one in the absence of documented institutional policy; the other following an institutionally approved policy (Du Prè & Pretorius, 2001: 1).

These findings suggested that there were grounds for significant concern regarding the extent to which HEIs have taken the government's RPL policy seriously. Du Prè et al (2001: 2) argue that, "…ideally, higher education wishes to facilitate a discourse of equivalence between the different forms of knowledge, allowing a mutually beneficial process of contestation and enrichment to inform a truly South African 'process of constructing a seamless lifelong learning system' (*Council on Higher Education*, 2000) that embraces all facets, levels and sites of learning". In this context, this thesis adopts a more micro focus by examining the policy content of the three universities with respect to the government's RPL policy.

FOOTNOTE 2: CTP – was established as a statutory body in terms of the Technikons Act, 1993. It no longer has statutory status as the Technikons Act was repealed with the introduction of the Higher Education Act. This body fulfils the same role for the technikon sector as SAUVCA does for the universities (Breier, 2001: 46)

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent does the RPL policy of the University of the Western Cape, the University of Cape Town and the University of Stellenbosch reflect the RPL policy requirements of the national government?

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The principal purpose of this research was to define and explain national government's RPL policy and to establish the extent to which the RPL policy documents of the three Western Cape universities comply with the RPL requirements of national government.

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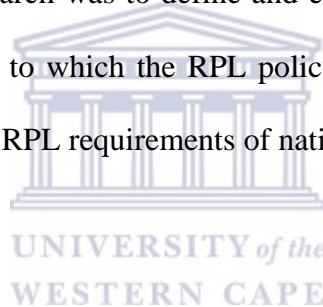
RESEARCH METHOD

This mini-thesis is a qualitative study, incorporating analyses of procedural and policy documents relevant to RPL, issued by the various national bodies and institutions. All three institutions have copies of their RPL policies, whether in draft or approved by the senate, available on their websites. Further data collection involved a review of literature: scholarly journals, books, dissertations, policy reports and papers, as well as attending workshops on RPL offered by the National Department of Education and HEIs.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

The research is a study that attempts to describe and define the RPL policy of the universities in comparison to the RPL policy of national government. A descriptive investigation has a (Cooper & Schindler, 2001: 13) broad appeal to the policy analyst for planning, monitoring and evaluating.   An inductive approach to research, as is generally taken in qualitative research (Thietart, Girod-Seville & Perret, 2002: 15), was taken in this project. According to Cooper & Schindler (2001: 35) to induce is to draw a conclusion from one or more particular facts or pieces of evidence. An inductive approach begins with immersion in the social process, not with hypothesis or existing theory.   Cooper & Schindler (2001: 137) state that emphasis on detail provides valuable insight for problem solving, evaluation and strategy.

This report ends with recommendations, which it is hoped, will be imaginative but also practical and implementable within the current structures of the institutions and in accordance with national RPL policy requirements, and most importantly in line with national government's human resources development strategy.

ADVANTAGES OF THE RESEARCH METHOD
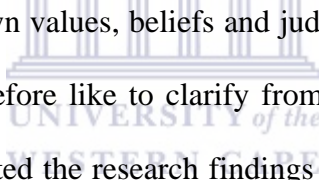
The advantage of this research method is that information is available in print and validity and reliability should not be questionable as reference can be made to the policy documents at hand. The approach produces concentrated data on a specific topic and the data are targeted to

the research problem.   This provides direct evidence and valuable insight, and makes estimated time for analysis and evaluation easier.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE RESEARCH METHOD

There are no obvious disadvantages in this method of analysing policy documents.

RESEARCH CONDUCT

I acknowledge the fact that my own values, beliefs and judgment cannot be ignored in what I was investigating and would therefore like to clarify from the outset that my understanding and background would have affected the research findings to some extent. I have to the best of my ability, attempted to distinguish between my perception of the research problem and the research problem itself in order to ensure that the findings and conclusions are amicably detailed.   The recommendations do not exceed the scope of the study.   Decision-based conclusions have been matched with detailed findings.

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of national government's RPL policy requirements for prospective RPL candidates, through a clarification of the RPL policy content of the respective universities. The interpretation of the findings led to suggestions for further policy development and improvement of the existing RPL policy initiatives at the universities.

It is hoped that this research will stimulate discussion and further studies on RPL initiatives in order that the purpose of RPL can be filtered to those for whom the RPL initiative was intended i.e., candidates seeking access to further education possibilities, and those seeking redress.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Due to the nature of the study there was no personal involvement other than the telephonic contact with the representatives of the respective institutions. The purpose for the request was explained and the RPL policy documents were forwarded by post and electronically. All participants providing information did so on a voluntary basis and were fully informed of the purposes of the research beforehand. No remuneration was offered or provided to those agreeing to provide information.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

The information is public information as it is available on the institutions' web sites and confidentiality was therefore not a consideration. Appropriate training and preparation for conducting the research was ensured by attending related courses and seminars offered by universities, the Department of Education and other educational and private institutions. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical and professional guidelines as specified in my professional association.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RPL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter consists of the Literature Review and Relationships between RPL and National Government Human Resources Strategy. The literature review is provided relative to the changes in higher education, including RPL and the interaction with policy formulation. The literature covers the period January 1994 to December 2004. This was a period of intense debate related to educational transformation as a whole within South Africa. Themes in the literature are presented relative to various national and international debates on RPL.
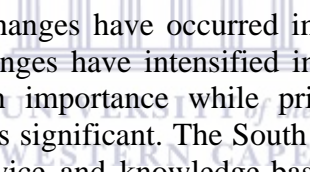
The Relationships between RPL and National Government Human Resources Strategy highlights the importance of meaningful institutional RPL policy formulation in the context of the government's agenda for transformation in higher education. The RPL initiative is an integral part of the education transformation process and requires of education institutions to form partnerships with other stakeholders for RPL progress and success. In this regard the relationship between the SETAs and HEIs is vital to the success of the government's human resources development strategy. The government's human resources strategy, through the RPL initiative, aims to increase the pool of formal skills within the country.

LITERATURE REVIEW (1994 - 2004)

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The South African government defines RPL to mean "... the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner howsoever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specific qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements" (*Government Gazette*, 2003: 8).

The *Department of* Education *and Department of Labour* (2001: 32-33) report on the government's HRD strategy for South Africa that:

> significant structural changes have occurred in the economy over the past three decades, and these changes have intensified in the past decade. Tertiary sector activities are rising in importance while primary and secondary sectors are becoming relatively less significant. The South African economy is in the process of becoming more service and knowledge-based each year. More complex and dynamic operating environments, together with continuous technological advances, are resulting in businesses requiring more skilled labour.

In this context, RPL can potentially make a significant contribution to the achievement of the government's HRD strategy. Internationally procedures and tools for RPL have become an integral part of flexible assessment or competence-based assessment systems. Moore & Van Rooyen (2002: 293) argue that there is no difference between the tools and procedures of competence-based assessment and those of RPL. Moore & Van Rooyen (2002: 293) quote Simosko & Cook (1996: 1) to the effect that: "Educators, trainers, employers and government policy makers, regardless of nation, seem to be saying much the same thing: that as nations we

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must put individuals first and provide opportunities whereby everyone can make maximum use of their potential. Educators, trainers and other human resource development specialists are concerned that too much valuable time and effort is lost, teaching people what they already know and can do" (Moore et al, 2002: 293).

Cretchley & Castle (2001: 497) argue that adult learners are mature, experienced and motivated people who are competent to take responsibility for their own learning. Cretchley & Castle quote Knowles (1978, 1984) to the effect that RPL upholds the andragogic principle that the individual's self-concept and life experience form both a resource and a constraint for further learning. RPL relies on the individual's ability to understand their learning needs and intended achievements, and on the expertise and political will of the institution-based assessors and programme teams to validate the learning and admit the adult to further opportunities.
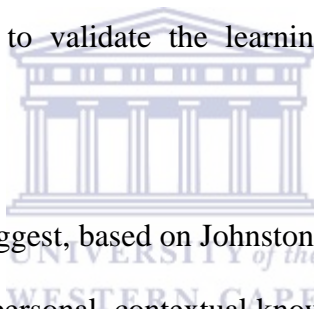
Cretchley & Castle (2001: 497) suggest, based on Johnston & Usher (1997), that RPL requires the adult learner to transcribe the personal, contextual knowledge gained from experience into the more abstract and generalised forms of knowledge recognised by assessors and disciplinary experts employed in higher education. Cretchley & Castle continue stating that the balance of power rests with the institution, rather than the learner, to define what material is relevant in an RPL application. Moore & Van Rooyen (2002: 293) argue that a practical elaboration of RPL policy and practice in the education and training sector is needed. This process needs to be administered carefully and supported by explicitly anti-discriminatory policies to encourage fairness and equality (Moore & Van Rooyen, 2002: 293).

Moore & Van Rooyen (2002: 293) argue that RPL, following McKay, Kotze, Vaccarino & De Necker (1998: 163), will avoid unnecessary duplication of learning, encourage self-assessment, assist learners to make judgements concerning their knowledge and skills, reduce the time learners need to spend in training and help build learner confidence. Moore & Van Rooyen (2002: 293) endorse the DoE's argument that the assessment system for Education and Training (of which RPL is integrated) is the cornerstone of transformation activities and programmes (*Department of Education*, 1997a: 117). Knowledge acquired through non-formal training by many adults and school leavers (Moore et al, 2002: 293) was not recognised or certificated and this often led to exclusion from certain jobs, failure to obtain promotion on the job, and from further education and training opportunities for which some form of "certificate" was a pre-requisite.
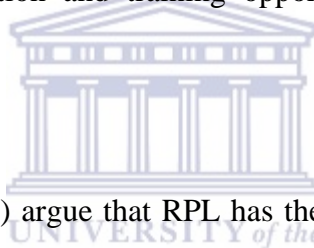
Moore & Van Rooyen (2002: 293) argue that RPL has the potential to be a powerful tool in people development to provide a skill focus for employers and to assist in economic and social development. Moore et al (2002: 294) continue that RPL is an approach that seems to embody a number of key elements relevant to current South African economic, organisational and labour market realities. RPL recognises the increased importance of continuous learning and upgrading, and values past learning and skills gained through life and work experience, as well as through formal education and training (Moore et al, 2002: 294). RPL focuses upon individuals and builds confidence and self-esteem based upon systematic self-assessment of concrete performance and achievement (Moore et al, 2002: 294 – 295). In South Africa, various RPL initiatives have had different degrees of success where the majority of the initiatives were conducted on an informal basis (Moore et al, 2002: 294).

THE RPL INITIATIVE (INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL)

RPL is an access strategy that (Geyser, n.d.: 30) has grown out of international educational developments which has gained much prominence in countries such as the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Similar practices are called the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (APEL) in the United Kingdom; Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) in the United States of America; Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in Canada.

RPL processes are meant to contribute to the establishment of (Geyser, n.d.: 30) a single national co-ordinated system of education. Geyser (n.d.: 30) maintains that RPL has dissolved the borders between working, learning and leisure. Osman & Castle (2002: 63) explain that, "RPL is a tool that assists adults to identify existing knowledge and skills, acquired informally, through work and life experience, while allowing institutions to make judgements about their preparedness for study and eligibility for credit".

Internationally RPL is increasingly used as an alternative access route into higher education, particularly in professional fields, such as law, engineering, teaching, nursing and management (Osman & Castle, 2002: 63). RPL is one of many changes in higher education associated with the move to lifelong learning (Osman & Castle, 2002: 64). Walters (1999: 578) argues that education policy documents in various parts of the world, including South Africa, suggest that lifelong learning is often a panacea for a multitude of problems: "it will

help career development, cure unemployment, encourage flexibility and change, raise personal and national competitiveness, help personal development".

Harris (1999: 1) argues that RPL occupies a place in South African education and training policy as a main tenet of the NQF. Harris (1999: 1) states that RPL also features in both the NCHE (1996) Report and the paper on Higher Education Transformation (DoE, 1996). Harris (1999: 3) continues that the RPL concept is thus relatively un-problematically underpinned by beliefs to the effect that "(1) … adults are by definition predisposed to learning and of necessity experienced learners and (2) … subject to some form of scrutiny, non-accredited learning has the potential to be 'recognised' and accorded value in relation to formal qualifications and structures".

Barkatoolah (n.d.: 1) maintains that practices concerned with RPL are designed to increase self-awareness and to offer substantial amounts of educational and career guidance to potential learners. Barkatoolah (n.d.: 1) continues that the outcome of RPL tends to be a 'competence audit' of personal and occupational skills that an individual can use to negotiate access to learning programmes with educational institutions and career advancement with employers (based on collective bargaining agreements). Barkatoolah (n.d.: 1) argues that RPL can lead to accreditation of previously acquired learning/skills that can lead to the award of particular certificates. Castle (2001: 2) argues that RPL is an attractive proposition in South Africa because it offers a response to social and economic pressures for change in economic participation by all South Africans. Castle (2001: 2) explains that there is a growing

awareness that learning from experience, gained in a variety of contexts, should be more substantially acknowledged and rewarded, especially by educational institutions.

RPL – CHALLENGE OR THREAT?

Anderson & Maharasoa (2002: 15) suggest that RPL should not be seen as causing a breakdown in the quality of education or existing qualifications, nor as a threat to educators, especially those employed in HEIs. Kistan (2002: 169) argues that there is an endemic shortage of high-level professional and managerial skills in South Africa. Statistics from the National Plan for HE (*Department of Education*, 2001a: 169) for the period 1994 to 2000, show a 79% decline in demand for the labour of workers with no education, and an increase by 2028% for workers with a tertiary qualification. Kistan (2002: 169) argues that the labour market trends indicate a need for a higher education system to produce more graduates. Enrolment trends suggests that both in terms of (Kistan, 2002: 169) numbers of students enrolled and enrolment in different fields of study, the higher education system is not meeting this need. Kistan (2002: 169) continues to argue that for millions of adults formal learning opportunities have been severely limited because their experiences were seldom understood or recognised.

RPL places the challenge to universities (Kistan, 2002: 170) to create a balance between what they are currently doing against what is happening in reality. The Ministry of Education believes (Kistan, 2002: 170) that an important avenue for increasing the potential pool of

recruits to higher education is to recruit non-traditional students such as workers, mature learners (in particular women), and the disabled.   The DoEs White Paper (1995: 15), quoted by Kistan (2002: 170), opens doors of opportunity for people whose academic or career paths have been needlessly blocked because their prior knowledge has not been assessed and certified.   Moore & Van Rooyen (2002: 293 - 296) explain that RPL provides a practical means to utilise past learning in order to pursue future objectives in a variety of contexts. RPL provides a solid base for long-term human resource development and may contribute to improvements in morale, quality service and viability. Moore et al (2002: 295 - 296) further suggest that the ability of RPL to serve the interest of workers cannot be assumed but must be concretised within particular practices that create a supportive environment for workers in the establishment of RPL policy and practice. Osman & Castle (2002: 63) argue that many higher education educators see RPL as an undemanding way of gaining credit and this causes university educators to be sceptical about RPL.
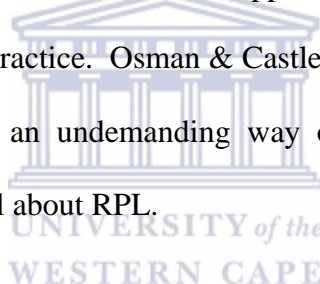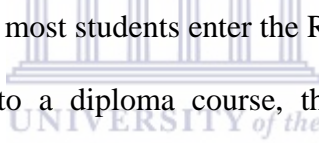
RPL involves (Geyser, n.d.: 30) a perspective on learning that challenges the traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Geyser (n.d.: 30) argues that one of the reasons why RPL is reluctantly accepted in some academic circles is that RPL learners represent new challenges that could add to the heavy load of overworked academics. Geyser (n.d.: 30) continues that, on the other hand, if the drop in the number of students in traditional higher education in South Africa is taken into consideration, RPL could become a necessity – "even a survival strategy for many departments at universities …". In this context universities should take cognisance of the emerging trend of student access to private higher education institutions. The admissions requirements to existing learning programmes at private higher

education institutions accommodate the RPL initiative in that students do not need a matriculation exemption, as is the case at public universities. RPL requires of universities to allow access to existing degrees and not alternative remedial learning programmes.

