

**THE VALUE OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING IN ENHANCING
ACCESS AND REDRESS IN TEACHER EDUCATION**

by

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ETHICAL STATEMENT



Faculty of Education

22-Nov-2018

Dear Mrs Makabelo Makhatsane

Ethics Clearance: The value of the Recognition of Prior Learning in enhancing access and redress in teacher education

Principal Investigator: Mrs Makabelo Makhatsane

Department: School of Higher Education Studies Department (Bloemfontein Campus)

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2018/1446**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

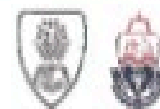
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We have completed the proofreading, editing, layout, syntax, spelling and grammar check on a 51 023 word / 171-page **Thesis submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree Masters in Higher Education titled the Value of the Recognition of Prior Learning in Enhancing Access and Redress in Teacher Education for Makabelo Iketleng Makhatsane, Student No.: 2000025110 in the School of Education Studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.**

Brenda van Rensburg

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Date: 08 February 202

ABSTRACT

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is regarded as a priority in the effort to redress the discrimination of the past. RPL assists individuals to return to education and work at the pace that is related to the learner. RPL plays a role in facilitating access in teacher education through experience. The literature has shown that RPL can build confidence for students through self-reflection on their own experiences, thus making them less anxious about embarking on future studies. In the light of the fact that the qualification, the National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) through which students received access to education through the application of RPL has been terminated, this study intended to explore the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

The study followed a mixed method approach. The quantitative approach used a self-constructed closed-item questionnaire, whilst the qualitative approach consisted out of semi-structured interviews. In this study, a sample of hundred (100) students who were enrolled for the NPDE, participated in the questionnaires and in the survey. These participants were selected using random sampling. I selected every second person on the list, irrespective of race, gender or status, until one hundred (100) persons were reached.

Quantitative data was entered via Microsoft Excel for analysis and SPSS for reliability testing, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be 0.784. The quantitative data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics in which tables and percentage distributions were used, to display data.

The main findings of this research suggested that RPL plays a very important role in enhancing access and redress in teacher education. Data from both the questionnaires as well as the interviews suggested that it was only through RPL that they were able to access Higher Education Institutions (HE). In this way, RPL redressed past injustices and brought about the transformation of education. However, what came out very strongly in this study was that the aim of RPL was to enhance access and redress past injustices could be severely jeopardised by financial constraints experienced by the participants. In some cases, the lack of funding

resulted in the participants having to terminate their studies for at least a year, in order to accumulate finances. It is my view that the lack of finances could have or will negatively influence the vision of ensuring access and redress through RPL. It is against this background that, among others, I recommend that the government and institutions of higher learning look into a funding model for students that wish to enter teacher education through RPL.

Key words: RPL; NPDE; Access; Redress; Transformation; Discrimination; Past Injustices; HE; Experience; and Teacher Education.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the following people who are special in my life:

- My husband, Tankiso Makhatsane supported me when I had to go away to study - thank you.
- I thank all my children; Aletta, Lerato, Relumetse and Mpho who supported and believed in me.
- My mother, Maiketleng Mokhatla who believed in me and wanted better things for me.
- My late sister, Emang Emely Mosonkutu who gave huge support to my mum when I was financially down and my younger sister Keneng Mokhatla for all her support - thank you for being the best.

Ke leboha ho menahane, Molimo A le atlehise.

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- All the students who took part through, filling out questionnaires and interviews - thank you for your time.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC: African National Congress

CAEL: Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning

CAEL: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

CHE: Council on Higher Education

CPD: Continuing Professional Development

COSATU: Congress of South African Trade Unions

DHET: Department of Higher Education and Training

DoE: Department of Education

ETDP: Education and Training Development Practices SETA

EU: European Union

FET: Further Education and Training (also FE)

GET: General Education and Training (also GE)

HEI: Higher Education Institutions

HEQC: Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education

HET: Higher Education and Training (also HE)

KMO: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

MQA: Mauritius Qualifications Authority

NDP: National Plan Development

NPDE: National Professional Diploma in Education

NQA: Namibia Qualifications Authority

NQF: National Qualifications Framework

NQA: Namibia Qualifications Authority

PLA: Prior Learning Assessment

PLAR: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

RDP: Reconstruction and Development Programme

RPL: Recognition of Prior Learning

RSA: Republic of South Africa

SA: South Africa

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SAIDE: South African Institute for Distance Education

SAQA: South African Qualifications Authority

SETA: Sector Education and Training Authority

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UFS: University of the Free State

USA: United States of America

Umalusi: General and Further Education Quality Assurance Council

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

UNISA: University of South Africa

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CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND THE BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Prior to 1994, in general, Black teachers in South Africa could enter the teaching profession with only a basic diploma or a certificate in education. These certificates and diplomas were offered at different universities in South Africa (SA). The aim of these qualifications was to equip teachers with basic teaching skills which would enable them to enter the teaching profession.

In the new democratic SA, we saw a new trajectory of transformation and development taking place, particularly in the education sector. This transformation became a necessity, not only in ensuring development in the country, but also in transforming the education sector in SA. Moreover, it was also considered important to ensure that all South Africans received quality education.

Appropriately, qualified teachers are therefore regarded as a *sine qua non* for equitable and quality education. Within the vision of equity, quality and access to education, the new government introduced several new policies and strategies that were adopted to address the serious shortcomings of the Apartheid education system.

These policies and strategies introduced new basic minimum requirements for teachers which demanded a higher-level qualification for them to remain in the teaching profession. This resulted in the phasing out of the *old* certificates, diplomas, higher diplomas, and further diplomas in teacher education, that were awarded to Black teachers in particular, during the previous dispensation. Guidelines of the new minimum requirements for teaching were expressed in the South African Qualification Authority Act (SAQA) (Act 58 of 1995) and articulated in the National Qualification Framework (NQF) (Act 67 of 2008), that came into effect on the 1st of June 2009.

In this regard, the NQF (Act 67 of 2008) stated that in order to become a legally registered teacher in SA, prospective applicants had to have a senior certificate, as well as a teaching certificate. This stipulation meant that many in-service teachers without a Grade 12 certificate were immediately regarded as under-qualified and therefore not legible to teach in public schools in SA. Although regarded as under-

qualified, the service contracts of these teachers, who in many cases were permanent employees and practising teachers, could not be terminated. Instead, what was effectively required was that they should take the opportunity to access higher education institutions (HEI's) where they could improve their qualifications, in line with the new minimum requirements for teachers. This opportunity was created primarily by the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

RPL became the formal part of the assessment within the development policy landscape of many countries around the world, as including South Africa (SA) (Dyson & Keating, 2005). In SA, RPL was introduced as the alternative route to improve the qualification of the under-qualified teachers. It was envisaged as the mechanism to recognise and acknowledge the diverse learning experiences of an individual (DoE, 2013:35) and it is valued because it provides an opportunity for one's life experience to be accredited (Nel, 2010).

The SAQA describes RPL as a combination of a learner's experience, obtained through specific learning outcomes with the purpose to obtain a certificate that would meet set standards (DoE, 2013: Section 16).

In addition, RPL was also regarded as an important national imperative with a key role to play in transformation (SAQA's Annual Integrated Report, 2013/2014). As such, RPL is supposed to contribute an essential part in ensuring the transformation of society, by ensuring the redress of past injustices and inequalities in access to education, particularly in the education sector.

To enable under-qualified serving teachers to upgrade their qualifications to meet the new requirements, the *National Professional Diploma in Education* (NPDE) came into existence. This qualification served to upgrade teachers and it was offered by various higher education institutions in SA. When the NPDE was introduced in 2001, there were about forty thousand (40 000) schoolteachers with below the minimum qualifications in SA (DoE, 2006:6). Most of these teachers were average aged women who used their mother tongue in the Grade R classrooms. Most of them had studied in the colleges to obtain their qualifications which were now regarded as insufficient to register as a teacher in SA (DoE, 2006:6).

For teachers to enrol for the NPDE and get access to higher qualifications, the teachers had to be in possession of an under-qualified certificate (Ngidi, 2005). The NPDE catered for those teachers who have a senior certificate as well as a one (1) or a two (2) year education certificate, who need to upgrade their qualifications to a three (3) year education certificate level. Students get access to the NPDE programme based on RPL. SA had to adopt RPL to drive access to HE (SAQA Act 58 of 1995).

The rationale for this is to be found in the transformation of education in particular and to also consider the SA constitution with regard to education (Act 108 of 1994), which aimed to: *improve the quality of life of all citizens and to free the potential of each person* (RSA, 1996a: Preamble). This vision is further articulated in the White Paper 6 on Education and Training (1996) which describes the requirements for SA schools and therefore also from teachers, to effectively contribute towards the socio-economic transformation and the country's development.

Against this backdrop it becomes important to explore the value of RPL in enhancing access and redressing imbalances in teacher education.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

RPL is a principle that has been introduced to the education sector, where it has positively influenced certain important parts of the SA policy that provided information on the systems-level reforms after 1994. In this regard, it is the view of Ralphs (2012) that RPL was introduced for the purpose of creating political discussion to bring transformation and to redress past injustices and promote worthwhile access to learning for all those who were excluded under the Apartheid policies.

The core focus of RPL (SAQA, 2002a) are:

- (i) to open new avenues for access to education as a career and to allow for progress; and
- (ii) to speed up the process of redress and discrimination and to allow new career paths.

As such, RPL aims to ensure that teachers have access to institutions of higher learning by redressing the imbalances, the discriminatory and the poor practices of the past that stood in the way of access to and the provision of education.

In teacher education, and in line with the basic aim of RPL as referred to above, RPL was introduced as a prerequisite for access to the National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE). The NPDE is a qualification that underqualified in-service teachers could enrol for, in order to upgrade and improve their qualifications in line with the new requirements, and in line with the vision of redress and access. As such, RPL created the opportunity for underqualified teachers to have access to and to redress past imbalances in teacher education, by gaining access to higher education qualifications and upgrading their qualifications.

This is particularly important since the *National Qualification Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008* requires from prospective applicants, who want to register as teachers in SA, must have the highest School certificate in SA, together with the Bachelor of Education degree or a Diploma in Education. As a result, teachers without a Grade 12 certificates including a recognised four (4) year bachelor's degree in Education or a three (3) year teacher's Diploma in Education are regarded as underqualified and are therefore not entirely legible to teach in public schools in SA.

At the time of the introduction of RPL in the NPDE in 2001, there were about forty thousand (40 000) underqualified teachers in SA (DoE, 2006). These teachers were African women teaching Grade R in their mother tongue who mostly had college certificates which were now insufficient to be registered as a teacher in SA (DoE, 2006). It is assumed that these teachers could, for various apartheid regime regulations, not get access to teacher education programmes and qualifications at that time; hence they were now regarded as unqualified. By recognising and acknowledging their prior knowledge, an opportunity is created for these teachers to enter education programmes, such as NPDE, to improve their qualifications. However, the opportunity to get access to HE through RPL in the NPDE programme, ceased in 2014, and students were expected to complete their studies by the end of 2018 (DoE, 2011). However, at the UFS, the NPDE programme would, continue until June 2020 for students already on the system. This would give them the opportunity to complete their studies. This explains why I could still have access to NPDE students.

Various reasons accounted for the termination of this programme. Ralphs (2012) claimed that the introduction of RPL was shown to involve high costs, it was complicated and far short of what was anticipated and its importance in acknowledging claims of equivalence across domains of knowledge is under critical review. The termination of this programme effectively also meant that underqualified and unqualified in-service teachers would not get access to HE institutions through the NPDE and the subsequent application of RPL to obtain or improve their qualifications. More so, this also impacted on plans to redress past imbalances and injustices.

In addition, the termination of the NPDE as one way of getting access to HE institutions through RPL as a strategy to ensure access and to redress past imbalances is taking place despite indications that a large number of unqualified teachers are still present in the SA education system. Hawker (2013) claims that there are still seven thousand and seventy-six (70,076) unqualified teachers in Johannesburg alone who are still active in the classrooms. According to Makwetu, (2015) seventy-eight percent (78%) of the Grade R teachers did not have a diploma at that time, and likewise they did not have the minimum requirements to teach at that level. An audit by the Department of Basic Education also found that twelve thousand three hundred and thirty-six (12,336) teachers were underqualified or unqualified and they were therefore in need of upgrading their qualifications (DoE, 2014).

A response in Parliament by the Minister of Basic Education (Silva, 2017) also indicated that there were at least one thousand seven hundred (1,700) unqualified teachers, who still taught in the high schools in SA. Mathews (2017) also maintained that thousands of learners in South Africa were still taught by teachers who were unqualified. Based on the 2008 figures, (I was not able to obtain the recent figures) the highest number of teachers were found in the Free State i.e. thirty-nine percent (39%) lacked proper qualifications in the sciences while in the Western Cape eight point two eight percent (8.28%) lacked proper qualifications.

Although these statistics might not be representative of the situation within the South African country, and in the education, they do suggest that there might still be a need that RPL realises the aims of making education accessible which is also redressing prior imbalances in the teaching sector. For this reason, this study intended to explore

the value of RPL in enhancing access and redressing imbalances in teacher education.

1.3 THE AIMS AND THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of this research explores the value of RPL in enhancing access and redressing imbalances in teacher education.

In realising this aim the following objectives will be pursued:

- 1) To establish the nature of RPL in general and in SA in particular.
- 2) To explore the nature of and the policy context of RPL in SA teacher education.
- 3) To determine the perceptions and the experiences of the teachers regarding the value of RPL in access and redress.
- 4) To make recommendations to enhance the value of RPL in access to and redressing past discrimination and imbalances in teacher education.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above problem statement, the study asks the following primary research question:

What is the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education?

Based on this question, the following subsidiary questions are asked:

- 1) What is the nature of RPL in general and particular in SA education?
- 2) What is the nature of and the policy context within which RPL in SA teacher education is coached?
- 3) What are the perceptions and the experiences of the SA teachers about the value of RPL in redress and access in teacher education?
- 4) What recommendations could be made to improve the value of RPL in enhancing access to and redress of past injustices in teacher education?