Resisting the change that RPL will bring raise issues of sustainability of universities. Learners who are denied access to public higher education institutions due to not qualifying within the current admission of a matriculation exemption[3], may access learning programmes at private higher education institutions that offer RPL access and progression.

THE NATURE OF RPL IN PRACTICE

McMillan (1999: 3) maintains that most students enter the RPL process due to a lack of formal qualifications for direct entry into a diploma course, through a desire for personal and professional advancement or confirmation/preparation. At the level of higher education, access to a programme will be the objective of those who apply for RPL, but it will also include those candidates seeking certification of existing skills without any intention of undertaking further formal education (as an end in itself). Assessment for RPL (without compromising quality in education) is subject to, "…credible assessment; the quality of the evidence; an assessment planned and designed on the basis of understanding the requirements of the unit standard, part qualification or whole qualification; the use of various methods and instruments; the requirements for a credible assessment process; and moderation and quality assurance of assessments" (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 20).

FOOTNOTE 3: This thesis deals with the period up until 2004. Subsequent policy developments will be outside this scope.

RPL is an important strategy to address access for those previously excluded from education. National government provides the necessary frameworks (see chapter 3) in order to facilitate a socially inclusive approach to RPL. Nieman (n.d.: 151) argues that changing circumstances and revolutionary approaches, such as RPL, demand that institutions should thoroughly scrutinise and reconsider existing assessment and evaluative methods.

Conventional assessment and evaluation reflect a number of serious shortcomings and are far from relevant to the current situation, especially with regard to prior learning. RPL candidates may not have "formal" learning experience and the idea of conventional assessment methods, e.g. sit-down examinations, do not necessarily serve the purpose of evaluating the knowledge gained by such a learner (Castle, 2001: 6). RPL candidates, of whom the majority would be adult learners, may lack confidence and self-esteem, and the idea of a sit-down examination could result in fear of assessment (Castle, 2001: 6). Alternative methods to sit-down examinations, especially for adult learners, can include methods of: Observation; Questionnaires/Questioning; Research and Presentation; Testimony; Story-Telling; Practical Application – videoing, role plays; Skills transfer (on-the-job).

Nieman (n.d.: 151) further quotes Toop & Burleigh (1993: 17), that there is the perception amongst academics that RPL involves a "second class" or inferior assessment. Nieman (n.d.: 151), however, argues that educators ascribe this to the fact that "the critic has set up in his/her mind an idealised assessment situation which is rarely met in reality". RPL candidates may

only be au fait with workplace performance assessment methods related to key performance indicators (KPI) and key performance areas (KPA) which does not involve memory or theory testing but practical skills related to e.g. maximising profit and production (Nieman, n.d.: 151).

There seems to be agreement in the literature on a number of principles in academic matters, administrative procedures and fees with reference to RPL. The standards established in terms of these principles are intended to assist and direct the quality assurance of RPL. An example of standards is that the assessment process should not in any way be manipulated for other gains other than the purpose intended by the process. This is part of a quality management process. Baty (2003: n.p.) warns in his article on "Degree Short Cuts" (The Times, Higher Education Supplement, 2003) about students gaining degrees after completing a third of their courses by paying universities to assess their life experiences and offsetting them against teaching and assessment in the respective learning programmes. An example of this is that a holiday lifeguard could offset "unassessed" work against a degree in sports science where the experience is directly relevant to the programme. Leisure and voluntary activities are counted as experience in some countries and credit is granted for this in accessing formal learning and for granting credits in formal learning programmes. Evans (2003: n.p.) argues that Baty (2003: n.p.) is wrong about "degree shortcuts". According to Evans (2003: n.p.) the regulations issued by the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Registry in the UK gave institutions explicit authority to award academic credit for APEL at undergraduate and graduate levels.

Du Prè & Pretorius (2001: 28) argue that RPL is a costly and labour intensive exercise and will have negative implications for institutions such as, e.g., overworked staff, administrative and academic, that could lead to a drop in service levels as they might not be able to perform their duties competently. Du Prè & Pretorius (2001: 28) argue that RPL tasks should preferably be officially recognised as formal responsibilities of lecturing staff and not as add-ons. The teaching loads of academic staff may have to be reduced as a consequence, to allow time for them to undertake RPL work. Both academic and support staff may require training in dealing with the RPL process. Baty (2003: n.p.) argues that external moderators/assessors have to be appointed to moderate internal assessment. Baty states further that QAA in the UK, for example, is drawing up guidelines on the use of APEL. The QAA states that some universities allow APEL to be double counted towards more than one qualification where awards are very similar (Baty, 2003: n.p.).
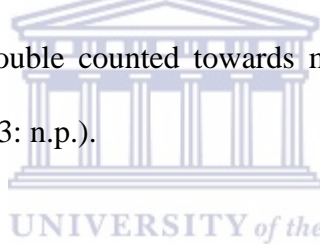
Harris (1999: 61) argues, quoting Bourdieu & Passeron (1997), that the work of traditional academia is the creation of an educated elite, which perpetuates the system of class relations and reproduces the social, cultural and economic status quo (Harris, 1999: 61). In order for RPL to succeed (Harris, 1999: 61), candidates have to reclassify and accommodate themselves to the demands and assumptions of the current system by translating their knowledge into that which is valued in the field. The alternative would be staff and processes that accept educational transformation and allow unbiased, equal access to opportunities. Harris (1999: 61) continues to argue that although current practices may lead to advancement for some individuals, these practices are more about a re-inscription of dominant discourses than any challenge to them. Only change in approach to the RPL initiative can encourage ongoing

success, due to the absorption of non-qualifying learners into private educational institutions offering more relevant learning programmes.

THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The *Ministry of Education* (2002: 1) is seeking to transform higher education in South Africa from an apartheid education system to one that is consistent with the vision, values and principles of the constitution and which contributes to the human resource and knowledge needs of the country. The new institutional landscape has arisen out of a wide-ranging consultative process that began in early 1990. A rich variety of policy documents were produced. An appeal by the Ministry of Education was made to all HEIs and other constituencies to set aside their differences in favour of the common good (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 1).

Since 1994 interesting changes have taken place in the South African higher education system. Fourie (1999: 278) explains that following on the country's transition to democracy, the demands and expectations arising from the new political dispensation gave new impetus to the drive towards a more open, relevant and non-discriminatory higher education system. Fourie continues that transformation in the South African higher education system has been characterised by a considerable degree of conflict. She argues that this conflict mostly emanates from contesting paradigms related to curriculum development and curriculum content (Fourie, 1999: 278).

Change in the higher education sector, amongst the myriad of other changes in education nationally, was also the result of internationalisation of higher education. Anderson & Maharasoa (2002: 15) quote Teichler (1999: 6) to the effect that "… higher education institutions could already be perceived as very international institutions, compared to other major institutions in society: there was a high appreciation of cosmopolitan values, pride was based on international reputation, international mobility and cooperation were not rare occurrences". Teichler (1999: 6) quoted further by Anderson & Maharasoa (2002: 15), however, cautions that, while regarding the international aspect of institutions, the national context of the institutions should not be ignored. Cognisance should be taken of the priorities for which students have to be trained in order for them to serve meaningfully in local communities.
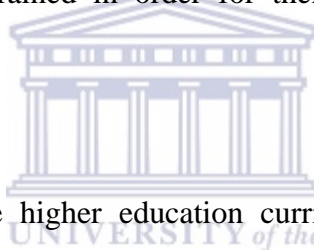
The nature and relevance of the higher education curriculum has become a concern to government (Luckett, n.d.: 50). A recent report by the CHE's Size and Shape Task Team (2000: 23) quoted by Luckett, (n.d.: 50) showed that:

> The knowledge economy and complex societal problems require inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary knowledge production and graduates that possess a range of competencies and skills. The production of graduates as critical citizens vital to a democratic society also requires education and training that is not narrow but spans and incorporates various disciplines and fields. Public higher education institutions should be multipurpose institutions and offer broad-based higher education to achieve the goals set for higher education. Programmes should not be concentrated in only one or two broad areas of study. This would enable institutions to accommodate newly developing areas of study, which in many cases arise from the combination of existing knowledge areas, more easily in their learning programmes (Luckett, n.d.:50).

Luckett (n.d.: 51) argues that any debate on the content of the curriculum has been largely side-lined by the preoccupation of "disciplinary experts'" with meeting SAQA's demands for the (interim) registration of qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework which is largely about meeting the globalisation and massification agenda. Luckett (n.d.: 51) quotes Breier (1999) as saying that an unexpected drop in student numbers in public HEIs, and increased competition from private institutions, led to an overriding concern by public HEIs for recruitment, efficiency, viability and meeting market demands. Oberholster, (2003a: 12) explains that there are many more private providers of higher education offering courses for those who want to further their studies after Grade 12. The HEQC was established by the CHE as the official body to ensure that all providers offer an education that meets the standards and requirements of SAQA, as well as conforming to both national and international best practice.
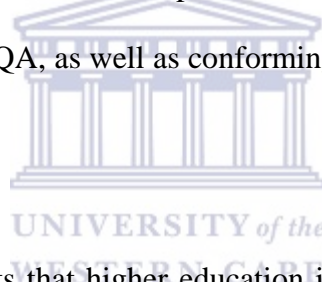
Oberholster (2003b: 12) comments that higher education is charged with contributing to the urgent economic and social development of South Africa, with producing high-level skilled graduates to drive such development, and with generating the knowledge that is a vital component of development. Oberholster (2003a: 12) reiterates that the government's decision to establish the CHE must be understood against this background. While the mandate of the CHE is to advise the minister of education on all matters of higher education, the HEQCs main function is to evaluate the quality of programmes offered by public and private providers of higher education.

Since 1994, policy documents and initiatives (Strydom & Hay, n.d.: 82) proposed not only regional co-operation between various higher and further education institutions, but also the need for academic programme co-operation between institutions. Academics are still reluctant to engage in such endeavours. Strydom & Hay (n.d.: 82) comment that the institutions and individuals might be overwhelmed by the abundance of policy proposals in basically all spheres of the South African society – "reform fatigue" - but argue that the intentions of most of these policy initiatives are valuable and necessary to bring about change in the South African society.

Walters (1999: 577) argues that massification and diversification are required by the South African government without the expectation that real per capita resources will increase substantially: innovative approaches to learning and teaching are thus required. Walters (1999: 577) states further that there are 21 universities (reduced since 1999) in South Africa with gross inequalities between historically black and historically white universities. South Africa's legacy of exclusion and inequality, and the national and international trend of diminishing resources and increased demands, gives an added critical dimension to the present situation (Walters, 1999: 577).

Strydom & Hay (n.d.: 87) argue that due to the increasing complexity of higher and further education, institutions are facing many challenges, and quote (Barnett, 2000: 153) to the effect that new challenges will arise for universities in respect of the development of leadership and management skills. Strydom et al (n.d.: 87) continue that academics should be prepared to take on their new role, including the requirements of RPL, in HEIs based on the White Paper

on Higher Education and the Higher Education Act. This can however raise important issues of academic freedom.

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN RPL SUCCESS AND EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

Change in higher education is a global phenomenon and Fourie (1999: 275) quotes Green & Hayward (1997: 3) arguing that "although higher education is often seen as slow to change or downright resistant, it has undergone rapid transformation throughout the world in the last 25 years and may be in a period of unprecedented change". Fourie (1999: 275) quotes Hagstrom & Steen (n.d. 15) confirming that:

> There are many signs, which indicate that the world is going through such major changes that we may be talking about a new epoch. Since knowledge plays the key role in the new society it is sometimes called the knowledge society. The emergence of the new society calls for a re-evaluation of the university system … (Fourie, 1999: 275).

Transformation in the higher education system requires universities to undergo, (Fourie, 1999: 276) not only a comprehensive change process but also a radical one i.e. starting afresh. The aforementioned relates to the need for RPL to be incorporated into programme development by HEIs, requiring of these institutions to re-look and re-do education strategies related to national government's goals and objectives of access and redress. There are constant shifts of emphasis that dominate the higher education debate which requires of academic staff to make

paradigm shifts, adapt and approach their professional endeavours in new and innovative ways (Fourie, 1999: 276).

Anderson & Maharasoa (2002: 16) quote Gordon (1997: 68) suggesting that there are three main issues of relevance that universities should address without delay, namely diversity, employability and institutional accountability. RPL requires of learning programmes to address these issues through allowing access to candidates who were historically not afforded the opportunity to access learning programmes, as well as learners who seek access to education institutions to improve their level of education. The implications in this regard would be (Anderson et al, 2002: 16) that universities cover ground from diverse academic training needs to culture-related tuition, which, in turn, calls for diversity of staff and their areas of expertise.
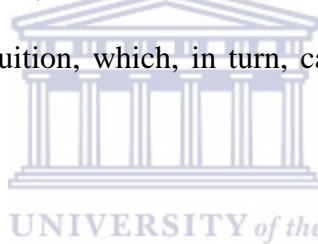
Universities should address the employer community needs, both nationally and internationally, (Anderson et al, 2002: 16) by drawing on experiences from different worlds, which would impact positively on the relevance of the programmes of study. RPL encourage the notion of access and redress that allows for partnerships with employers and communities in order to address the skills shortages within the economy through education. This international approach to education extends to learners the opportunity of international employability encouraging opportunities in the labour market both locally and internationally (Anderson & Maharasoa, 2002:17). Anderson et al (2002: 17) however caution that universities will always, quoting (Gordon, 1997) in setting up of partnerships, remain accountable to the national governments, the taxpayers, the learners and their parents, and the

employers. The shape the universities evolve into does not excuse them from remaining national entities and this should form the basis of all their operations (Anderson et al quoting Teichler (1999)).

Anderson & Maharasoa (2002: 17) encourage universities not to manifest change in education as a threat to the future but to act in order to evade extinction. Anderson & Maharasoa (2002: 17) quote Williams & Fry (1994) advising "…universities to form partnerships in which they can pay attention to the issues of effectiveness in teaching and learning, diversity and differentiation of academic programmes and qualifications, and the use of technology as matters of primary concern". Anderson et al (2002: 17) continue that previously the success of business relied on variables e.g. "how well an organisation could take business away from competitors", today 'all the world's a stage' and survival of the fittest is the name of the game (Anderson et al, 2002: 17). South African HEIs are of late experiencing a similar situation with the upcoming private higher education. Private higher education institutions are more resourced in terms of finances as well as the scope and duration of innovative programmes and are attracting potential learners from public universities (Anderson et al, 2002: 17). This situation, amongst others, propels universities to (Anderson et al, 2002: 17) shift from competition to co-opetition – operating in order to compete successfully with likes.

The success of the RPL initiative, through all its stakeholder bodies (see chapter 3), require of universities to form partnerships. Universities can secure a more sustainable competitive advantage by combining efforts. Anderson et al (2002: 17) argue that co-opetition between local and international universities are gaining momentum in South Africa. The co-opetition

approach allows for enhancement in the quality of academic provision. Universities will not just be surviving but will be able to serve a broader and more diverse pool of customers (Anderson et al, 2002: 17)).

Mji (n.d.: 166) argues that universities have experienced stagnating or declining budgets and simultaneous pressures to increasing enrolments. This has resulted in some universities being stretched for funds and resources to an extent that access for eligible students is gradually becoming harder and harder. Other problems include the poor socio-economic conditions, a legacy of inferior schooling, studying through a second or third language and so on. Mji (n.d.: 166) continues that access to university education is important because, if the country is to have future leaders and informed opinion makers, then it should be guaranteed for deserving students, whatever their circumstances. Consistent with this contention Mji (n.d.: 166) quotes Nicholson (1999) arguing that "… for upliftment of a group or class, it is a wider liberal education, … which will enable them effectively to take their place as leaders, opinion makers and policy developers". Mji (n.d.: 166) cautions that such access should take cognisance of the different experiences students have had prior to university, including a variety of issues such as the language/s students use and, cultural norms and practices, amongst others.