1.5 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the study of how to do research, how to locate things, and how an understanding is gained, in order to discover answers (Kothari, 2004). In order to proffer solutions, the methodology explains the use of positive techniques or

equipment for the research (McGregor & Murnane, 2010). In addition, methodology also explains the methods that a researcher chooses for the purpose of integrating it in a logical and in a coherent way with one-of-a-kind components of the study; thereby making sure that the research problem is addressed effectively. In short, methodology constitutes the mannequin for the series and for the valuation of the data (De Vaus, 2001). The research methodology may be explained as a collection of strategic plans varying from specifying the selection of respondents to data collection and analysis (Posthuma, 2011).

As such, the scope of the research for the methodology is wider than the research strategies (Kothari, 2004). Thus, when we speak of a research methodology we do not solely talk about the research methods, we also consider the good judgment that we use behind the strategies in the context of the research study and we give an explanation as to why we are using a particular approach or technique in preference to another. One can therefore conclude that the methodology has to do with everything that a researcher does to collect relevant information on the topic that will be informative in drawing conclusions and making suggestions. The methodology includes the design, methods and selection of participants as well as the paradigm.

1.6 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design might also be defined as the researcher's overall strategy, that has been chosen to combine the exceptional factors to learn about in a coherent and in a logical way. It ensures that the problem of the research is effectively addressed. In short, it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, the measurement, and for the analysis of the data (De Vaus, 2001). Research design is a collection of strategic plans which move from specifying the selection of respondents to data collection and analysis (Posthuma, 2011).

In this study, I followed a mixed methods design, where I combined both qualitative as well as quantitative approaches. Qualitative research gives a detailed account of human behaviour within the contexts in which it occurs (Alshenqeeti, 2014:39). Therefore, qualitative studies enable one to establish how people experience their context, to what extent they understand that context and how they react towards it. In addition, qualitative research also contributes to gaining insight into the subjective truths and the multiple realities (Castellan, 2010:2). I am of the opinion that a

qualitative approach enabled me to explore the multiple realities applicable to the value of the recognition of prior learning, in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

A mixed-method design also allowed me to follow a quantitative research approach and thus to use quantitative methods. Quantitative research is objective, systematic and it make use of numerical facts (Huberman & Miles, 2002) analysed by using mathematical methods (Sukamolson, 2007). This methodology also explains what a variable is, it determines interrelations between variables and it determines the causes of integration between variables (Burns & Grove, 2005). In addition, quantitative study may be defined as the numerical representation for describing the phenomena reflected on the observations (Labaree, 2009). The combination of these two approaches is informed by Mouton and Marais (1988) as cited in (de Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont 2005:364) who asserted that “phenomena that are investigated in the social sciences are so enmeshed that a single approach most certainly cannot succeed in encompassing human beings in their full complexity”.

My assumption therefore that the use of both these approaches would enable me to understand the social reality of the participants better, especially as it related to the recognition of prior learning and its value for access and redress in education.

1.6.1 The research paradigm

A paradigm is defined as an established research tradition in a particular discipline (Bradley & Sutton, 1993). It describes the entire system of thinking. My concern with the practical value of RPL informed my choice of pragmatism as a research paradigm.

Pragmatism is a philosophical epistemology that links practice and theory (Pansiri, 2009). In addition, pragmatism focuses on *what works* (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003:713). Pragmatism is therefore concerned with what works best and what is of value and what is useful, but it is also concerned with the enhancement thereof. For Waghid (2004:7) pragmatism is rather a habit of action or an inquiry aimed at improvement and utility. For pragmatism the truth lies in what works.

I regard pragmatism as valuable for this study as it enabled me not only to explore what works best in relation to RPL, but also to make suggestions towards the improvement of practices that govern the recognition of prior learning, especially as it

relates to the extent to which RPL is able to or can enhance access and redress in teacher education.

1.6.2 Data collection techniques

Data collection is the process to measure and to gather facts on various activities to enable one to respond to the research study questions, and to evaluate the outcomes as well as to test hypotheses (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). In this study, data was collected quantitatively, and qualitatively, recorded, captured on the computer and analysed in the form of tables and graphs, as well as through using themes and then interpreting them. In line with my research design and informed by the paradigm, the research methods used comprised questionnaires and policy analysis. A literature study, and interviews were also used. A brief exposition of these methods and their value to this study is given below.

a) Questionnaires

According to Bryman and Bell (2003), participants are independent when completing questionnaires. This allows for free and easy responses since there is no interviewer. Questionnaires were used because they can cover many respondents within a short time at minimal cost (Graham, 2004).

In addition, questionnaires also offer a lot of anonymity, especially when dealing with sensitive issues that might arise in the study (Alyahri & Goodman, 2006). It is my contention that the questionnaires assisted me to gain insight into the experience of teachers in the NPDE regarding RPL and its value in enhancing access and in redressing past imbalances in teacher education.

In this study, close-ended questionnaires (cf. Appendix 5A) were used to obtain the views from the NPDE students on the value of RPL in enhancing access and in redressing past imbalances in teacher education. I assumed that the students had insight into RPL as they submitted RPL portfolios for consideration as part of the admission requirements into the NPDE. They were therefore able to give valuable information about their experience of RPL. The study focused on a hundred (105) students who are currently enrolled in the NPDE programme.

b) Interviews

In keeping with the mixed methods approach, interviews were also conducted (see Appendix 5B). The diversity in RPL practice, particularly in terms of RPL assessment, as opposed to a more holistic and integrated approach to the assessment, calls for a two-way talk (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), as is made possible by interviews.

I therefore conducted semi-structured interviews consisting of a list of questions that cover a list of topics and are open-ended (Creswell, 2014). In addition, even though semi-structured interviews consist of numerous key questions that assist to define the areas to be explored, they also permit the interviewer or the interviewee to diversify, in order to pursue a concept or a deeper response (Pope & Mays, 2006:17).

I used interviews (see Appendix 5B) as they are flexible, and they cater for the interviewer and for the interviewee to have a friendly non-intimidating relationship. This also allows for one-on-one interviews with purposively selected participants or, in this case, teachers presently enrolled in the NPDE programme including students who had completed their NDPE studies, and who gained access to the NPDE through RPL.

An interview grid with various open-ended questions was formulated ahead of the interviews. Although the questions were informed by the findings in previous chapters, they were primarily intended to request the participants' ideas with regard to the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

c) Literature study

A literature evaluation was undertaken to determine the nature of RPL particularly in SA. It is vital to do a careful and a thorough literature assessment when one performs research. It is regarded as simple homework that is assumed to have been executed vigilantly and is a given truth in all research papers (Kaniki, 2006). Doing a literature study provides one with information on how much work has been done on your research topic (Kim, 2015).

Kaniki, (2006) indicates that when the researcher has determined an area of interest as a research project, the relevant information must be sourced as it helps to determine the information known on the topic and what still must be researched. A literature study would therefore indicate the relevant information available in all

scholarly resources and other relevant sources that are directly related to the focus of my research (Mouton, 2011).

In addition, a literature study also enabled me to assess what the current state of research on the research topic is (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). As such, it also revealed which researchers had written more on the topic than others and who were more knowledgeable and could be used more for reference on the topic (Labaree, 2009). A literature review also enabled me to have insight into what other researchers had found and to discern where there was a lack of information on my topic (Marrelli, 2005). The value of a literature review for this study lay in the opportunity that it gave me to discover how much had been done on RPL so that I could identify the contribution that I could make on the topic.

d) Policy analysis

Policy analysis may be explained as the expertise of examining existing policy intending to find out what would best fit the changes one might want to implement. As such, it provides an informational base from which a policy is constructed (Hajer, Wagenaar, Goodin & Barry, 2003). Analysis of policy entails assessing policies and programs including the product of the analysis (Fischer & Forester, 1993).

For this study the focus of the policy analysis was analysing the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* and other related policies and Acts promulgated in South Africa. For this study, policy analysis would explore the extent to which the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* facilitated the realisation of access and redress in teacher education.

1.6.3 Data analysis and presentation

Analysing data includes breaking down of data into parts in answering the said research questions (Strydom, 2005). While the analysis of the data does not always provide answers to the questions, the data still needs to be interpreted. In other words, the data needs to be explained and I needed to derive meaning from the data.

Regarding the evaluation of the quantitative data, the following was applicable. Data was captured into the computer application referred to as the Statistical Package for

Social Sciences (SPSS) for further analysis. I used this type of analytic programme because it had been made specifically for analysing quantitative data. It was also flexible, and it could organise data (Macinnes, 2017).

In addition, the SPSS quantitative data analysis method was perceived to be quite reliable and it was regarded as user-friendly (McCormick & Salcedo, 2015). Although different statistics evaluation packages may be better in some areas, SPSS is by far the most used statistical analysis software program and Windows-based program, as it shares many points with different Windows-based software (Muijs, 2004). The value of SPSS for this study therefore lay in the type of data that it would provide, concerning the views and the experiences of teachers of the value of RPL – and in the fact that it was commonly used in education and it was user-friendly.

Qualitative data analysis, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:461) entails making sense of participants' opinions, views, similar patterns and themes in all situations. In analysing the qualitative data, I intended to make use of thematic analysis which is a method that analysis, identifies and document patterns (themes) inside the data (Braun & Clark, 2006:6). I therefore summarised all the qualitative data generated from the interviews for a final written report that represented the voice of the participants. The data analysis would include the organisation of the data, the finding and the organisation of ideas and concepts, and the constructing of overarching issues in the information (O'Connor & Gibson, 2003).

My intention with the data analysis was based on the views of Vosloo (2014:358) who claimed that information that comes from analysing the responses of interviewees could be used to present research findings in a well-structured manner that would give insight into the research question. The use of thematic data analysis was therefore with the intention that it would give insight into the value of RPL in enhancing redress and access in teacher education.

1.6.4 Population selection and sampling

A sample is a small component of the total set of objects, occasions or individuals who collectively comprise the subject of study (Strydom, 2005). The intention of sampling is to select a set of elements from a population in such a way that the descriptions of these factors accurately display what the populace from where they were selected

would say (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky, 2001). This, in turn, enhances the feasibility of a study. The sampling process also makes it possible to draw valid references on the basis of careful follow-ups and observation since a sample represents a smaller number of the actual population (Best & Kahn, 2006).

Because it is not easy to include everyone in the populace, a sample of a hundred (105) students was drawn to complete the questionnaires. This sample consist out of students who are currently registered for the NPDE qualification at the University of the Free State (UFS). All these students were subjected to an RPL process. These respondents were selected using random sampling which simply maintains that a member of the populace have an equal chance of selection (Strydom, 2005).

To select the respondents, I obtained a list of all the NPDE students currently registered within the five (5) centres of the UFS, where the NPDE programme is offered. I assigned a specific number for each member of the populace. I then selected every second person on the list, irrespective of race, gender or status, until she reached a hundred (105) respondents, a number which I believe is an acceptable representation of the population.

From the 105 respondents selected, I also selected five (5) RPL students registered with the UFS to conduct interviews with. I applied random participant selection in selecting the participants to be interviewed. The semi-structured interviews enabled me to gain knowledge regarding respondents' perceptions of the value of RPL with regard to enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Strydom (2005), ethics deal with what is right and what is wrong. It is a set of (ethical) concepts which are normally and widely acceptable, and which provide rules and behaviours that have to be followed. There are numerous reasons why it is necessary to adhere to moral norms in research.

David and Resnik (2011), suggested that norms and ethics promote research aims, as well as promoting essential standards of importance to incorporate at work. This is important since research not only involves understanding, trustworthiness and avoidance of error, but also cooperation and coordination among many different people. Although rules and principles may be important and essential, they still lack

certain situations. They require interpretation hence why it is a necessity for researchers to learn, interpret, assess and apply policies well for them to be able to act ethically in various situations (David & Resnik, 2011).

Ethical standards such as responsibility, trustworthiness, being accountable are therefore, very important and relevant. In order for any research project to be ethical and fair, some important ethical issues need to be considered, one of them being that the participants have to know the purpose of the study so that they have cognisance of the nature of the research and the likelihood of its impact on them. These aspects will be observed before the study commences, as well as during the study. These issues are briefly discussed in the next few paragraphs.

My first step in responding to ethical demands, was to apply for permission to conduct a study and to have ethical clearance through the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Education, at the University of the Free State (cf. Appendix 1). Following this, I applied for permission from the DoE in the Free State province to collect data from practicing teachers and permission was granted.

The objective and purpose of the research had to be explained clearly. Ethical clearance was obtained from the School of Open Learning (UFS), where the NPDE is offered. This was important since current students enrolled in the NPDE were involved in the study, and I subsequently had to collect data on its premises and in the classrooms, whenever the need arose.

Voluntary participation in the study was also important, so the participants had to sign a letter of consent. Other ethical aspects that needed to be considered during the study included confidentiality, trustworthiness, transferability, credibility, conformability and dependability. These aspects are briefly discussed below.

1.7.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality which is all about protecting the privacy of participants is very important in research and to the institution at which the research takes place (Mertens, 2010). Ensuring their confidentiality encourages respondents to take part and be willing to give information truthfully and sincerely.

I complied with the principle of confidentiality by keeping the names of the participants confidential. In order to protect their identities and so ensure confidentiality, the respondents and the participants were asked not to put their names on paper nor names of their schools or their student numbers on any part of the questionnaire.

The protection of the participant's identities became a priority as Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2007) indicated that the names of the participants and the respondents involved in the research should not be recorded or appear in any way, in the research. In the reporting of the data I assigned pseudonyms to the respondents and the participants.

1.7.2 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation refers to the right that humans have in determining whether to take part in the research study or not. International law, national law, and the codes of conduct of scientific communities protect this right (Lavrakas, 2008).

To ensure voluntary participation, all the potential participants were, ahead of time, given informational letters of consent, clarifying what the research was all about and stating if they may need to withdraw they are free to do so should they decide to do so. The aims and the objectives of the study, as well as possible harm associated with the study was communicated to the participants, so that they had enough information to make an informed decision regarding their decision to participate or not.