Fourie & Hay (2000.: 9) argue that important national policy developments such as the NCHE report, the White Paper on Higher Education and the establishment of the NQF opened up debates around apparent paradoxes such as, "autonomy vs accountability, centralisation vs decentralisation, access vs quality, uniqueness of HEIs vs inter-institutional articulation and student mobility, and others". Fourie & Hay (2000.: 9) continue that these policy directions

entailed not only opportunities but also threats for higher education. Threats include excessive emphasis on career education and training demands for relevant teaching and research, limitations on institutional autonomy and academic freedom, diluting the differentiation between higher and further education (Fourie & Hay, 2000.: 9).

The culmination of programmes into specified registered qualifications requires the following important aspects:

> There should be coherence between the content of the programme and the formulated outcomes of the programme; the programme should have a strong, clear focus; the various components of the programme content should interrelate in a complementary way; if the programme is interdisciplinary, all relevant disciplines should be well-represented; interdisciplinary should be substantive and synergetic in nature; undergraduate programmes should lay a sound basis for postgraduate studies; postgraduate programmes should provide access to international contexts of knowledge and research; the content should be well-defined configuration of knowledge (Fourie & Hay, 2000.: 9).

Fourie (1999: 277) argues that transformation of HEIs is not only about changes in the composition of staff and students, or changes in governance structures or course content. Fourie (1999: 277) argues that transformation is essentially about change in organisational culture and the development and acceptance of new, shared values. This can only be achieved through cognitive transcendence of all stakeholders and role-players, amongst which academic staff requires particular attention (Fourie, 1999: 277). Institutional governance and management structures and processes have been (Fourie, 1999: 277) under constant attack from staff, students and the broader community. Accusations against Councils of (Fourie, 1999: 277) undemocratic behaviour, unrepresentivity and even illegitimate behaviour have

been at the forefront. Academics have accused Senates of not adequately representing their interests and that their views are not being reflected in decision making (Fourie, 1999: 280). Fourie (1999: 280) continues that for many academic staff members their involvement in transformation forums was their first experience of negotiation and joint decision-making with non-academic structures. Some senior academics withdrew from the process of transformation as they found the entire idea unpalatable (Fourie, 1999: 280).

Meanwhile, globalisation and technological advances are taking place at a pace that is hard to keep up with. Mji (n.d.: 167) argues that massive amounts of information and the advances in technology being churned out to the world everyday, is being missed by a large number of our potential skills base in South Africa. In order that more students are encouraged to take up professional courses at universities and technikons it is (Mji, n.d.: 167) imperative that this country, both public and private sectors, recognise the injection of much needed funds now that will pay future dividends. In the same breath the much needed co-operation of all stakeholders should be encouraged with incentives, to achieve success and sustainability in not just higher education but the education sector as a whole.

EDUCATION REFORM - COMPETITON FOR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES FROM THE PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Fehnel (2002: 67) explains that prior to 1997, private higher education providers in South Africa were not allowed to offer qualifications. They operated in partnership with public

universities and technikons. The Higher Education Act of 1997 however changed the rules of the game by permitting private providers to offer degrees and diplomas within the guidelines of the NQF. Fehnel (2002: 67) continues that within private higher education the specialised segment known as corporate universities or corporate classrooms has been the fastest growing segment. Fehnel (2002: 67) quotes Giroux & Myrsiades (2001) arguing that academics see corporate classrooms as an expropriation of an ideal by those who seek to 'commodify' higher education.

Corporate education is (Fehnel, 2002: 69) capturing a larger share of the growing market because they are responsive to the needs of employers for developing competencies that will enable both the individual and organisation to operate more effectively – leading to increased productivity for the organisation and an education for the individual. Fehnel (2002: 69) continues that corporate providers are becoming the preferred sources of education and training for workforces as they provide an educational service that is substantially different in content and context, which is substantially different from traditional providers of education.

Badroodien (2002: 137) argues that in this era of globalisation it is no longer possible to separate private and public higher education provision in a rigid manner. Badroodien (2002: 137) continues that previously impermeable boundary lines between private and public provision have become blurred and are converging more and more. The South African higher education landscape towards the development of unified institutional and qualification structures have had a significant influence on the ways in which private and public education provision is understood. Responses that have occurred in line with the shifts are: "the absence

of a coherent and systematic planning framework across the higher education and training sector; the new technological and economic production regime that has accompanied radically changed conditions in the global economy; the recognition of a worldwide trend towards a more open, permeable and massified higher education and training system; and the significant reduction of state financing of public higher education provision in South Africa" (Badroodien, 2002: 137).

Kraak (2002: 63) argues that given the rapid decline of low-skilled and semi-skilled employment and the concomitant increased demand for intermediate, middle-level education and training, it can be argued that such a convergence of education provision is potentially good development for the national economy, with the contribution of the private education and training sector constituting an important complement to public provision of education. Kraak (2002: 63) continues to argue that benefits will only accrue if certain conditions prevail: "the quality of public and private provision at the FET-HET interface is high and not compromised by a narrow chase after new markets and income; there is no duplication of provision on an unacceptably large scale – this would require a greater form of state co-ordination of provision at the FET-HET interface than is currently the case; there are no skewing effects which act to reduce the volume of high-skill education and training and research output (NQF Levels 6, 7 and 8) in public HET institutions, as these same institutions opportunistically strive towards increased provision at the lower end of provision (NQF Level 5)". Achieving these conditions (Kraak, 2002: 63) would require the careful integration of 'state steering' with more dynamic and rapidly changing forms of institutional initiative in both the private and public education and training sectors.

Kruss (2002: 27) argues the majority of private providers meet a demand for 'different' education, which takes the form of small-scale 'specialised' providers offering vocational and professional programmes that are not traditionally considered to be higher education. Kraak (2002: 27) continues that these programmes aim to extend access to job opportunities and niche markets. These private higher education sub-sectors offer different opportunities and contribute potentially to the goal of a diverse national higher education landscape in different ways. Kraak (2002: 27) argues that while these sub-sectors are in direct competition with traditional public universities, a larger private sub-sector offers post-grade 12 higher vocational education and training at a level of intermediate skilling for which there is insufficient public provision. Little attention has been given to the actual and potential contribution of these private providers in meeting a 'different' demand for education and training. Understanding the primary demand to which private sub-sectors respond, and the related organisational and financial forms, potentially leads towards a more nuanced engagement with the private higher education sector in relation to the public sector (Kruss, 2002: 28).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The government sees RPL as a device for transformation providing access to people previously excluded from education opportunities. Many big issues are raised in the Literature Review but the significance to this study would be the emphasis on the potential RPL has as a tool for transformation in education thereby addressing the government's human resources strategy of access and redress.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RPL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

Breier (2001: 5) argues that responsiveness to societal interests and needs is one of the three key policy goals for the South African higher education system put forward by the NCHE and enshrined in the White Paper on Higher Education (DoE, 1997). Breier (2001: 5) quotes the NCHE (1996: 6) to the effect that responsiveness would require: "… a shift away from closed knowledge systems controlled and managed only by the canonical norms of traditional disciplines and by collegially recognised authority, to more open systems which are dynamically interactive with broader social interests, 'consumer' or 'client' demand and outside processes of knowledge generation". Responsiveness to societal interests and needs would lead to (Breier, 2001: 5) the incorporation of values of non-elite communities into the educational and cognitive culture of institutions, and to innovations in the research function of higher education. New forms of trans-disciplinary knowledge production would involve many more role-players than simply academic researchers. In this context Breier (2001: 6) argues that higher education will be under pressure to be accountable to larger social and economic constituencies.

Peters (2000: 2) argues that the concept of RPL raises issues not only concerning student recruitment, teaching and assessment, but also the curriculum itself. RPL calls into question the notion of fixed programmes, which must be completed in full by all would-be graduates

and indeed the content of the curriculum. These questions involve what it is that students bring with them to university when they come with considerable experience in life and/or work and how this can be built on. This raises further issues about what it is that students need to know on leaving university to take up roles in society, or to continue in the roles that they occupied before returning to study (Peters, 2000: 2).

Since 1994 attempts have been made to remove barriers to access learning in the education system in South Africa. The notion of RPL entered current mainstream education and training discourse with the introduction of the NQF and post-1994 education policy documents (Du Prè & Pretorius, 2001: 1). Du Prè & Pretorius (2001: 1) state that findings from recent studies commissioned by the CHE and the JET explored the status of RPL policy development at South African institutions. The findings showed that only one institution had an institutional RPL policy that was in the process of implementation and many other institutions have totally ignored the RPL initiative.

Breier (2001: 3) argues that demands for educational redress through the recognition of prior learning, combined with efficiency considerations, has led to the implementation of the NQF. The NQF facilitates a "building block" system of certification courses through the SETAs that can lead to a national qualification and in the process access to formal learning programmes. In this regard candidates who achieved certification through informal learning programmes should be able to access formal learning programmes through an assessment process. The NQF is dependent on the specification of qualifications in outcomes format. The need for a higher education system that is efficient and effective, while also being responsive to the

country's economic needs, has led to proposals for a programme-based approach to funding and numerous planning initiatives (Breier, 2001: 3).

On a broader spectrum, pre- and post 1994, many people acquired skills in non-formal ways. These skills were not often recognised and it was difficult for people who had obtained these skills to convince others that they had them. Thus, South Africa has this large pool of uncertificated poorly used skills that can be recognised toward a particular learning programme. In this regard RPL can serve this purpose. The RPL initiative, through its processes allow for these skills to be widely accepted which in turn can empower e.g. historically disadvantaged individuals, to undertake further skills acquisition without having to formally repeat skills which they already have. These existing skills are very likely to be marketable given that people have been using them for years to earn a living. In order to achieve this successfully in practice, we must ensure that universities are adopting and implementing the RPL policy. The thesis is checking this with regard to the three Western Cape universities.

THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RPL INITIATIVE

The New Institutional Landscape by the *Ministry of Education* (2002: 1) proposes the establishment of a wide-ranging consultative process on the restructuring of the higher education system. The National Plan for Higher Education, released in March 2001, identified five policy goals and strategic objectives to be achieved, which are critical to the transformation and reconstruction of the higher education system. These are:

> To increase access and to produce graduates with the skills and competencies necessary to meet the human resource needs of the country; to promote equity of access and outcomes and to redress past inequalities through ensuring that student and staff profiles reflect the demographic composition of the South African society; to ensure diversity in the institutional landscape of the higher education system through mission and programme differentiation to meet national and regional skills and knowledge needs; to build high-level research capacity, including sustaining current research strength, as well as to promote research linked to national development needs; to build new institutional identities and organisational forms through restructuring the institutional landscape of the higher education system, thus transcending the fragmentation, inequalities and inefficiencies of the apartheid past and to enable the establishment of South African institutions consistent with the vision and values of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 6).

Two inter-related goals were prioritised, namely, (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 7) "the promotion of institutional diversity and the restructuring of the institutional landscape; to address the structural inefficiencies and systemic problems that are inherent in the system and to lay the foundations for the transformation and restructuring of the higher education system". Processes for implementation were initiated. These include:

- HEIs had to submit their proposed programme/s and qualification profiles to the Ministry for approval;

- A NWG[4] was appointed to advise on restructuring of the institutional landscape of the higher education system.

The *Ministry of Education* (2002: 7), under the leadership of Kader Asmal, encouraged the merging of HEIs for reasons of sustainability and, effectiveness and efficiency of the use of resources within the higher education system. Kader Asmal argues (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 7) that the current landscape of higher education was inadequate to meet socio-

FOOTNOTE 4: **National Working Group – appointed by the Ministry of Education in March 2001 also advised on the feasibility of reducing the number of HEIs.**

economic needs and was therefore undesirable. In the report by the *Ministry of Education* (2002: 7) it is stated that South Africa does not have the human and financial resources to maintain the present institutional configuration, and that some institutions do not satisfy the specification to continue as independent institutions, therefore the need for mergers. The report by the *Ministry of Education* (2002: 7) explains that a higher education system should be socially just and equitable in its distribution of resources and opportunities, and should meet the requirements of long-term sustainability and thereby enhance the productivity of the system through effectively and efficiently meeting the teaching, skills development and research needs of the country.

Breier (2001: 26) argues that HEIs, especially universities, have traditionally been run by academics, i.e., the professoriate. HEIs were professional organisations with one dominant profession, the academic profession. These institutions interact with different actors in external and internal policy processes. The characteristics of professional occupations like the professoriate, related to their working conditions, are that they want control over working conditions as well as the definition of work itself (Breier, 2001: 26). The government's RPL initiative (Du Prè & Pretorius, 2001) can therefore easily be seen as a nuisance or interference by these institutions – derived from the survey results by the CTP showing the delay in RPL policy formulation by the institutions. Breier (2001: 27) argues that the traditional characteristics of universities make it difficult to initiate and steer organisational changes within, from the outside.

Castle (2001: 2) argues that RPL is an attractive proposition in South Africa because it offers a response to social and economic pressures for change. There is a growing awareness that learning from experience, gained in a variety of contexts, (as defined and measured through RPL), including work, politics and civil society, should be more substantially acknowledged and rewarded, especially by educational institutions. Castle (2001: 7) continues to argue that this awareness is underlined by moral and political imperatives to broaden participation in higher education by black South Africans, many of whom were excluded from quality education and a range of occupations in the apartheid years. Castle (2001: 7) quotes Harris (1999) & Michelson (1998) arguing that RPL is not only associated with issues of individual and social justice, but also with the cause of redress and cannot be considered a politically neutral process. Breier (2001: 16) argues that it is internationally recognised that, unless accompanied by curriculum change, RPL can reinforce the standards and forms of knowledge that are celebrated in formal education rather than 'recognising' and accrediting alternative forms of knowledge. This, however, is not the principal basis of RPL policy in South Africa which rather aims at achieving parity of esteem for the alternative means of obtaining economically important skills.

Breier (2001: 17) explains that attempts by institutions to implement RPL illustrate the complexity of the subject. Breier (2001:17) warns of the danger of recommending reform that has implications for curriculum, without providing guidelines. Breier (2001) further quotes Luckett (1999: 25) who argues that:

> It will be very unwise for South African universities to begin to try 'recognising' the experience and learning of 'others' without first becoming aware of and interrogating our own experience and learning and the assumptions on which these are based. It is only once we are aware of the effects of our own situatedness, interpretive frames and discourses, that we will be able to appreciate the differences between ours and others' experiences and learnings. This might lead us to accept that our and others' learning are incommensurable and that learning and adapting by both assessors and assessees will be necessary before we are able to 'recognise' each other (Breier, 2001: 17).

In order to assist institutions, SAQA provides guidelines for institutions to develop and implement the RPL initiative. It recommends that, "Criteria and Guidelines for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning" (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2003) should be followed in conjunction with National Government's RPL Policy document when developing institutional RPL policy. The document makes reference to national government's RPL policy document and highlights six steps to address the need for guidelines in developing RPL within institutions. These steps are: "(1) an audit of current practice; (2) the development of detailed sector-specific plans; (3) capacity building of resources and staff; (4) the design and moderation of appropriate assessment instruments and tools; (5) quality management systems and procedures; (6) the establishment of a research base" (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2003: 7)).

The *South African Qualifications Authority* (2002: 7) recommends that its documents, "Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF registered Unit standards and Qualifications"; and the "Recognition of Prior Learning in the context of the South African National Qualifications Framework" be used in logical sequence. It argues that this procedural sequence enhances opportunities for 'learners' from an environment of workplace

learning and experiential learning to access formal learning programmes. The "Criteria and Guidelines for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning" document (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2003: 5) aims to support the development of systems and processes that ultimately enhance the implementation of RPL. It is SAQA's view (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2003: 6) that such a system can only be built through critical engagement with RPL practice and eventual consensus on the application of RPL across the education and training system. The SAQA guidelines document should be seen as a 'living document' encouraging good practice and partnerships in order to reach consensus. The broader purpose of the document is to develop assessment systems and practices that are more responsive to the needs of learners, curricula and contexts (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2003: 7).