1.7.3 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are central to all measurements. Neuman (1997) stated that if the indicators of the research have a low degree of reliability and validity, the final score could be questionable. To avoid any doubts in the research findings and ultimately in the research, I had to adhere to the principles of reliability and validity.

1.7.3.1 Reliability

Reliability means the degree of consistency with which the measuring instrument measures (Mouton & Marais, 1988). A questionnaire is assessed as reliable when it gives the same results when administered at different times to the same group. The reliability of a questionnaire is typically threatened by poor word or sentence structure (Pietersen & Maree, 2007). To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, I gave the

questionnaires to certain lecturers and to the ad-hoc RPL assessor and moderator at the University of the Free State, for them to read and to make recommendations on the construction of my sentences, and the nature and the quality of my questions. In addition, I also pre-tested the questionnaire.

1.7.3.2 Validity

Validity refers to the trustworthiness of the results from the investigation (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Validity may also mean the measure at which a quantitative measuring instrument measures what it claims to measure (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002). The term validity also refers to whether the instrument covers the complete content of what it is expected to measure. In this research, to ensure validity, I gave the questionnaires to experienced NPDE tutors and lecturers, as well as lecturers at the education department of the University of the Free State.

1.8 RATIONALE FOR AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

My experience of fourteen (14) years with RPL in the NPDE made me to realise the extent to which RPL successfully promoted access to higher education for unqualified and under qualified teachers, who would otherwise have fallen by the wayside. It has brought life, confidence and motivation to these teachers. It has also brought happiness to their families and stable jobs to many. Realising, therefore, that the NPDE which enabled access to HE through RPL was being phased out when there is evidence of thousands of teachers who were still unqualified and underqualified prompted my interest in the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress.

At the time of this study, no plans for an alternative qualification to replace the NPDE existed in SA that would enable underqualified and unqualified teachers who are still in the system, and who see the importance of upgrading their skills with the purpose to meet minimal basic requirements for an educator in SA. Such a programme and process, such as RPL is important, as the National Development Plan (NPC), Vision 2030 indicated that the key to sustainable employment and economic growth in SA is through education (National Planning Commission, 2012). Statistics South Africa, (2015) also suggested that many teachers could not have access to higher education through RPL for various reasons, including the lack of financial aid. After the announcement that the NPDE programme was going to be terminated and that the

last intake of students was July 2014 (The new Qualification Framework Act 67 of 2008), I witnessed a high influx of students registering for the NPDE and thus subjecting them to an RPL process. The NPDE programme would continue until June 2020 for students already in the system. This explains why I could still have access to students doing the NPDE. I agree with Mohlala, (2014) that the termination of the NPDE programme should only have taken place after all the unqualified teachers within the education system had upgraded their qualifications.

The NPDE is one of the critical in-service teacher training and development programmes that has helped many teachers improve. I hope that this research which looks into the extent at which the PRL enhanced access and redress in teacher education will shed more light on the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education and that the comments made here will assist the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in reflecting on their decision to terminate the NPDE programme that enabled many unqualified and underqualified teachers access to HE institutions through the implementation of RPL in NPDE.

1.9 DEMARCATION

Demarcation of a study aims at locating the study within a particular discipline and to identify the geographical area within which the study was conducted.

1.9.1 Scientific demarcation

The aim of this study is to: **explore the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.** In SA, teacher education is the responsibility of the DHET and as such, it takes place within institutions of higher learning. Higher education is a sub-field of education, which is an independent discipline. Since this study is focusing on what is happening in higher education; in terms of teacher training, it is appropriate that this study be scientifically demarcated to first education as its discipline and higher education as the field of education that it falls under. However, this study also looks at a specific policy within the Higher Education Sector and that is the National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013) and as such, it also belongs to the sub-discipline of Education Policy Studies. Education Policy Studies is an independent discipline within the field of education, and it focuses on the development and on the impact of education policies. A study that

looks at the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education, and which will analyse the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* can therefore fittingly be demarcated to Education Policy Studies.

1.9.2 Geographic demarcation

The research will be conducted amongst the teachers in the Free State province of SA. The Free State is one of the nine provinces in South Africa and its capital is Bloemfontein. According to Statistics South Africa (2015), the population of the Free State is 2.8 million. The province is divided into five (5) educational districts namely, Mangaung Metro (Motheo), Xhariep District or Gariep District, Lejweleputswa District, Thabo Mofutsanyane District and the Fezile Dabi District. The choice of this area is motivated by the fact that I worked directly with the students and the tutors in various centres in and around the Free State province, as the coordinator of RPL at the University of the Free State. The following map of the Free State below shows the educational districts, that serve as feeder zones for RPL students that enrolled for the NPDE.

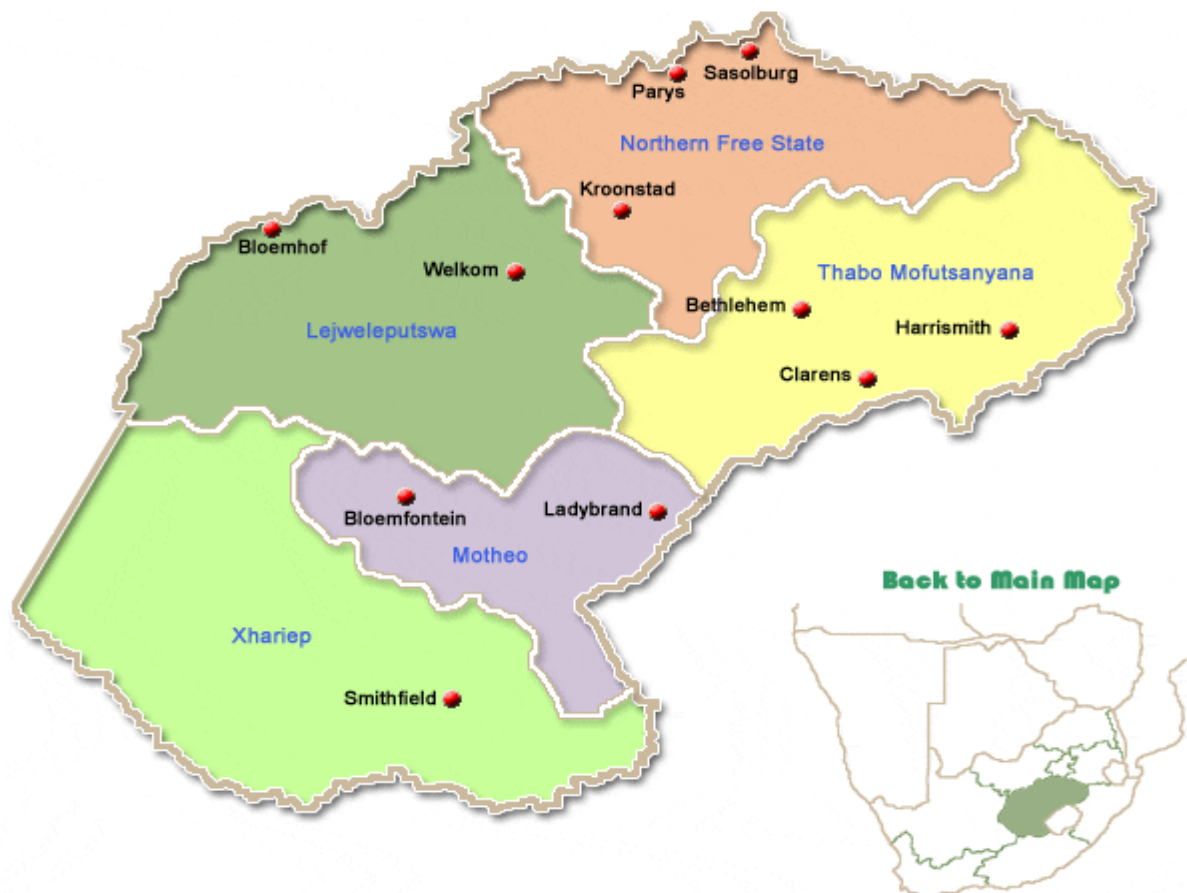


Figure 1.1: Map of the Free State. Source: (Google Maps)