GOVERNMENT RPL POLICY AND GOALS

The government's human resource development strategy includes, "…increasing access in career-focused programmes with prospective candidates able to choose from a wider range of programmes with different entry requirements; improved articulation between career-focused and general academic programmes" (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 12). The RPL initiative, if adopted with commitment, can assist in achieving these objectives. If the government's goal in respect of RPL is to provide access to learning programmes and learning opportunities, and in the process develop an educated workforce, serious consideration need to be given to

providing meaningful and realistic ways for RPL policy goals to be achieved (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 12).

The essence of RPL, from a public policy perspective, is that: "learning occurs in all kinds of situations – formally, informally and non-formally; (in RPL) measurement of the learning takes place against specific learning outcomes required for a specific qualification; and credits are awarded for such learning if it meets the requirements of the qualification" (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 7).

The national government's RPL policy (*South African Qualifications Authority, 2002: 7*) states that Recognition of Prior Learning across all sectors of education in South Africa is critical to the development of an equitable education and training system. The RPL policy should be sensitive to the needs of all the role players, including Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies, providers of education and training, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and, most importantly, the main beneficiaries of the process, the learners.

Du Prè & Pretorius (2001: 2) argue that higher education is compelled by a range of public policy imperatives to be responsive to the dual demands of reconstruction and development, and the consolidation and expansion of the country's capacity to participate in a global economy. In both respects meaningful implementation of RPL (Du Prè et al, 2001: 3) requires dedicated commitment to the development of appropriate policy, programmes and systems in the workplace and in institutions of learning. Higher education practices, which were

developed to cater to the needs of school leavers, will clearly have to be reconsidered in the light of the philosophy and operational demands of the government's RPL policy. This challenges the silo and hierarchical approaches of the previous education system. Du Prè & Pretorius (2001: 2) also argue that RPL introduces new ways of affirming and valuing indigenous knowledge systems and the cultural contexts in which they are situated.

Du Prè & Pretorius (2001: 5) argue that the transformative potential of RPL has provided organised labour, especially COSATU, with an authentic mechanism to challenge existing access and credit practices. COSATU fought for (Du Prè et al, 2001: 5) the rights of workers to have increased access to higher education opportunities (and hence improved employment and promotional opportunities) in the face of increasing retrenchments and capital-intensive investment.

Du Prè & Pretorius (2001: 6) quote Ballim et al (2000) in summarising the socio-political value of RPL as:

Reconstruction and development – Bridges the gap between those groups, who traditionally had access to institutions of HE and those who for a variety of reasons were systematically denied access Du Prè & Pretorius (2001: 6).

Recognition of knowledge – Knowledge that workers acquire through experience at work and in organised union activity, can be linked to the improvement of access to

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training by workers, leading to improved wages, grading and working conditions Du Prè & Pretorius (2001: 6).

A public policy favourable to RPL provides a supportive context for the ongoing development of these initiatives. It must, by the same token, be understood and recognised by agreements that (Du Prè et al, 2001: 26) the profile of candidates for RPL in South Africa is different to that of candidates in developed countries. The reality in South Africa reflects a nation of which a large portion of the population has never progressed beyond a few years of schooling.

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CHAPTER 3

THE SOUTH AFRICAN FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY FORMULATION AT UNIVERSITIES

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER

The chapter provides a contextual background in terms of which national RPL policy can be understood.

HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORKS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In 1997 the Department of Education, SAQA and the CHE had reached agreement on transitional arrangements for registration of qualifications, and accreditation and funding approval of learning programmes (Breier, 2001: 44). On the accreditation of learning programmes, the CHE indicated that once the HEQC was fully established and had developed policies and practices for the accreditation of learning programmes, it should assume full responsibility for this function. A transitional arrangement resulted in an Interim Joint

Committee on Qualifications and Programmes being established consisting of SAQA, the CHE and the DoE. The policy frameworks included a Qualification Structure for Universities in South Africa, Report 116 (DoE, 1996/02), General Policy for Technikon Instructional Programmes, Report 150 (DoE, 1997/01), the SAQA Act and Regulation 452 of 28 March 1998, The Higher Education Act of 1997, White Paper (DoE, 1997), the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000) (Breier, 2001: 44).

The Interim Joint Committee, on behalf of the DoE (Breier, 2001: 44) would consider all existing qualifications and programmes that were submitted to SAQA for 'recording'; and advise the DoE on the funding of new learning programmes until a new funding policy for higher education had been determined. Breier (2001: 45) quotes the Department of Education (2000: 3-6) arguing that due to the structures based on policy frameworks not being ready yet, divergent views on the way forward in the re-structuring of higher education curricula based on policy frameworks, still continued.

National organisations at the intermediate level consist of SAUVCA and the SERTEC. These bodies play supportive roles in restructuring South African curriculum and function on the intermediate and operational level of the curriculum process (Breier, 2001: 45). SAUVCA representatives talk on behalf of the university sector and try to keep the university sector informed by ensuring networking and effective transmission of information on SAQA matters that affect universities. A SAQA Action Group was set up within the structures of SAUVCA. The role of the Action Group is to:

Publish a handbook aiming to provide a clear framework to assist universities in the task of re-submitting already recorded and interim-registered qualifications, as well as proposed new qualifications, to SAQA by 30 June 2000; circulate a proposed framework for meeting the qualification specifications required for interim registration; create an interactive environment with a 'help-desk' service within the SAUVCA office run by the Director of Academic Affairs; conduct workshops on the pegging of qualification and level descriptors and on the assessment of the academic (re)structuring process at all institutions; maintain close liaison with the 12 SAUVCA representatives on National Standards Bodies; Organise workshops and other activities regionally and nationally when necessary (Breier, 2001:45).

In 1999 SAUVCA compiled a questionnaire to determine (Breier, 2001: 45) universities' progress regarding the interim registration of qualifications on the NQF – the purpose was to demonstrate a commitment to play a supportive role. The purpose of the questionnaire was to (Breier, 2001: 45) identify problem areas in which the SAQA Action Group could assist universities in the (re)structure of curricula. Feedback revealed that universities needed information on macro- and micro-issues relating to the operationalisation of the SAQA/CHE/DoE policies. A workshop focusing on these issues was held in October 1999 (Breier, 2001: 46) and the discussions included the adoption of the SAUVCA position on articulation and level descriptors at NQF levels applicable to higher education.

SERTEC is a statutory body that ensures comparable campuses (previously technikons) certificates represent minimum (equal) standard of education and examination. SERTEC accredits these campuses (Breier, 2001:46) that meet the norms and standards prescribed by the evaluation committees. The programmes are developed according to nationally agreed upon guidelines (Breier, 2001: 46) in collaboration with industry/ professionals/ employer bodies. Colleges wanting to offer such programmes must have their infrastructure evaluated by SERTEC, whereafter they can apply, via the DoE, to the CHE for approval of the course.

SERTEC focus primarily on programme assessment and the auditing of the internal quality assurance processes of these learning institutions. At NQF level, SERTEC attest whether each programme has a record of outcomes and how the curriculum fits in with these outcomes (Breier, 2001: 46).

National organisations established to facilitate development and implementation of higher education policy, (Breier 2001: 47) usually start with a form of research related to practice and policy and not theoretical conceptualisation. Breier (2001: 47) argues that the knowledge workers or experts recruited by these organisations to assist them come from a range of disciplines, including sociology, political science, economics, law, psychology and the 'hard' sciences, as well as domains such as gender and ethnicity, management and, most commonly, education studies.
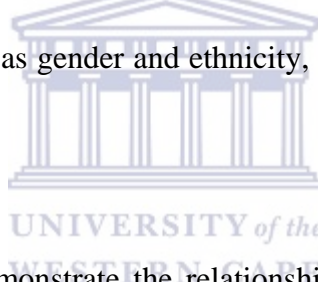
The following three diagrams demonstrate the relationship of the various higher education stakeholder bodies within the higher education system. The RPL initiative is embedded in the policy formulation environment relevant to the various stakeholders as shown in the diagrams that follows. In terms of government policy HEIs should include RPL in curriculum development because these processes cannot ignore the broader spectrum of education, i.e. learners from workplaces seeking access to higher education; learners who acquired certification through other forms of learning, e.g. learning that is responsive to societal interests and needs.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FORCES AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
National Organisations

Environmental Scan: Economic, political, geographical, etc. influences

Factors and forces Directing Policy-making

National policy (planning and formulation)

National operationalisation

Intermediate

- Influences Factors Pressures

- Stakeholder needs and interests

- Political dispensation

- SAQA Planning

- Branch HE Department of National Education Policy Planning

- CHE policy planning

- Professional bodies/ organisations planning

See figure 3

Providers — SGBs

DoE

State Subsidy — Qualifications — NSBs Registration

RPL

CHE / HEQC

Quality Assurance

Accreditation

ETQAs/SETAs/Professional Bodies

Situation analysis: Needs, pressures, resources, role-player and stakeholder interests

REVIEW

Figure 1: Source: Breier, 2001: 56

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF POLICY FORMULATION

SAQA/CHE – RPL REGULATORY BODIES

National Qualifications Framework Institutions
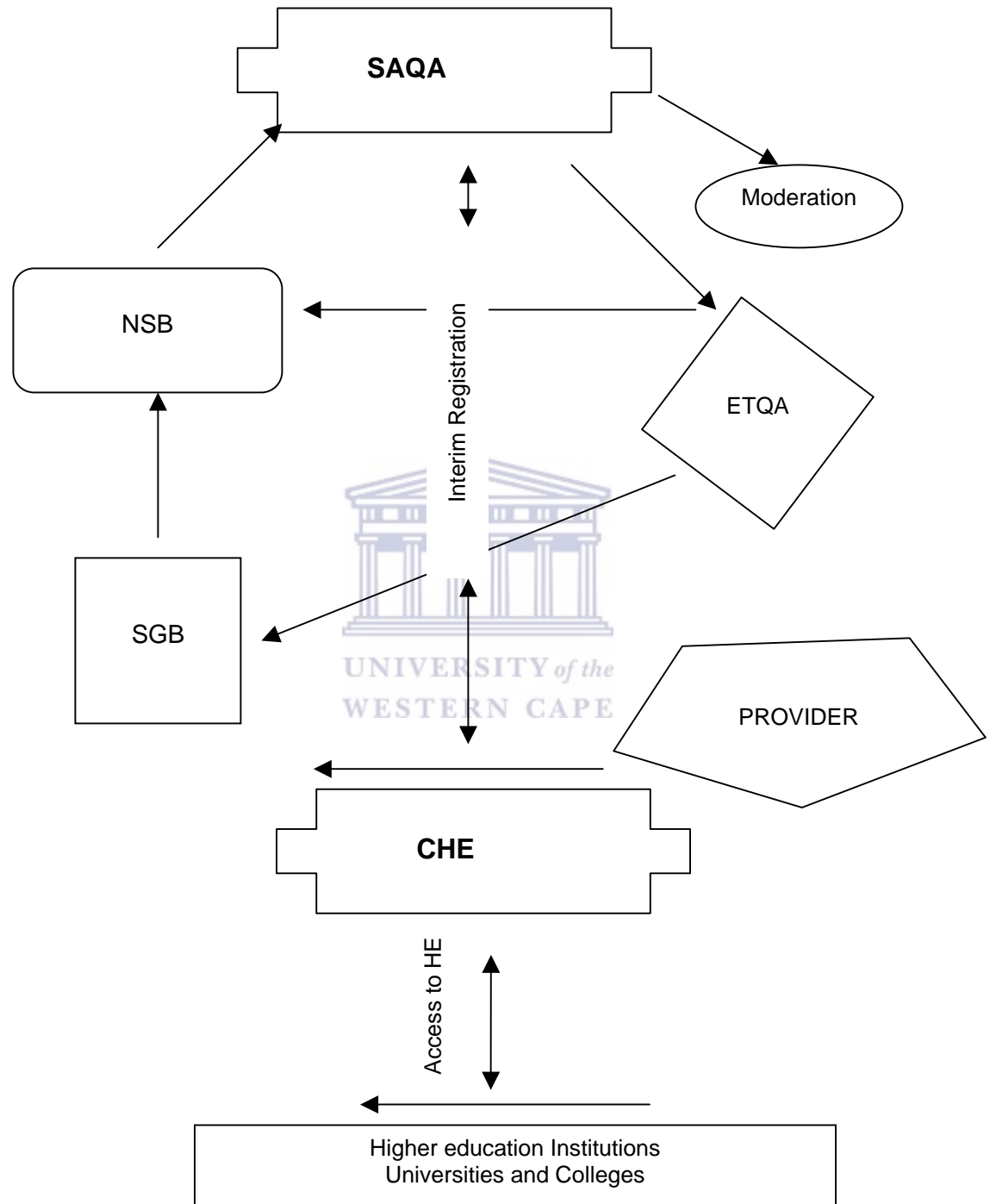
Figure 2: Source: Breier, 2001: 57

RPL – EMBEDDED IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The roles of SAUVCA and CTP in supporting the registration and accreditation process

Planning	Implementation		Assessment	Moderation

| SAUVCA | ←→ | **Higher education institutions**
- Programme Committees
- Programme directors and coordinators | ←→ | CTP |

| SAQA – SAUVCA Action Group | ←→ | Joint SAUVCA and CTP group (CTM) | ←→ | Committee for Tutorial Matters |

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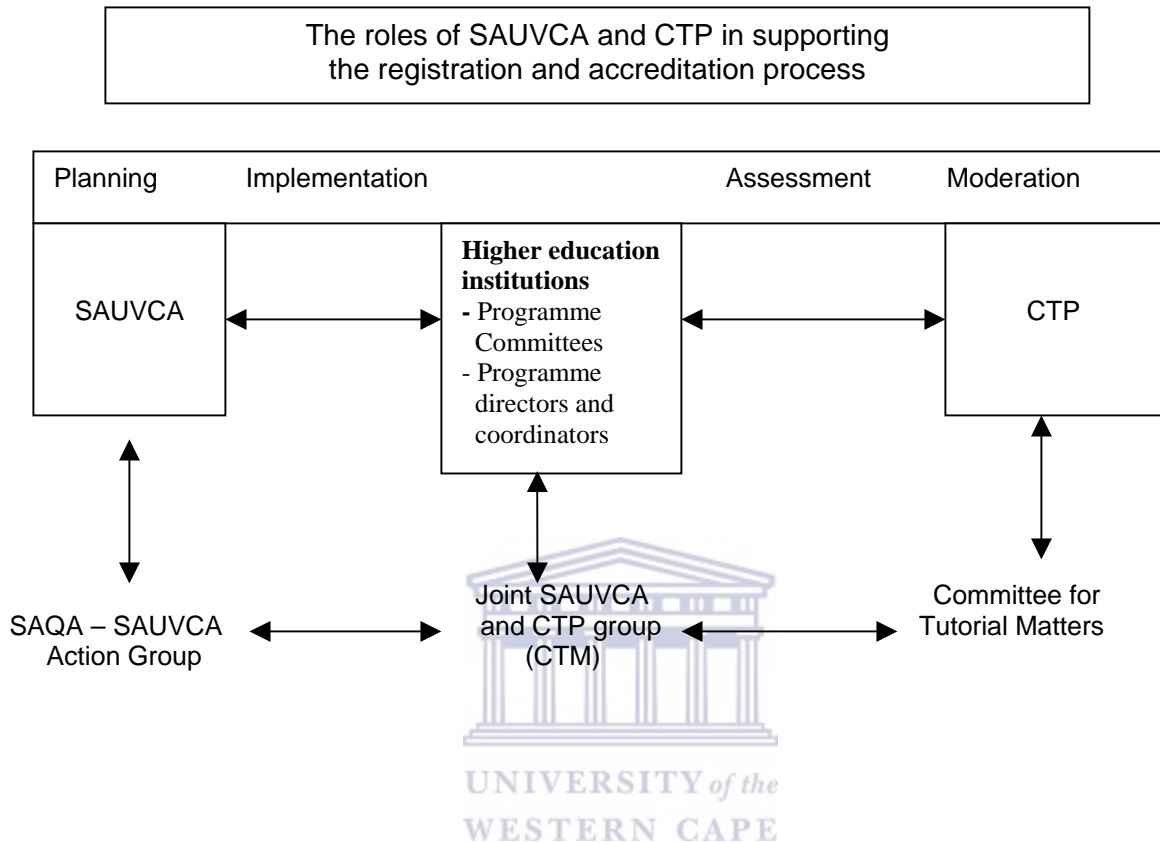
Figure 3: Source: Breier, 2001: 58