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The aim of this research is to determine whether the objective of the policy has been achieved, namely, creating opportunities to those whose prior learning histories were severely disrupted due to social, political and economic factors beyond their control.

Table 1.1: Chapter Outline

Chapter	Title	Aim
Chapter 1	Introduction	Introducing the aim of the research and the methodology.
Chapter 2	Literature Review	The nature of RPL in South Africa and internationally.
Chapter 3	Policy Analysis	The context of RPL policy in SA.
Chapter 4	Empirical Research	The perceptions and the experiences of the NPDE teachers concerning RPL.
Chapter 5	Conclusion and Recommendations	To discuss the findings on transformational changes and to make recommendations.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter offered the introduction and the orientation to this research. The discussion consists of an analysis of the problem, and the assertion of the problem, consisting of three (3) research questions, a discussion of the pursuits and the cost of the study, a short description of the research methodology and finally, a short definition of a range of chapters and their contents.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, an overview was given on the implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in South Africa (SA), its purpose, and its main objectives. In this chapter, RPL is framed within a national and an international context, in order to learn more about it. The objective of this chapter is therefore to conduct a literature study to explore the nature and the extent of RPL, both nationally and internationally.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a term used in many parts of the world to define experiential learning and to describe the validation of non-formal and informal learning and prior learning assessments (Harries, 2000). According to Nel (2010), RPL is the accreditation of prior experiential learning, the recognition of recent learning and the assessment of prior learning. Experiential learning increases one's access to skills, competencies, and knowledge, so that it becomes easier for one to enter higher and further education institutions. RPL provides the opportunity for people who have not studied for a long time to obtain a qualification and/or to gain credits that will allow them to return to formal learning (Nel, 2010).

For Garnett and Cavaye, (2015) RPL is defined as the process whereby informal learning and non-formal learning are given academic recognition. Knowledge and skills obtained through life could be defined as experiential learning (Garnett & Cavaye, 2015). In summary, I associate with the definition of RPL given by Nel (2010). According to Nel (2010) RPL embraces all activities that lead to the recognition of skills and knowledge that was previously acquired (Nel, 2010). This is a manner that identifies the contribution of understanding and skills, when combined with a qualification or with a phase thereof. This process includes the identification, the moderation, the assessment and the acknowledgement of know-how and the capabilities gained through non-formal and formal learning (Breier, 2011). RPL is also referred to as: *Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)*, *Recognition of Recent Learning*

(RRL), *Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)* or the *Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)* (SAQA Act 58 of 1995). In this study, I will use the concept of RPL to denote the assessment and the accreditation of all skills learned and acquired through experience.

RPL became an important tool in recognising knowledge and skills developed at the workplace, formally or informally. Moreover, it is an important aspect of continuing learning Professional Development (CPD), it is measured against the professional standards while determined by educational bodies (Garnett & Cavaye, 2015).

RPL takes place in three (3) contexts, namely, the education system; the workplace and the personal sector (Cameron, 2012). In the schooling system, RPL represents a structure of evaluation, inside training and education that identifies and recognises an adults' former studies and the competencies won (Cameron, 2012). Within this context, RPL embraces education gained formally, and non-formally (Harris, 2000). RPL is a contributory factor in credit transfer and applying for RPL has proven to be advantageous to many students in SA and parts of the world where it is used (Pryor, 2012).

In the workplace, RPL could be defined as the practice of assessing and acknowledging skills that adults have gained outside the formal education system (Harris & Wihak, 2011). RPL's role is to accept and recognise understanding and improvement of skills within the place of work as well as community-based spaces (Cameron, 2012). Acquiring professional recognition for learned skills while at work is of vital importance (Wihak & Hall, 2011). As a result, the workplace RPL offers opportunities for skills previously ignored and undervalued to be assessed. In this way, RPL contributes positively to the workplace, the community, and the training programmes in or out of the educational institutions.

Lastly, gaining knowledge and improving one's intellectual skills is what RPL entails for growth and for individual development (Duvekot, 2007). As for the individual workers, RPL accreditation is important and workers avail themselves to the increased benefits of RPL such as the acknowledgement of skills and the expertise at work (Lugg, Mabitla, Louw & Angelis, 1998). With earned credits through RPL, the students save time and money in earning a degree and are thus motivated to persist and to complete their studies (Klein-Collins, & Wertheim, 2013).

RPL allows for a process of pre-testing which serves to determine whether the candidates have sufficient knowledge and skills to achieve credits or qualifications. This according to Kubiszyn and Borich (2013), is important for the students' own development and training, in order to focus on development and additional learning. The value of RPL lies in its potential to increase the opportunity for promotion, as promotion is linked with the qualifications that one has acquired, since candidates are now able to compile a record of skills and knowledge gained (Nel, 2010).

RPL also opens admission benefits for adult learners to enter HE institutions, these are the learners who were under-privileged in attaining HE qualifications. RPL values the skills and the knowledge that the students acquired on their own outside the classroom, and as such it values the formal learning settings and therefore awards credits for it (Jooste & Jasper, 2010). Moreover, RPL practice enhances a high self-esteem for a student for them to accomplish and to understand the values of lifelong learning (Van Rooy, 2012).

RPL students seem to display certain characteristics and in various ways this serves as motivation to students to continue with their studies. Morin (2007) stated that RPL students are highly motivated, are self-selected, and are academically capable. In addition, Morin (2007) stated that a large majority of RPL students indicated that RPL was the most important factor in their decision to continue with formal education towards successful programme completion.

For me, RPL represents the final formal acknowledgement of all skills acquired formally and informally. All skills and knowledge learned is measured against learning outcomes and if candidates meet the criteria they are credited. The strategy of recognising prior learning is used as an alternative point of entry for mature adults in further and higher education.

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), RPL has recently gained momentum as the development of lifelong learning policies has globally grown, along with the recognition of the importance of recognising all types of learning, and making visible and valuing the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, so that these may be formally recognised and validated (SADC, 2017). However, because of practices such as gender bias, cultural dynamics, and rural living environments, many people, especially women who have acquired the knowledge and the skills through

informal and non-formal learning have not been mainstreamed into the formal learning and labour market (Moll, 2008).