THE ENVIRONMENT OF RPL POLICY FORMULATION

Moore & Van Rooyen (2002: 293) argue that the concept of RPL i.e. recognising and accrediting – what people already know and can do – is having a significant impact on many of the education and training programmes currently being developed. Moore et al continue that this process of recognising and accrediting is irrespective of whether the learning has been acquired through unstructured learning, performance development, off-the-job assessment, or skills and knowledge that meet workplace needs, but have been gained through various previous learning experiences. The concept of RPL (Moore et al, 2002: 293) can be understood as the method of assessing relevant competences gained by adults through work and life experiences, which can then be counted towards qualifications or for promotion in the workplace by using a systematic set of procedures.
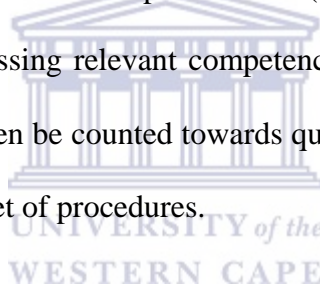
Breier (2001:47) argues that longstanding divisions between academic and non-academic forms of knowledge are dissolving due to changing social, economic and epistemological conditions. The academy is trying to be 'relevant' to the world of work but the world of work (Breier, 2001: 47) is assuming more and more of the research (knowledge-producing) and training functions that used to be the preserve of the academy. Breier (2001: 47) quotes Banks (1996) stating that there is a "curriculum canon battle", arguing that post-modern influences challenge distinctions between academic and non-academic forms of knowledge, combined with the diversification of student populations that is the result of massification, which is leading to increasing pressure to accommodate non-dominant knowledge forms. The RPL

initiative requires recognition of knowledge in the various forms as suggested by national government's RPL policy, regulated by SAQA and the CHE.

Breier (2001: 47) argues that the different disciplinary perspectives produce different views of both the policy agenda and of ways of implementation of the policy. Breier (2001: 47) comments further that much of the formative work in higher education curriculum research, which has affected policy, has come from different traditions. In sociology, (Breier, 2001: 47) curriculum policy research was influenced by the studies of social structure affecting access to higher education; studies of institutional structures, including studies that emphasises the primacy of the individual and the basic unit and, more recently, management and quality studies. Breier (2001: 47) quotes Kogan & Henkel (1998: 8-9) arguing that economists might produce a different vision as to what regulates, or should regulate, student flows and higher education outcomes. In this process (Breier, 2001: 47) the whole perspective of higher education curriculum design could be radically changed if viewed through the aspect of theories of knowledge or learning rather than specific disciplinary interests and needs.

The location of responsibility for the implementation of national RPL policy can be problematic. Research and development by the national organisations i.e. SAUVCA, DoE, SERTEC revealed significant concerns about the NQF and SAQA (Breier, 2001: 47):

> **"Academic concerns**: the negative impact on curriculum coherence of separating the registration of standards and qualifications from the rest of curriculum design. It was pointed out that this should be a bottom-up process as is recognised in higher education globally; the failure to acknowledge openly the complex nature of most

educational and vocational outcomes and the difficulty of specifying such outcomes in an easily interpreted form; the failure to recognise the impact of process on outcomes and the implications of this for interpreting educational standards; the increasing emphasis on assessment rather than teaching and learning; the failure to include a focus on excellence; the failure to recognise the significance of content and context in assessment of student work and decisions on credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning (Breier, 2001: 47).

Administrative concerns: the array of cumbersome procedures generated by the model; the excessive record keeping generated by the model and the large bureaucratic structures now being created to manage the development and implementation of the model; the devolved costs envisaged for users of the NQF; the need for greater decentralisation of the registration process for rapid handling of changes in knowledge and innovations in a field or sub-field; the additional workload for staff in higher education" (Breier, 2001: 47).

Given these reservations, any resistance to the implementation of government RPL policy could be analysed in the context of Jansen's approach to policy matters. Jansen (2001: 271) argues that the lack of fit between education policy and education practice is commonly explained in terms of the lack of resources, the legacy of inequality and the dearth of capacity to translate official vision into contextual reality. Jansen (2001: 271) explains that this powerful view is difficult to refute for three reasons, (1) because it is lodged in a deeply held sense that government means what it says, i.e. that what education policy claims, it intends to happen; (2) because it assumes a simple linear logic between policy and practice, i.e. policy moves logically and naturally from intention to realisation; (3) because it is based on a commonsense conception of policy as official documents or ideal statements made by government. Jansen (2001: 271) argues that this is a view devoid of politics and of power, of competing interests and conflicting struggles.

Much is made of the role of "participative discussion" in resolving policy tensions. Jansen (2001: 278), however, offers some cautionary advice stating that while groups are invited to participate, this does not mean that the views of the participants prevail. Jansen quotes Samoff (1996: 12) stating that the policies that are finally adopted may not have been widely discussed and criticised. Jansen (2001: 278) mentions the example of the report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) which, as it moved from 'discussion document' status, to Green Paper, to Draft White Paper, to White Paper, became less and less open to participatory and consultative inputs as a government document. He states that this may reflect the changes in and micro-politics among key officials coming into the Department of Education, and almost certainly reflects the demise of the NCHE as an organisation following the release of its report. Jansen (2001: 278) argues that participating groups have unequal power and expertise in different policy forums, leading to different kinds of emphasis in policy outcomes.

The foregoing material provides a background for defining the RPL policy responses of the three universities, which is done in the next chapter. The current attempt by national government to transform higher education is to ensure that students from a wide diversity of educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds can be accommodated with a common system (Miller, Bradbury & Lemmon, n.d.: 166). The various ways in which the three universities in the Western Cape have responded to RPL through policy formulation is part of the process.

<u>CHAPTER 4</u>

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter contains a matrix representation and the analysis of the research data.

INTRODUCTION

Government policies with respect to transformation and restructuring of the higher education system in South Africa encourage education institutions to revise admission policies and embrace the RPL initiative. The national government's RPL policy and Criteria and Guidelines documents provide a framework for developing institutional RPL policies. For purposes of this study only the sections in the government documents relevant to the universities are examined. The exercise, therefore, excludes issues such as those to do with unit standards.

The National Government's RPL Policy document provides self-audit tools to assist institutions with policy development and highlights the fact that an enabling environment, which facilitates commitment to RPL, is essential. The self-audit tools assist with measuring

progress against agreed targets. Areas of practice applicable to the analysis include: institutional policy and environment; services and support to learners; methods and processes of assessment; quality management systems (such as moderation); fees for RPL services (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 12).
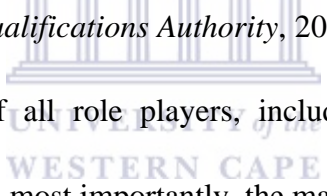
A BRIEF HISTORY ON THE THREE WESTERN CAPE UNIVERSITIES

The current structure of universities in South Africa originates from The Universities Extension Act of 1959 (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 1). This Act restricted access to higher education on the basis of race and ethnic lines and not on the universal notion of values intrinsic to higher education. The purpose was two-fold, (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 1) "First - to ensure that the historically white institutions served the educational, ideological, political, cultural, social and economic needs of white South Africa. Second – to establish institutions that would produce a pliant and subservient class of educated black people to service the fictional homelands of apartheid's imagination". Based on this premise it must be understood that the University of the Western Cape falls into the category of historically black, and the University of Stellenbosch and University of Cape Town, fall into the historically white category.

The University of the Western Cape has historically been providing access to higher education to poor and disadvantaged students (*Ministry of Education*, 2002: 1). The University of Stellenbosch and the University of Cape Town, as previously white universities, were

resourced and funded accordingly. Historically, graduates from previously advantaged institutions enjoyed privileges in the market place and workplaces as having a superior education than those from a previously disadvantaged institution. The *Ministry of Education* (2002: 24) requires historically white universities to give urgent attention to issues of increased access and equity by applying themselves to the "development of an enabling environment in which all South Africans can pursue their studies unhampered by social and cultural impediments".

FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE POLICY DOCUMENTS

The RPL Policy (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 3) states that institutional RPL policy should meet the needs of all role players, including ETQAs, other providers of education and training, SETAs and most importantly, the main beneficiaries of the process, the learners. The RPL policy (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 4) explains that it should be noted "that there is no fundamental difference in the assessment of previously acquired skills and knowledge and the assessment of skills and knowledge acquired through a current learning programme".

The key challenge (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 4) for RPL in South Africa is the sustainability of such a system. The RPL initiative in South Africa is not a short-term

challenge as it is hoped (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 4) that, as the South

African education and training system matures, RPL will support the principle of lifelong

learning. For the purposes of this study the following documents were analysed:

o Criteria and Guidelines for the Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning. SAQA.

    Pretoria. 2002.

o The Recognition of Prior Learning in the Context of the South African NQF – Decision

    SAQA 0242/02. Policy Document.

o National Standards Bodies Regulations. SAQA Act No. 58. Pretoria.

o Criteria and Guidelines for ETQAs. SAQA. Pretoria. October 2001a.

o Criteria and Guidelines for Providers. SAQA. Pretoria. October 2001b.

o University of the Western Cape: The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy -

    Procedures and Practices at UWC / University of the Western Cape – RPL Procedures for

    Admission for January 2002.

o   University of Cape Town – Section A – Draft Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning

(RPL) / Section B – Additional Information on RPL.

o   A Policy for the Assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning (APRL) by Stellenbosch

University.

The following tables present the areas of practice that universities can apply as a guide for

developing and measuring assessment policies as suggested by national government's RPL

policy document. These practices can be applied as auditing tools to measure progress against

set targets.   The RPL policies of the three universities were analysed for purposes of

compliance against these areas of practice based on the following indicators:

"Y"   Yes – meets the criteria;

"N"   No – does not meet the criteria;

"U"   Underdeveloped in the current policy documents.

A description of the categories is provided. The purpose of the respective categories is also explained. A brief comment clarifies the indicators as listed and is elaborated on further in the chapter. It is important to note that UCT's RPL policy is in draft form. This draft policy document was used for purposes of analysis.

RPL POLICY COMPLIANCE MATRIX

(Indicator: Y - Yes; N - No; U - Underdeveloped in the current policy documents)

TABLE 1: GENERAL AREAS OF PRACTICE FOR RPL PROGRESS ALIGNED WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF ACCESS AND REDRESS

RPL Principles of Access and Redress	Description of Category	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
General	This category deals with the extent to which policy development and policy formulation is aligned with expectations and requirements reflected in the SAQA RPL policy as well as general practices of commitment to RPL. These areas of practice are also based on the requirements of the SAQA RPL policy document as well as the Criteria and Guidelines document (SAQA, 2003: 8).	Does the institution have an approved RPL Policy? - Required by HEQC (UCT, 2004: 2).	Y	Y	N	UCTs RPL policy is still in draft - not approved by the Senate. The draft policy was however used in this study.
		Is the definition of RPL the same as contained in the SAQA RPL Policy document? "… the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner howsoever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specific qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements" (Government Gazette, 2003: 8).	Y	Y	Y	USB referenced the exact definition from the SAQA RPL policy. UCT and UWC elaborated on the definition and clarifies specific connotations.
		Is the university's RPL Policy available in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa?	N	N	N	None of the policies are availabe in isiXhosa.
		RPL requires access to education programmes for candidates with or without a matriculation exemption. Entry requirement for existing degree courses at the all three universities - matric endorsement or equivalent, (equivalence as required by the Matriculation Board (UCT, 2004: 2)).	N	N	N	All three institutions require a matric endorsement or equivalent entrance for existing degree courses. RPL access is preferred at post-graduate level for existing degree courses. Other learning programmes are developed for RPL learners for which the outcome is a certificate (SAQA, 2003: 8). The government RPL policy specify that RPL learning programmes not be developed separate from other learning programmes.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002 & 2003

TABLE 2: ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT DEMONSTRATING COMMITMENT TO RPL

National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Institutional Policy and Environment	There is a shared commitment on the part of the ETQAs, accredited constituent providers and workplaces to provide enabling environments for learning and assessment (inclusive of close cooperation between administration, learning facilitators, evidence facilitators, advisors, assessors, moderators, professional organisations, employers, trade unions and communities, where appropriate). RPL encourage learners from i.e. workplaces, the unemployed and adult learners to gain access to universities through processes of assessment.	The assessment policy expresses an explicit commitment to the principles of equity, redress and inclusion.	Y	Y	Y	
		The assessment policy reflects planning and management in accordance with relevant legislation and policy.	Y	U	Y	USB - not in as much detail. A General reference is made to the RPL legal framework on the premise of no pressure from the government or other institutions.
		Information about assessment opportunities and services are widely available and actively promoted.	Y	N	Y	USB - no mention is made of any promotional activity at or through USB to promote RPL other than reference made to a response by the institution to requests from i.e.. interest groups, individuals, employers.
		Admission procedures and systems are accessible and inclusive of learners with diverse needs and backgrounds.	N	N	N	None of the institutional policies are available in isiXhosa - only English and Afrikaans - the policies are therefore not reflecting the three official languages of the Western Cape as per the Western Cape Language Policy.
		Equal access to opportunities for advice, support, time and resources for all candidates seeking assessment.	N	N	N	None of the institutional policies are available in isiXhosa - only English and Afrikaans - the policies are therefore not reflecting the three official languages of the Western Cape as per the Western Cape Language Policy.
		Organisational structures ensure that evidence facilitators, assessors and moderators and other key personnel, such as advisors, are given sufficient support, resources and recognition for services.	Y	Y	Y	
		Regional integration and collaboration are encouraged among institutions, professional bodies and workplaces, where possible.	Y	N	Y	USB - no mention is made of building relationships with other institutions or bodies as required by the SAQA RPL policy.
		Formal agreements between ETQAs, providers and workplaces are encouraged to ensure effective validation, articulation and recognition of assessment results, where possible.	Y	N	Y	USB - no mention is made in this regard. A General reference is made to the RPL legal framework on the premise of no pressure from the government or other institutions.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 12

TABLE 3: CRITICAL LEARNER/CANDIDATE SUPPORT STRUCTURES

National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Services and Support to Learners	Through properly conducted evidence facilitation, advice and other support services, including assistance with dealing with personal, social and technical barriers to assessment and preparation of evidence, candidates are able to see how to use the process of RPL to achieve their personal, educational and career goals.	Advising services and programmes assist learners/candidates to make effective choices about learning programmes, career and work-related opportunities.	Y	U	Y	Not much information provided in the USB policy in this regard.
		Advising programmes and services provide assistance to learners/candidates in preparing for assessment.	Y	U	Y	USB applied the generic framework supplied in the SAQA RPL Policy. UWC and UCT elaborates extensively on their processes.
		Support services attempt to remove time, place and other barriers to assessment.	Y	U	Y	USB's process is rather generic and not specific to e.g. departments or faculties as is the case with UWC and UCT.
		Evidence facilitators assist candidates in preparing and presenting evidence in a coherent and systematic fashion.	Y	U	Y	USB's process is not very specific as is the case with UCT and UWC.
		Structured short learning programmes or articulation-based programmes are increasingly available where required.	Y	U	Y	USB's RPL policy document is not clear in this regard.
		Policies and review mechanisms regarding monitoring and quality assurance of evidence facilitators, assessors, moderators and other key personnel are in place.	Y	Y	Y	
		The functions of evidence facilitation, assessment and advising are clearly defined, and where possible, should not be performed by the same person.	Y	Y	Y	
		Training and development encourage mentoring relationships between staff with and those without assessment expertise.	Y	U	Y	USB's policy is faculty/department specific - not encouraging partnerships.
		Quality assurance systems are implemented by all training providers to ensure that they increasingly meet the developmental objectives as agreed with the ETQA.	Y	U	Y	USB's programme is very generic - places a lot of emphasis on accountability for quality on the Rector's management team - not faculty or department specific.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 14