The subsequent lack of appropriate qualifications, therefore resulted in people being faced with disadvantages in accessing further and higher education, even though they might have the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake it (Moll, 2008). There is therefore a demand for the recognition of the knowledge, the skills, and the competences that people have developed with out of school education as well as formal education; to enable them to access decent employment. It is against this background that the SADC specifically supports all initiatives to put RPL policies in place (SADC, 2017).

In SA, RPL has become a catalyst for human resource development (SAQA, 1995, p. 26). The intention of RPL is to accelerate access and the quality of education at large in SA, and thereby to contribute to full personal development of the citizens (SAQA Act, 1995). In SA, RPL has a dual purpose which centres around redress and access.

In the HEI, redress provides individuals who were previously disadvantaged and excluded from higher education during the apartheid regime the privilege to study in such institutions (De Graaff, 2014). In a similar way, access is granted to those who did not in the past meet the standard entry requirements of these institutions (De Graaff, 2014).

Transformation is a drastic form of change that involves; culture, mind set and behaviour as such, humane awareness is vital in the workplace for better organisational running and performance (Poutiatine, 2009:91). *Transformational* is the word used by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) with reference to RPL. They explain that RPL recognises non-formal and experiential learning rather than trying to match what higher institutions have in their curriculum (SAIDE, 2002).

RPL also brings about transformation that embodies human growth, ultimate peace of mind, and self-actualisation. It is a movement towards wholeness (Poutiatine, 2009). In line with this transformational ideal that is associated with RPL, one also needs to emphasise that in SA, RPL serves as a priority in the country's efforts to redress past

discrimination by affording people the opportunity to go back to the educational institutions at their own time and pace.

2.3 THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING: INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

Internationally, RPL is seen as driving people to achieve higher education credits. RPL has attracted a renewed interest in recent years. The renewed interest in RPL is associated with the efforts to promote and develop individuals' competencies and skill-based qualifications (Heyns, 2005). The concept of RPL emerged in higher education in the United States (USA) shortly after World War II when war veterans in the USA wanted entry into universities to continue studying what they had already learnt from experience.

These soldiers who had come back from the war, wanted to continue with the learning programmes and they proposed that what they had learnt whether it be military or not, must receive consideration for the uniqueness of the career (SAQA, 2002). This called for the recognition of what they already knew and the right to be granted access to university based on this, and so this resulted in an amendment of Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as G.I. Bill (Keeton, 2000).

Consequently, during the 1970s mature students in the USA also requested access to Higher Education by considering knowledge and skills already acquired throughout life (Janakk, 2011). As a result, the USA officially founded an organisation in 1974 called the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning (CAEL), to fully accommodate RPL (Keeton, 2000). The CAEL project was a collaboration of work by colleges and universities to acknowledge the skills of individuals, particularly adult learners wishing to study further and coming with rich information.

Recently, more than twelve hundred (1,200) colleges and universities in the USA offer RPL (Du Pre & Pretorius, 2001). Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is practised in the USA to determine the candidate's level of competence, for them to qualify for credits for the skills and experiential learning that they had already received.

According to Klein-Collins and Wertheim (2013), in the USA, RPL is considered a national goal, in order to allow as many people as possible to cross the finish line of degree completion. However, it also remains a challenge to fund RPL students, as current loans and grants still support traditional time-based and credit-hour based

learning. It is against this background that the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is working hard to educate the government towards policy change, to allow students who study through RPL to be awarded funding (Klein-Collins, & Wertheim, 2013). The purpose of RPL in the USA is to gain access and entry into higher education through being credited with prior learning skills and experience towards completing a degree or the required college credits for occupational purposes (Michelson, 2000).

I assumed that it is also the case elsewhere in the world, that groups who are targeted for RPL are mainly adult learners who go back to school for various reasons. These include early school dropouts who intend to obtain a degree as well as those intending to make a career change and foreign students requiring credit for qualifications earned in another country. These groups are subjected to institutionally developed assessment, and include non-formal examinations as well as individual assessment, through a portfolio of evidence or with oral interviews (Scholten & Teuwsen, 2001).

According to Tremblay, Lalancette and Roseveare (2012), the USA and Canada were the first to achieve mass numbers in higher education in the 1960s using RPL, followed by western Europe and Japan in the 1980s, and then South Korea in 1998. As a result, the economies of these countries improved.

Over the years, other countries mainly, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have also adopted RPL as a policy orientation (Rubenson, 2011). The Australian qualification framework for instance, endeavours to create a stronger link between workplace skills recognition and national qualifications (Heyns, 2005), which indicates a greater inclination towards RPL. However, the move towards the adoption and implementation of RPL in Australia, also came about because of the significant immigration of skilled workers (Duvekot, 2007), who had experience.

Furthermore, Australia's adoption of relatively advanced forms of competency-based training resulted in them having an infrastructure that easily linked workplace skills recognition with national qualifications (Dyson & Keating, 2005). It is through this linkage that an opportunity was created for RPL to be recognised as a way of gaining access to higher education and other education programmes.

To facilitate the implementation of RPL, universities in Australia have established their own RPL policies where credits are offered for recognition of prior *informal* learning. This *informal* learning includes all experiential learning obtained (Dyson & Keating, 2005).

In Australia, RPL credit transfer broadly consists of the following:

- Learning acquired in a 'credentialed' context, other than a university or a college, such as in a course offered by a professional body, the workplace, a private educational institution, or by any other service provider that is recognised by a university.
- Learning acquired in an 'un-credentialed' context, such as through work or life experience (AVCC, 1993).

RPL was introduced in the United Kingdom (UK) around the 1980s, with a focus on social justice and the admission to higher education (Andersson, Fejes & Ahn, 2004). For USA, the focal point later shifted to the labour market. Since then, other nations such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada have additionally carried out RPL (Rubenson, 2011). In their report for the Conference Board of Canada, Bloom and Grant (2001) identified RPL as the key to *brain gain*. Brain gain is a phenomenon that is the opposite of the better-known, *brain drain*. According to Bloom and Grant (2001), *brain gain* is based on the new potential *experiential learning*.

One way of showcasing experiential learning attained while working is through providing a portfolio of evidence. For learners to showcase their work, expertise and skills, individuals compile the portfolio of evidence. For instance, in some cases a portfolio might be required to demonstrate that you are worthy of being admitted to the University of Toronto Law School or, in other cases, it might work as a proof and evidence to the employer that you deserve and qualify for advancement (Barrett & Carney, 2005). The institutions of Higher Learning mostly use the portfolio as part of the study and as a way to record accomplishments. The portfolio might include citizenship, experience and a knowledge of expertise and more.

For the cases that are known to me, the type of portfolio is initiated by educational institutions with the intention of encouraging young learners to continue to keep themselves current after graduation, thus allowing the documents to serve as

'portfolios for life'. Similarly, many workplaces encourage their employees to develop a performance portfolio. These portfolios highlight an employee's skills and their accomplishments, and they are used as evidence for promotion-worthiness.