RPL POLICY COMPLIANCE MATRIX

TABLE 4: PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT THAT CONSTITUTE GOOD PRAE

National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Methods and Processes of Assessment	Assessment is a structured process for gathering evidence and making judgments about a candidate's performance in relation to registered national standards and qualifications. This process involves the candidate and the assessor within a particular context in a transparent and collaborative manner.	The purpose of the assessment and the expectations of the candidate are clarified.	Y	U	Y	USB's purpose and expectations are very generic. The processes and expectations are not elaborated upon or aligned with current programmes or faculties/departments as is the case with UWC's and UCTs policy documents.
		Assessment plans take into account the form, quality and sources of evidence required (for example performance evidence, knowledge evidence, witness testimony, etc).	Y	Y	Y	
		The form and quality of support to be provided to the candidate in preparing for the assessment are established.	Y	U	Y	UWC and UCT elaborate on their processes specific to the 'assumed' needs that students might have. USB's policy is once again very generic and does not provide much detail.
		The candidate is actively involved in all aspects of the assessment process to ensure that the assessment i fair and transparent. Possible barriers to fair assessments are identified and addressed.	Y	Y	Y	
		Assessment plans indicate a variety of appropriate assessment methods and instruments to validate diverse types of learning.	Y	U	Y	USB's processes are generic in this regard. UWC and UCTs policies are specific - linking to different means and ways of RPL.
		The choice of assessment methods is fit for purpose and ensures reliable and valid assessment outcomes	Y	U	Y	UWC and UCTs RPL elaborates on this issue in their policy documents. USB's policy refers to an access plan for the undergraduate level (Access with success: A new access model, June 2003) which consist of measures that will be made applicable to all ARPL applications.
		An appeals process is in place and made known to the candidate.	Y	Y	Y	
		Assessment instruments and exemplars are developed and moderated in compliance with the ETQA requirements.	Y	U	Y	USB's policy is very vague in this regard. The policy only mentions the responsibility for quality assurance by the Vice-Rector's (Teaching), office who is supported by the Division for Academic Planning and Quality Assurance. There is no detailed elaboration of the processes within faculties and departments as is the case with the policy documents of UWC and UCT.

Continued on next page

TABLE 4: PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT (CONTINUED)				
Assessment reports indicate the assessment plan, the evidence presented, the assessment outcome and recommendations for further action, including additional training and/or re-assessment.	Y	Y	Y	
Moderation and review mechanisms are in place, including policies for verification, evaluation and quality assurance of assessments and assessment systems.	Y	N	N	UWC's policy refers to monitoring and evaluating the process of RPL by making reference to detailed policies and procedural documents being in place for faculties and departments. USB and UCT does not confirm that these are in place - the policies only specify this as a requirement.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 17

TABLE 5: COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INTEGRITY AND CREDIBILITY

| National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Quality Management Systems	Quality management systems are in place to ensure the continuous improvement of assessment systems. The quality management system ensures the critical integrity of assessments and reporting and recording processes inform strategic requirements at provider, sectoral and national level.	Quality management systems for assessment are designed, documented and implemented in accordance with agreed criteria and specifications.	Y	N	N	UWC's policy refers to quality management system documents being in place for faculties and departments. USB and UCT does not confirm that these are in place - the policies only specify this as a requirement.
		Quality management systems ensure the refining of assessment policies, procedures and services at all levels and informs planning for further development aimed at meeting agreed targets.	Y	N	N	UWC's policy refers to quality management system documents being in place and ongoing changes to be effected as the need arises. USB and UCT does not confirm that these are in place - the policies only specify this as a requirement.
		Quality management systems provide for input from all key stakeholders, including representatives from the candidate community.	Y	N	U	UWC's policy refers to quality management system with ongoing interaction between stakeholders as mentioned. UCTs policy also refers to interdisciplinary participation for quality management improvement. USB's policy however is not clear in this regard - the policy does not specify partnership initiatives.
		Evaluation and monitoring activities are clearly spelt out in QMS documentation, including diagnostic, formative and summative activities.	Y	N	N	UWC - specified with reference to institutional policies available. Not in UCT and USB policy documents.
		Assessment documentation, reports and sources of evidence are maintained in accordance with agreed criteria and specifications.	Y	N	N	UWC - specified availability as per the policy document. UCT and USB's intentions are mentioned in the policies.
		RPL results are recorded in accordance with the requirements of the ETQA and SAQA's NLRD.	Y	Y	Y	
		Information on RPL outcomes, including unsuccessful and successful applications are maintained.	Y	Y	Y	
		The quality management system provides for systems to monitor progress of candidates who enter learning programmes post-RPL.	N	N	N	None of the policy documents mention any intention in this regard.
		The quality management system provides for analyses and reporting of services and results.	Y	U	Y	USB's policy mention the intention but does not provide processes as is the case of the UWC and UCT policies.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 18

TABLE 6: RPL COSTS AS AN INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Fees for RPL Services	Fees for the delivery and administration of assessment and RPL services, do not create barriers for candidates. The development of services and programmes is an investment in the lifelong learning approach across all levels and sectors of education and training in South Africa.	Fees should not create barriers for candidates.	Y	U	Y	All the policies specify intentions accordingly. UWC allocates prices for services and variations in services rendered. UCT allocates a nominal fee and elaborates on variations of services that can be offered. USB's policy are not specific in this regard.
		The fees for the assessment of prior learning should be less than the cost of a module or full-time learning programme. Candidates allowed to access programmes after assessment should not have to pay for the full programme or have to do extra modules to cover the cost of the full learning programme. Assessment against a specific module should be less than the cost of the module.	U	N	U	UWC and UCTs policy specify the fees related to variations in the RPL process and not to modules or programmes. USB's policy makes a general reference to costs which is for the candidate's account. No variations are specified.
		Credit-bearing portfolio development or other articulation programmes are made increasingly available to assist candidates in their preparation for assessment, and to qualify for available subsidies for selected skills programmes and learnerships.	Y	U	Y	USB's policy makes mention of portfolio development but do not specify partnerships for further assistance or development.
		Flexible payment options, in line with the policies and procedures of the ETQA and constituent providers, area available.	Y	N	Y	UWC and UCT elaborate extensively in this regard. USB's policy refers to the candidate's responsibility and no other initiatives in this regard.
		Research and development priorities are identified, including those that investigate costs and cost effectiveness.	Y	U	Y	UCT and UWC elaborate extensively in this regard whereas USB's policy is very vague.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 19

The current concerns of educational policy and delivery in South Africa include increasing access to educational opportunity, ensuring equity in educational provision, improving the quality of education, and making education more relevant to socio-economic needs – as specified in chapter 3. The RPL policies at each of the Western Cape universities were analysed in terms of the extent to which they comply with national higher education policy. Analyses are provided related to the areas of practice in each table. The categories are discussed individually with reference to the RPL Policy Compliance Matrix. The analysis shows that the three universities are in breach of important requirements of national government's RPL policy.

South African Qualifications Authority (2003: 8) in the national RPL policy quotes Helen Peters (2000) in identifying the following obstacles to access learning programmes at HEIs by RPL candidates:
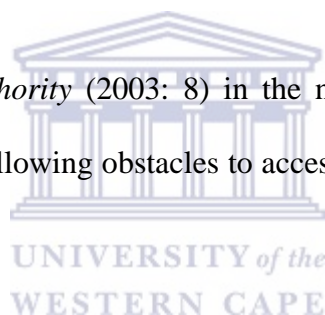
- Recruitment of students is almost exclusively focused on school leavers with matriculation exemption;
- Students over the age of 23 may apply for mature age exemption, but this is done at faculty level and is not part of general admissions procedures;
- Students without the option of mature age exemption, (i.e. learners who have perhaps only completed grade 11/standard 9 or lower) currently have no means for admission to suitable programmes by means of proof of equivalent learning through experience; and
- Should a learner be admitted to a programme through RPL without the minimum requirements, such a learner is not eligible for access to any bachelor's degree programme unless he/she has passed at least four subjects at the Senior Certificate level. Also, under present national legislation, a learner is not eligible for being awarded a degree even when the learner has completed the programme of study successfully. At the most, a 'certificate' may be awarded (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2003: 8).

The SAQA RPL policy document states that through RPL, candidates should be allowed to access existing learning programmes with or without a matriculation exemption or equivalent.

TABLE 1:   GENERAL AREAS OF PRACTICE FOR RPL PROGRESS ALIGNED WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF ACCESS AND REDRESS

COMPLIANCE AND VARIATION WITHIN AREAS OF PRACTICE

This category deals with the environment and development of policy with reference to the RPL principles of redress and access as defined by SAQA within the framework of the national government's RPL policy initiatives. The four areas of practice, listed in Table 1, are based on the requirements within the SAQA RPL policy document as well as the Criteria and Guidelines document (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2003: 8).   UWC has an approved RPL policy since 2001 whereas USB's RPL policy was approved in June 2004. The University of Cape Town's RPL policy is still in draft and has not been approved by the Senate.

With reference to compliance and variation in practices UWC's and USB's RPL policy documents comply with two areas of practice as listed in Table 1 except the availability of the policy document in isiXhosa, and the access requirement of a matriculation exemption or

equivalent. UCT's RPL policy complies with one area of practice which is that the definition of RPL is aligned with the SAQA definition.

UCT and UWC's RPL policies elaborate on the RPL definition and clarify specific connotations, e.g. UWC's definition specifies knowledge and capabilities people may possess that can be acknowledged for purposes of access to higher education. The definition makes reference to workplace, community and organisational and cultural activities relevant for RPL assessment as specified by SAQA, due to the diversity of candidates (*University of the Western Cape*, 2002: n.p.). In the same context UCT's RPL policy definition refers to access to higher education through an enabling system other than the process of normal entrance requirements criteria. UCT's RPL definition stresses the importance of evaluation through appropriate and reliable RPL practices where different types of knowledge can be applicable to academic access (*University of Cape Town,* 2004: 3). USB's RPL policy repeats the RPL definition provided by the SAQA RPL policy. A general comment related to the RPL definition is made, "… learning is evaluated by experts as being valid and reliable when measured against the learning outcomes of a specific qualification, learning programme or module/learning unit for the purpose of access to or acknowledgement within a learning programme" (*University of Stellenbosch*, 2004: n.p.).

The national government RPL strategy (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 4) encourages universities to change their admissions policies for all programmes to allow access for candidates without matriculation endorsement. Candidates admitted to learning programmes via RPL should not attend programmes especially developed for RPL candidates,

but should be allowed entry into existing programmes run for all students. RPL should not be seen as a remedial strategy separating conventional and RPL learners (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 4).

All three universities do not allow RPL entry to under-graduate degrees without a matric endorsement (*University of the Western Cape*, 2002: n.p.; *University of Cape Town*, 2004: 2; *University of Stellenbosch*, 2004: n.p.). RPL assessment for entry to learning programmes is applied in some cases depending on the discipline for which entry is sought. Specialised disciplines e.g. psychology require of candidates to have gone through the full undergraduate process of three to four years, disregarding related workplace knowledge. The post-graduate level is the preferred entrance level for RPL candidates in all qualifications at all three institutions.
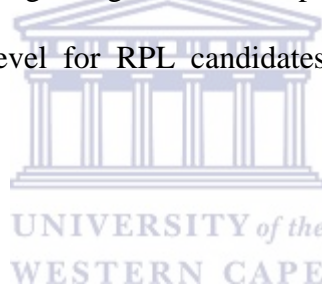
TABLE 2:   ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR A COMMITTED RPL ENVIRONMENT

COMPLIANCE AND VARIATION WITHIN AREAS OF PRACTICE

The SAQA RPL policy defines RPL to mean, "…the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner howsoever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specific qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements for access". Chapter 3 outlines the necessary partnerships and relationships that need to be formed in order to demonstrate commitment to RPL and in the process provide an environment facilitating the success of RPL candidates. The existing skills acquired through whichever means, as indicated by the SAQA RPL definition, after assessment and certification can be used for credit transfer and allowing RPL candidates entry into university courses to achieve a formal qualification. Credit transfer means that the candidate be exempted from modules for which credit has been given. This part of the analysis explores the commitment on the part of the universities to provide processes enabling access to courses for RPL candidates (inclusive of close co-operation between administration, learning facilitators, evidence facilitators, advisors, assessors, moderators, professional organisations, employers, trade unions and communities, where appropriate) (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 12).
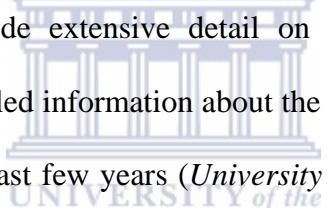
Table 2 contains eight areas of practice. UWC's RPL policy complies with six areas of practice of which the remaining two are not complied with due to the unavailability of the RPL policy document in isiXhosa. USB's RPL policy complies with two areas of practice.

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The remaining six areas present non-compliance in five areas of practice, and underdevelopment in one area of practice - planning and management in accordance with relevant legislation and policy.   UCT's RPL policy document complies with six areas of practice.   The remaining two areas of practice involve non-compliance with the isiXhosa language availability of the policy document.

SAQA's RPL policy highlights the fact that an "enabling environment demonstrating commitment to RPL" is essential for the success of RPL (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 12).   Proper policies, structures and resources should be allocated in order that contestation and conflict can be avoided.   The three HEIs' institutional RPL policies make reference to the principles of equity, redress and inclusion.   UCT's RPL policy also refers to the National Plan for Higher Education with regard to increasing the potential pool of recruits to universities, and the RPL policy makes specific reference to recruiting non-traditional students i.e. workers, mature learners and women in particular (*University of Cape Town*, 2004: 1).   UWC's RPL policy, in addition, expresses the commitment to cultural diversity and the institution's academic role in helping to build an equitable and dynamic nation that is world class (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.).   USB's policy document regurgitates what is stated in the SAQA RPL policy (*University of Stellenbosch*, 2004: n.p.).

UCT and UWC's RPL policies elaborate in great detail with regard to planning and management in accordance with relevant legislation. Reference is made to institutional units, e.g. departments and faculties, and their collaboration with the quality assurance bodies and

other external parties involved in RPL (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.; *University of Cape Town*, 2004: 13). USB's RPL policy makes reference to planning and management as institutionally driven: "…Stellenbosch University accepts that the rationale or raison d'être of ARPL is not based on pressure from the government or other institutions" (*University of Stellenbosch*, 2004: n.p.). The USB RPL policy states that the RPL initiative is the responsibility of the rector's management team but that institutional divisions apply RPL at their own discretion and not mandatory. In this regard the USB RPL document does not refer to internal or external feedback mechanisms or to relationship building interdepartmentally or with other stakeholders.

UCT and UWC's policies provide extensive detail on RPL opportunities and services. UWC's RPL policy provides detailed information about the various projects and activities that have been taking place over the past few years (*University of the Western Cape*, 2004: n.p.). Reference is made to pilots, the Division of Lifelong Learning, and the development of marketing and recruitment strategies (*University of the Western Cape*, 2004: n.p.). The USB RPL policy is not supported adequately by reference to practical cases. It does not, e.g., provide detail about past or existing RPL activity. Reference is made to a "reactive" philosophy in that the institution will respond to requests from i.e. interest groups, individuals, employers (*University of Stellenbosch*, 2004: n.p.).

The three institutional policies provide details of processes with regard to advice, time and resources for candidates. UWC and UCT's RPL policy details are clearly specified and refer to the variety of needs candidates may have (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.;

University of Cape Town, 2004: 9). USB's policy provides a generic (as provided by SAQA, 2002) process that does not clarify the institutional processes for candidates with differing RPL needs (*University of Stellenbosch*, 2004: n.p.).

All three institutional RPL policies address how the organisations will facilitate RPL. UWC's policy provides details of an ongoing interdivisional feedback mechanism / process in order to progress the RPL initiative (*University of the Western Cape*, 2004: n.p.). UCT's policy also mentions staff development and promotion opportunities, which form part of streamlining the RPL process. This emphasises the importance of trained, especially administrative staff, who are the first point of contact for an RPL candidate (*University of Cape Town*, 2004: 5). USB's policy refers to the responsibility for the success of RPL as being at the discretion of the department/ faculty (*University of Stellenbosch*, 2004: n.p.).
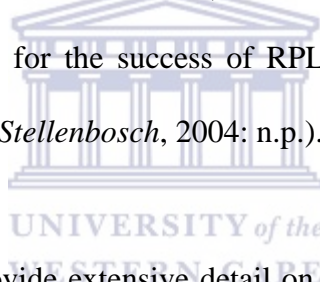
UWC's RPL policy document provide extensive detail on past and present initiatives, which makes it easier for RPL candidates to relate the policy to their own needs when making admission enquiries. UWC's policy provides detail about the relationship the institution has built with other stakeholders in order to successfully progress RPL (*University of the Western Cape*, 2004: n.p.). In the case of UCT, RPL policy requires that initiatives are to be undertaken with specific reference to national government's human resources growth and development strategies. Reference is made to various human resources development stakeholder bodies and initiatives for relationship building (*University of Cape Town*, 2004: 13-18). USB's RPL policy does not provide any detail of partnering with other institutions or bodies as is encouraged by SAQA, for the success of RPL, as mentioned in chapter 3.

UWCs policy reflects current agreements with the relevant stakeholder bodies for purposes of quality in education. Partnering, to progress the success of RPL, with HEIs and other stakeholders e.g. workplaces, government and the corporate sector, and organised labour, is mentioned in the RPL policy document (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.). UCT's policy reflects the same partnering initiatives and elaborates on how the institution intends responding to local, provincial and national people development needs (*University of Cape Town*, 2004: 13). The USB policy does not provide detail in this regard.

TABLE 3: CRITICAL LEARNER/CANDIDATE SUPPORT STRUCTURES

COMPLIANCE AND VARIATION WITHIN AREAS OF PRACTICE

Table 3 consist of nine areas of good practice with reference to RPL candidates. They relate to properly conducted evidence facilitation, advice and support services, including assistance in dealing with personal, social and technical barriers to assessment and preparation of evidence. An important RPL policy objective is to enable candidates to see how to use the process of RPL to achieve their personal, educational and career goals (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 14). The UWC and UCT RPL policy documents fully reflect these areas of practice. USB's RPL policy document complies with two categories and five underdeveloped in seven areas of practice.

The national government's RPL Policy document (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 13) states that learner/candidate support structures are critical to enhance the success rate of candidates. Institutions are required to apply this measure in terms of the requirements for accreditation as a provider of education and training, and the policy requires that the measure will be an aspect of the teaching and learning environment which will be quality assured (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 13).

Learner advisory services and programmes in the USB RPL policy are underdeveloped. They do not elaborate on specifics, as is the case with UCT and UWC's RPL policies. The UWC and UCT RPL policy documents make reference to the various needs of learners/candidates and provide a breakdown learning programmes that might be applicable to individuals or groups. Reference is made to the varieties of RPL within departments and the support that can be provided to access the different areas of study. UCT's policy provides procedures where learners' choices of learning and development are clear and where learners may need guidance related to their learning and development needs (*University of Cape own*, 2004: 4). Assessment procedures are defined in all three RPL policy documents. UCT's and UWC's policies also provide procedures relevant to the different departments and faculties which specify, how they are relevant to learning programmes (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p; *University of Cape Town*, 2004: 7).

Support staff at UWC are trained to assist candidates as well as other staff within the RPL process and across departments and faculties (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.). A feedback mechanism, from departments and faculties to the quality committees and the

rector's office, is in place to improve processes and encourage relationship building (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.). UCT's RPL policy mentions similar processes and in addition offers promotion opportunities for staff who take the lead in improving and streamlining RPL processes (*University of Cape Town*, 2004: 5).

The functions of evidence facilitation, assessment and advising are clearly defined by all three institutional policies and, in the case of UCT and UWC, relationships between staff within and across divisions are encouraged (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.; *University of Cape Town*, 2004: 7). Training and development, through cross-functioning and feedback cycles, are encouraged at UCT and UWC. These, in turn, are designed to encourage mentoring relationships between staff with, and those without, RPL assessment expertise. The USB policy does not provide detail in this regard, but states however that the respective faculties and departments are responsible for the RPL processes (*University of Stellenbosch*, 2004: n.p.). The USB policy makes no reference to the encouragement or process of cross-divisional/faculty RPL activity.

TABLE 4:   PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT THAT CONSTITUTE GOOD PRACTICE

**COMPLIANCE AND VARIATION IN AREAS OF PRACTICE**

Table 4 discusses RPL assessment as a structured process for gathering evidence and making judgments about a candidate's existing learning in relation to registered national standards and qualifications. It is a requirement under national government RPL policy that RPL be linked to an existing qualification by restructuring the qualification. This process involves the candidate and the assessor within a particular context in a transparent and collaborative manner (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 17). This category consists of ten areas of practice.

Principles of good practice must be applied in the design of all assessment methods and procedures (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 16). The SAQA RPL policy (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 16), states that the quality of evidence should relate to reliability, validity, authenticity, sufficiency and currency. The SAQA RPL policy (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 19) also explains that in the case of sufficiency, it is not only a question of whether enough evidence has been gathered.   Sometimes assessors require too much evidence, which makes the assessment process onerous for assessors and candidates (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 16). The SAQA RPL Policy states further that all assessments, regardless of subject matter and the context, should follow the same procedure, i.e.: planning of the assessment with the candidate; conducting the

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assessment; and feedback of the results to the candidate. The assessor, however, needs to plan, design and prepare assessments and include appropriate alternative forms of assessment (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 16).

The UWC RPL policy document is fully compliant with all of these areas of practice. UCT's RPL policy complies with nine areas of practice but makes no mention of the area of moderation and review mechanisms. The USB RPL policy document complies with four areas of practice. Five areas of practice are underdeveloped as these areas (see Table 4), do not provide detailed information that provide the degree of clarity to RPL candidates as which is required by the regulatory bodies, SAQA and the CHE/HEQC. One area of practice is not mentioned at all. This concerns moderation and review mechanisms, including policies for verification, evaluation and quality assurance of assessments and assessment systems.
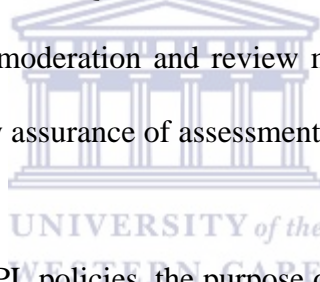
In the case of UCT and UWC's RPL policies, the purpose of the assessment, and expectations different candidates may have, is clarified with reference to specific RPL situations (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.; *University of Cape Town*, 2004: 4-5). These processes include information for learners seeking alternative access to specific programmes of study; the outcome of the RPL process, including a written report by assessors; final decisions regarding admission of the RPL candidate to a particular programme; appeals concerning RPL results (*University of Cape Town*, 2004: 5). UWC's RPL policy specifies different assessment methods as well as a step-by-step procedure including dates, for ease of reference (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.). The USB RPL policy is

underdeveloped (see Table 4) and mentions a generic process within the framework of the SAQA RPL policy.

TABLE 5:   COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INTEGRITY AND CREDIBILITY

COMPLIANCE AND VARIATION IN AREAS OF PRACTICE

Table 5 examine policies with reference to RPL quality management systems. A quality management system is required to ensure the integrity of assessment, in reporting and recording at provider level (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 18).   This category contains nine areas of practice.

The quality management system embraces the moderation, management and reporting procedures of ETQAs and providers (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 17).   The standards provide integrity and credibility of an assessment system for effective management, implementation, moderation and review. This extends to the secure production, storage and distribution of records, reports and other data relevant to RPL assessment (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 17).

UWC's RPL policy specifies that quality management systems must be in place within faculties and departments. The institutional RPL policy requires that collaboration between departments, faculties and programmes, and the Division for Lifelong Learning, must ensure that RPL is monitored and evaluated in terms of the quality assurance policy and procedures of the university (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.). The UWC RPL policy requires that quality management system documents are in place, and that a culture of continuous improvement ought to be encouraged. Ongoing interaction between stakeholders, external and internal, is encouraged for purposes of quality and relevance of courses offered (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.). Assessment documents, reports and resources of evidence are maintained in accordance with agreed criteria and specifications. USB and UCT's RPL policy documents do not comply in this regard as there are no related information within the policy documents.
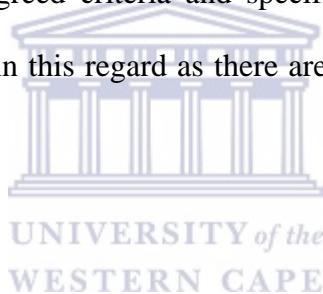
TABLE 6:   RPL COSTS AS AN INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

COMPLIANCE AND VARIATION IN AREAS OF PRACTICE

Matters to do with the fees charged for RPL services are raised in Table 6. Fees for the delivery and administration of assessment and other RPL services should not create barriers for candidates (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 19). The development of services and programmes is an investment, to be funded by various funding strategies, in the lifelong learning approach across all levels and sectors of education and training in South

Africa (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 19). This category consists of five areas of practice.

The national government RPL policy stipulates that (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 19) start-up RPL costs may be relatively high, but with learners entering courses the costs should reduce, as specified within the national government RPL policy. RPL should be cost-effective for candidates by reducing the cost of training in terms of those parts of the qualification for which the candidate already meets the requirement/s (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2002: 19).

All three institutional RPL policies specify intentions to provide cost-effective RPL services. UWC allocates prices for initial services, and variations in services rendered (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.). UCT's RPL policy allocates a nominal fee and elaborates on variations of services that can be offered (*University of Cape Town*, 2004: 17). Possible funding initiatives for RPL services are listed in the policy to assist candidates where they cannot cover the costs (*University of the Western Cape*, 2004: 17). The RPL policy documents of UWC and UCT provide flexible payment options for candidates. Research and development priorities are identified, including those that investigate costs and cost effectiveness (*University of the Western Cape*, 2001: n.p.; *University of Cape Town*, 2004: 17-18). The USB RPL policy does not specify costs at all. The USB policy refers to the candidate being responsible for assessment costs (*University of Stellenbosch*, 2004: n.p.).

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The success of the national government's RPL goals and policies depend on the extent to which education institutions adopt the spirit and the letter of the government's RPL initiatives. In this context the meaning given to RPL by the government and the extent to which the RPL policies of the Western Cape universities reflect this. Variations between institutional RPL policies and the government's RPL policy presents a problem because prospective RPL candidates may be hindered from accessing learning programmes due to inadequate RPL policies and processes at the institutional level. The government's ability to deliver educational reforms may be compromised on this account.

The main issue that the study seeks to address is the extent to which the RPL policy documents of the three universities in the Western Cape reflect the requirements of the national government's RPL policy. This has been addressed through defining and explaining the national government's RPL policy and in the context of the Council on Higher Education's findings that many educational institutions do not have approved institutional RPL policy
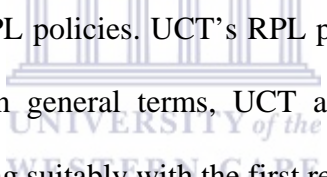
documents. In this study, which focused on the three higher education institutions in the Western Cape region characterised by different historical backgrounds, several significant variations in areas of RPL practice have been identified.

The study has revealed that UCT does not have a finally approved and adopted RPL policy. This raises the question of whether UCT is committed to the RPL initiative. Each university defines RPL in terms of SAQA requirements yet their policy documents differ in several areas of practice from the national government RPL requirements. The RPL policy documents of the three institutions, (in draft in the case of UCT), show variation in the allocation of responsibility and accountability for the institutional success of RPL. In most operational areas USB's policy document provides the exact information as contained in the government's RPL policy document, without elaborating creatively and innovatively as is the case in the UCT and UWC policy documents. *South African Qualifications Authority* (2001: 6) states that the criteria and guidelines for providers should not be viewed as minimum requirements.

Institutions that do not have the necessary RPL policy documents in place may not be considered "providers" of education and training, by SAQA and the Council on Higher Education, when seeking accreditation within their sphere of operation (*South African Qualifications Authority*, 2001: 6). Accordingly, these educational institutions should acknowledge the importance of at least completing the design of a RPL policy which meets national RPL policy expectations. The institutional RPL policy documents should define the nature of the partnerships between the universities that are crucial for HEIs to respond to local, provincial and national people development needs that allows access for RPL candidates to the

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

institutions where processes are not different, but comply with the national government's RPL requirements. The aforementioned raises questions about the success of SAQA and the CHE as regulatory bodies. The success of the government's educational policy reforms is dependent on the regulatory bodies to apply uniformity in its processes of accreditation. Institutions not making the necessary policy commitments should be suspended from operating as providers of education in fairness to those institutions that are committed to the government's educational policy reforms.

MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

UWC and USB have approved RPL policies. UCT's RPL policies are in draft form and have not received senate approval. In general terms, UCT and USB seem to have placed a relatively low priority on complying suitably with the first requirement of national government RPL strategy. The RPL policy documents of the institutions are moreover not available in the three official languages of the Western Cape. Language can serve as a barrier to entry as it can affect the RPL candidate's confidence if he/she is not able to converse in his/her home language (Helen Peters, 2000, n.p.). National government's requirements, furthermore is that RPL should not be seen as a remedial strategy and therefore separated from existing access to learning programmes at the universities. This is, however, the case at all three Western Cape universities. The preferred RPL strategy is that candidates enter studies at postgraduate and not undergraduate level and that RPL only applies with reference to defined qualifications.

The requirement for entry into existing degree programmes is still a matriculation exemption or equivalent. This requirement of a matriculation exemption or equivalent involves a rejection of government policy in arguably its most critical sphere (Peters, 2000: n.p.).

The requirements for effective support structures, as stated within the national government RPL policy, is poorly reflected in the USB RPL policy document The government's RPL policy states that inadequate support structures for learners/candidates can be responsible for numerous problems that can lead to misunderstanding and prejudices. The first point of support would be information reflected within the RPL policy documents of the institutions and this information must be unambiguous, relevant and effective. When candidates attend learning programmes, effective support creates continuity between the two dominant spheres of influence on the learner/candidate and likely signals to the learner that institutional support adds value to their education. Needless to say, effective support structures exert much influence on the learner/candidate's development and thus facilitate effective learning. Lack of effective support structures are compounded by ineffective learning programmes. Distorted information gives a poor image of the institution and undermines efforts of effective learning programmes.

It is important to note that the institutional RPL process should be clear to prospective candidates due to the complexity of the nature of RPL. The RPL policy aims of access and redress through effective institutional RPL policy formulation should be adapted on an ongoing basis impacting positively on learners/candidates.

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IN SUMMARY
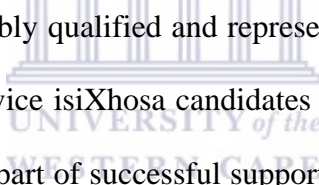
The obstacles to access learning programmes identified by Helen Peters in 2000 continue.

- The admission requirement of a matriculation exemption for existing undergraduate programmes causes a barrier to entry for RPL candidates and is inconsistent with government policy.

- The 2002 SAQA RPL policy provides definition and direction for an evolving system of RPL. The success of the RPL initiative relies on educational institutions adopting and adapting the RPL initiative with reference to access to current learning programmes. Of the three higher education institutions in the Western Cape, UCT is the only university without a formally approved policy document. The draft has 11 areas non-compliant or underdeveloped. This questions the institutional commitment to the RPL initiative.

- The SAQA RPL policy encourages principles of good practice that are not reflected in the USB policy document. There seem to be inconsistencies in the location of responsibility for RPL policy development at USB.

- USB and UCT's RPL policy documents have many non-compliant areas of practice. Policy development dialogue with UWC, which has five non-compliant areas of practice out of fifty-one areas analysed in this study, may be fruitful.

- ▪ None of the higher education institutions has a RPL policy available in isiXhosa. This raises important access questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government's RPL initiative seeks to address and direct the challenges of social, economic and human development. The RPL candidates seeking access to learning programmes have vast knowledge and skill that needs to be considered as a basis for entry into academic programmes.

There is an obvious need for suitably qualified and representative educators and support staff at the institutions that need to service isiXhosa candidates effectively. Information is crucial for the success of RPL and forms part of successful support processes. Policy documents and other related RPL information should therefore be provided in a medium representative of all learners/candidates seeking access to learning programmes. The SAQA RPL document states that effective support structures is necessary to ensure that all candidates receive equal and informed assistance to RPL. Options in this regard should be available in order that language, not serve as a barrier to entry or the success of the candidate.

National government's RPL policy provides the framework for RPL policy development and encourages the goals of redress and access to be progressed through good practice. In order to streamline and assist in ironing out blockages, SAQA has developed the Criteria and

Guidelines document. The SAQA RPL policy also provides areas of practice as a framework for institutions to improve and develop current practices in order that RPL can be successfully progressed. There is still a sense that RPL is not yet fully operational because of a number of inter-related problems including, as this thesis has shown, inadequacies in policy development.

RPL policy development require of institutions to rethink the content and processes of their programmes for purposes of relevance to the educational and skills needs of the country within a national and international context. The RPL initiative can provide an effective means of assisting candidates to develop skills acquired through past experience and progress their professional development. The development of RPL policies and practices should therefore be done within an understanding of social and economic conditions.

It is obvious that the spirit of RPL brings with it a new kind of learner who will require policies and processes relevant to their development needs. The government's human resources strategic objectives covering all aspects of human development, wants the focus of this development to be relevant to the world of work. The policy responses show that the institutions extract from the national RPL policy what is conducive to their current environment and not necessarily reaching out to other stakeholder bodies, or each other, to service the greater good within Western Cape higher education.

The literature shows that RPL as an initiative of meeting the learning needs and aspirations of individuals and in the process encourage access and redress within the current educational structures, have the potential to formally qualify many already skilled individuals. The

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research findings, however, indicates that the level of seriousness in adopting the RPL policy initiative leaves a lot to be desired. The findings do not only raise questions of how serious the universities are in developing effective policies but also how serious the regulatory bodies, SAQA and the CHE, are in encouraging institutions to adopt the RPL initiative. The regulatory bodies are responsible for educational institutions to operate as Providers of education within the framework of the government's educational reform.

The nagging question that remains is why some institutions still operate as providers of education without adopting the government's educational reform initiatives?

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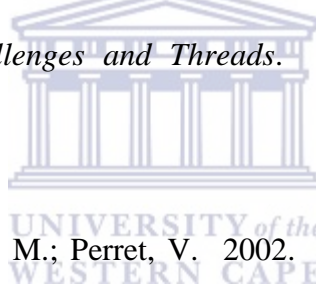
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RPL POLICY COMPLIANCE MATRIX

(Indicator: Y - Yes; N - No; U - Underdeveloped in the current policy documents)

TABLE 1: GENERAL AREAS OF PRACTICE FOR RPL PROGRESS ALIGNED WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF ACCESS AND REDRESS

RPL Principles of Access and Redress	Description of Category	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
General	This category deals with the extent to which policy development and policy formulation is aligned with expectations and requirements reflected in the SAQA RPL policy as well as general practices of commitment to RPL. These areas of practice are also based on the requirements of the SAQA RPL policy document as well as the Criteria and Guidelines document (SAQA, 2003: 8).	Does the institution have an approved RPL Policy? - Required by HEQC (UCT, 2004: 2).	Y	Y	N	UCTs RPL policy is still in draft - not approved by the Senate. The draft policy was however used in this study.
		Is the definition of RPL the same as contained in the SAQA RPL Policy document? "… the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner howsoever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specific qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements" (Government Gazette, 2003: 8).	Y	Y	Y	USB referenced the exact definition from the SAQA RPL policy. UCT and UWC elaborated on the definition and clarifies specific connotations.
		Is the university's RPL Policy available in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa?	N	N	N	None of the policies are availabe in isiXhosa.
		RPL requires access to education programmes for candidates with or without a matriculation exemption. Entry requirement for existing degree courses at the all three universities - matric endorsement or equivalent, (equivalence as required by the Matriculation Board (UCT, 2004: 2)).	N	N	N	All three institutions require a matric endorsement or equivalent entrance for existing degree courses. RPL access is preferred at post-graduate level for existing degree courses. Other learning programmes are developed for RPL learners for which the outcome is a certificate (SAQA, 2003: 8). The government RPL policy specify that RPL learning programmes not be developed separate from other learning programmes.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002 & 2003

TABLE 2: ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT DEMONSTRATING COMMITMENT TO RPL

National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Institutional Policy and Environment	There is a shared commitment on the part of the ETQAs, accredited constituent providers and workplaces to provide enabling environments for learning and assessment (inclusive of close cooperation between administration, learning facilitators, evidence facilitators, advisors, assessors, moderators, professional organisations, employers, trade unions and communities, where appropriate). RPL encourage learners from i.e. workplaces, the unemployed and adult learners to gain access to universities through processes of assessment.	The assessment policy expresses an explicit commitment to the principles of equity, redress and inclusion.	Y	Y	Y	
		The assessment policy reflects planning and management in accordance with relevant legislation and policy.	Y	U	Y	USB - not in as much detail. A General reference is made to the RPL legal framework on the premise of no pressure from the government or other institutions.
		Information about assessment opportunities and services are widely available and actively promoted.	Y	N	Y	USB - no mention is made of any promotional activity at or through USB to promote RPL other than reference made to a response by the institution to requests from i.e.. interest groups, individuals, employers.
		Admission procedures and systems are accessible and inclusive of learners with diverse needs and backgrounds.	N	N	N	None of the institutional policies are available in isiXhosa - only English and Afrikaans - the policies are therefore not reflecting the three official languages of the Western Cape as per the Western Cape Language Policy.
		Equal access to opportunities for advice, support, time and resources for all candidates seeking assessment.	N	N	N	None of the institutional policies are available in isiXhosa - only English and Afrikaans - the policies are therefore not reflecting the three official languages of the Western Cape as per the Western Cape Language Policy.
		Organisational structures ensure that evidence facilitators, assessors and moderators and other key personnel, such as advisors, are given sufficient support, resources and recognition for services.	Y	Y	Y	
		Regional integration and collaboration are encouraged among institutions, professional bodies and workplaces, where possible.	Y	N	Y	USB - no mention is made of building relationships with other institutions or bodies as required by the SAQA RPL policy.
		Formal agreements between ETQAs, providers and workplaces are encouraged to ensure effective validation, articulation and recognition of assessment results, where possible.	Y	N	Y	USB - no mention is made in this regard. A General reference is made to the RPL legal framework on the premise of no pressure from the government or other institutions.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 12

TABLE 3: CRITICAL LEARNER/CANDIDATE SUPPORT STRUCTURES

National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Services and Support to Learners	Through properly conducted evidence facilitation, advice and other support services, including assistance with dealing with personal, social and technical barriers to assessment and preparation of evidence, candidates are able to see how to use the process of RPL to achieve their personal, educational and career goals.	Advising services and programmes assist learners/candidates to make effective choices about learning programmes, career and work-related opportunities.	Y	U	Y	Not much information provided in the USB policy in this regard.
		Advising programmes and services provide assistance to learners/candidates in preparing for assessment.	Y	U	Y	USB applied the generic framework supplied in the SAQA RPL Policy. UWC and UCT elaborates extensively on their processes.
		Support services attempt to remove time, place and other barriers to assessment.	Y	U	Y	USB's process is rather generic and not specific to e.g. departments or faculties as is the case with UWC and UCT.
		Evidence facilitators assist candidates in preparing and presenting evidence in a coherent and systematic fashion.	Y	U	Y	USB's process is not very specific as is the case with UCT and UWC.
		Structured short learning programmes or articulation-based programmes are increasingly available where required.	Y	U	Y	USB's RPL policy document is not clear in this regard.
		Policies and review mechanisms regarding monitoring and quality assurance of evidence facilitators, assessors, moderators and other key personnel are in place.	Y	Y	Y	
		The functions of evidence facilitation, assessment and advising are clearly defined, and where possible, should not be performed by the same person.	Y	Y	Y	
		Training and development encourage mentoring relationships between staff with and those without assessment expertise.	Y	U	Y	USB's policy is faculty/department specific - not encouraging partnerships.
		Quality assurance systems are implemented by all training providers to ensure that they increasingly meet the developmental objectives as agreed with the ETQA.	Y	U	Y	USB's programme is very generic - places a lot of emphasis on accountability for quality on the Rector's management team - not faculty or department specific.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 14

TABLE 4: PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT THAT CONSTITUTE GOOD PRACTICE

National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Methods and Processes of Assessment	Assessment is a structured process for gathering evidence and making judgments about a candidate's performance in relation to registered national standards and qualifications. This process involves the candidate and the assessor within a particular context in a transparent and collaborative manner.	The purpose of the assessment and the expectations of the candidate are clarified.	Y	U	Y	USB's purpose and expectations are very generic. The processes and expectations are not elaborated upon or aligned with current programmes or faculties/departments as is the case with UWC's and UCTs policy documents.
		Assessment plans take into account the form, quality and sources of evidence required (for example performance evidence, knowledge evidence, witness testimony, etc).	Y	Y	Y	
		The form and quality of support to be provided to the candidate in preparing for the assessment are established.	Y	U	Y	UWC and UCT elaborate on their processes specific to the 'assumed' needs that students might have. USB's policy is once again very generic and does not provide much detail.
		The candidate is actively involved in all aspects of the assessment process to ensure that the assessment is fair and transparent. Possible barriers to fair assessments are identified and addressed.	Y	Y	Y	
		Assessment plans indicate a variety of appropriate assessment methods and instruments to validate diverse types of learning.	Y	U	Y	USB's processes are generic in this regard. UWC and UCTs policies are specific - linking to different means and ways of RPL.
		The choice of assessment methods is fit for purpose and ensures reliable and valid assessment outcomes.	Y	U	Y	UWC and UCTs RPL elaborates on this issue in their policy documents. USB's policy refers to an access plan for the undergraduate level (Access with success: A new access model, June 2003) which consist of measures that will be made applicable to all ARPL applications.
		An appeals process is in place and made known to the candidate.	Y	Y	Y	
		Assessment instruments and exemplars are developed and moderated in compliance with the ETQA requirements.	Y	U	Y	USB's policy is very vague in this regard. The policy only mentions the responsibility for quality assurance by the Vice-Rector's (Teaching), office who is supported by the Division for Academic Planning and Quality Assurance. There is no detailed elaboration of the processes within faculties and departments as is the case with the policy documents of UWC and UCT.

Continued on next page

		TABLE 4: PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT (CONTINUED)				
		Assessment reports indicate the assessment plan, the evidence presented, the assessment outcome and recommendations for further action, including additional training and/or re-assessment.	Y	Y	Y	
		Moderation and review mechanisms are in place, including policies for verification, evaluation and quality assurance of assessments and assessment systems.	Y	N	N	UWC's policy refers to monitoring and evaluating the process of RPL by making reference to detailed policies and procedural documents being in place for faculties and departments. USB and UCT does not confirm that these are in place - the policies only specify this as a requirement.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 17

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TABLE 5: COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INTEGRITY AND CREDIBILITY

National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Quality Management Systems	Quality management systems are in place to ensure the continuous improvement of assessment systems. The quality management system ensures the critical integrity of assessments and reporting and recording processes inform strategic requirements at provider, sectoral and national level.	Quality management systems for assessment are designed, documented and implemented in accordance with agreed criteria and specifications.	Y	N	N	UWC's policy refers to quality management system documents being in place for faculties and departments. USB and UCT does not confirm that these are in place - the policies only specify this as a requirement.
		Quality management systems ensure the refining of assessment policies, procedures and services at all levels and informs planning for further development aimed at meeting agreed targets.	Y	N	N	UWC's policy refers to quality management system documents being in place and ongoing changes to be effected as the need arises. USB and UCT does not confirm that these are in place - the policies only specify this as a requirement.
		Quality management systems provide for input from all key stakeholders, including representatives from the candidate community.	Y	N	U	UWC's policy refers to quality management system with ongoing interaction between stakeholders as mentioned. UCTs policy also refers to interdisciplinary participation for quality management improvement. USB's policy however is not clear in this regard - the policy does not specify partnership initiatives.
		Evaluation and monitoring activities are clearly spelt out in QMS documentation, including diagnostic, formative and summative activities.	Y	N	N	UWC - specified with reference to institutional policies available. Not in UCT and USB policy documents.
		Assessment documentation, reports and sources of evidence are maintained in accordance with agreed criteria and specifications.	Y	N	N	UWC - specified availability as per the policy document. UCT and USB's intentions are mentioned in the policies.
		RPL results are recorded in accordance with the requirements of the ETQA and SAQA's NLRD.	Y	Y	Y	
		Information on RPL outcomes, including unsuccessful and successful applications are maintained.	Y	Y	Y	
		The quality management system provides for systems to monitor progress of candidates who enter learning programmes post-RPL.	N	N	N	None of the policy documents mention any intention in this regard.
		The quality management system provides for analyses and reporting of services and results.	Y	U	Y	USB's policy mention the intention but does not provide processes as is the case of the UWC and UCT policies.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 18

TABLE 6: RPL COSTS AS AN INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

National Government's RPL Policy - Regulatory Bodies SAQA & CHE	Description of Categories Listed in the SAQA RPL Policy Document	Areas of Practice	University of the Western Cape	University of Stellenbosch	University of Cape Town	Comments
Fees for RPL Services	Fees for the delivery and administration of assessment and RPL services, do not create barriers for candidates. The development of services and programmes is an investment in the lifelong learning approach across all levels and sectors of education and training in South Africa.	Fees should not create barriers for candidates.	Y	U	Y	All the policies specify intentions accordingly. UWC allocates prices for services and variations in services rendered. UCT allocates a nominal fee and elaborates on variations of services that can be offered. USB's policy are not specific in this regard.
		The fees for the assessment of prior learning should be less than the cost of a module or full-time learning programme. Candidates allowed to access programmes after assessment should not have to pay for the full programme or have to do extra modules to cover the cost of the full learning programme. Assessment against a specific module should be less than the cost of the module.	U	N	U	UWC and UCTs policy specify the fees related to variations in the RPL process and not to modules or programmes. USB's policy makes a general reference to costs which is for the candidate's account. No variations are specified.
		Credit-bearing portfolio development or other articulation programmes are made increasingly available to assist candidates in their preparation for assessment, and to qualify for available subsidies for selected skills programmes and learnerships.	Y	U	Y	USB's policy makes mention of portfolio development but do not specify partnerships for further assistance or development.
		Flexible payment options, in line with the policies and procedures of the ETQA and constituent providers, area available.	Y	N	Y	UWC and UCT elaborate extensively in this regard. USB's policy refers to the candidate's responsibility and no other initiatives in this regard.
		Research and development priorities are identified, including those that investigate costs and cost effectiveness.	Y	U	Y	UCT and UWC elaborate extensively in this regard whereas USB's policy is very vague.

SOURCE: Derived from SAQA, 2002: 19