Applicants in search of new positions may additionally take along a portfolio to exhibit their suitability for the job. Immigrants in search for credits from country of preference, may compile the portfolio of evidence to highlight their accomplishments, as they are seeking entry into the workplace. There are various types of portfolios that are put in use to allow individuals to show and to portray their creativity and their uniqueness (Barrett & Camey, 2005).

Mauritius is another country where RPL seems to be effectively implemented. The *Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA)* was set up in 1988 and it was fully operational in 2002 (MQA, 2016). Shortly after that, in 2007, Mauritius introduced an RPL policy on lifelong learning, and hence introduced RPL fully in the Mauritian system of education (MQA, 2016).

One of the main functions of RPL policy was to recognise and to validate the competencies obtained outside formal education and training systems for the purpose of certification. Mauritius achieved this objective through the implementation of RPL, which offered access to those people who had previously been left outside the mainstream education system. Candidates are thereby awarded certificates through RPL, which enabled them to move forwards within the labour market (Allgoo, 2013). The implementation of RPL in Mauritius positively affected retrenched workers in the sugar and the textile industry, who were retrained under the Empowerment Programme whereby they would be provided with the necessary skills that would allow them to re-enter the world of work, especially the tourism industry. The MQA considers that prior learning and the experience of retrenched workers from the sugar and the textile industry can be assessed and validated, enabling them to obtain credentials that would help them to enter the tourism and the hospitality industry (MQA, 2016). According to the MQA (2016:7), the benefits of RPL to the learners are as follows:

- i) To ease the transition from informal and non-formal to formal learning by enabling the learners to value their achievements and recognise the importance of their learning through experience;
- ii) To plan for further learning and personal/career development;

- iii) To enter a programme of study if they do not have the normal entry qualifications; and
- iv) To obtain credit towards a programme of study, thereby shortening the period of study.

Not only does RPL hold advantages for students or for learners, RPL is also advantageous to employers. In terms of its benefit to employees it is noteworthy to understand that the staff development may be supported through RPL training by:

- i) Motivating employees as a way of positive reinforcement;
- ii) Less time away from work and reducing the time to achieve a qualification; and
- iii) Maintaining workers and avoiding duplicate training (MQA, 2016).

In terms of its benefit to the country, it is argued that RPL will enable the country to:

- Improve policy decisions;
- Acquire workers with competence;
- Market Mauritius globally;
- Reduce costs; and
- Optimize human power (MQA, 2016).

2.4 RPL IN NAMIBIA

Africa is the second largest continent in terms of population, and yet some African countries to date, have not yet introduced RPL. I will look at how the African countries have introduced RPL. I found very few African countries where RPL is implemented. However, apart from SA, Namibia also seems to have RPL policies in place (Sims, 2010). My focus in this section, although very brief, will be on RPL as it is implemented in Namibia.

2.4.1 Namibian Qualifications Authority (NQA)

In realising the educational aims and the objectives of the Namibian people, the *Namibian Qualifications Authority (NQA)* was founded in 2005, in terms of the *Namibian National Qualifications Authority Act of 1996* (NQA, 2011). RPL in Namibia was officially introduced in August 2014 as the route to recognise and to develop the skills of all Namibians and to address the mismatch between the qualified working class and the experienced workers in the labour market (NQA, 2011).

The intention with the introduction of RPL was to address the skills shortage in the labour market (NTA, 2014). In addition, through RPL the Namibian government also aimed at awarding qualifications to qualifying candidates who had particular skills, but they were unemployed. Importantly, this was done to formalise experiential skills to benefit the Namibians who had unrecognised certificates (NTA, 2014).

In order to promote quality higher education in Namibia, the NQA promotes lifelong learning or experiential learning.

This they do with the aim of:

- 1) Accepting all experiential learning and those who were disadvantaged.
- 2) Promoting lifelong awareness.
- 3) Improving Namibia's education and training systems.
- 4) Allowance for the best quality assurance (NQA, 2011).

The NQA in Namibia has qualification levels from certificates to doctoral degrees (Singh, 2008). *Open Distance Learning (ODL)* programmes are part of the countries plans. Institutions of Higher Learning give access to the aforementioned qualifications that RPL has implemented.

For Namibia, the value of implementing RPL lies in the opportunity it creates to:

- Help those who were disadvantaged through RPL;
- Create awareness and to acknowledge the individual's right to lifelong learning through various means, to achieve success;
- Improve Namibia's education and training systems in the regional, the continental and the international communities; and
- Give people greater assurance of the quality of education, training and assessment in Namibia (NQA, 2011).

However, the important parts facing Namibian education and training is the understanding that formal education and learning is regarded better as compared to informal learning and open distance learning, workplace-based learning, and experiential learning or RPL. In Namibia, two (2) distinct policies on RPL are in use. These policies are RPL policy on TVET Institutions and RPL policy of the Namibian College of Open Learning (NQA, 2011). Both these policies in various ways, lay down

certain guidelines that are meant to create the context for the implementation of RPL in both sectors of the HEI.

2.5 RPL IN SOUTH AFRICA

In SA, the apartheid regime era spanned for more than forty (40) years, and it resulted in the majority of South Africans, particularly Black South Africans, having little or inferior education. This was because education and training were differentiated along racial and ethnic lines (PSETA, 2012). Immediately after the first general election in 1994, the challenge faced by the new democratic government was to remove divisions inherited from the apartheid era and create equal educational opportunities for all South Africans (PSETA, 2012).

The challenge that the new democratic government faced was to put policies in place to reverse the imbalances of the previous government and, hence, came the implementation of RPL (Bird, 2001). RPL became part of the drive to fundamentally restructure education and training as opposed to the fragmented and inequitable system of the past. As a result, RPL policy's main objective was to take care of the needs of the people in South Africa who were neglected by the apartheid system. RPL was and is meant to recognise life skills and or work experiences (Mukora, 2008) of many South Africans.

The *South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995* is considered to be the most memorable act in education-related legislature. Key to this Act is the elimination of the racism that exists in education and training and to create a single unified education and training system (Sutherland, 2006). The SAQA Act of 1995 paved the way to the introduction of RPL in South Africa (Sutherland, 2006).

In 2002 the SAQA adopted a national policy dealing with the formal recognition of prior learning. RPL in South Africa is a holistic approach that develops skills. RPL has since been included in South Africa's *National Qualifications Framework (NQF)* as a key principle of redress and is promoted in legislation as a necessary step in further and higher education qualifications (SAQA, 2002).

The recognition and the subsequent adoption of policy and legislation in connection with RPL, is a result of it first being introduced in legislation by the South African

Qualifications Authority Act of 1995. In this Act, the aim of RPL was stipulated to achieve equitable educational opportunities for adult learners and those who are already employed, semi-skilled or unemployed (SAQA, 2002).

While RPL is relevant to individuals that were employed for years and have earned particular knowledge in certain parts, it also accommodates those who may have low levels of formal education. Furthermore, it is also applicable to disadvantaged learners who left formal educational programmes prematurely, but who, over a period of time, have gained meaningful and substantial learning through attending short courses (Nel, 2010).

Access has emerged as the cornerstone of the authority's policy for the higher education sector (Higher Education Act, 1997). RPL was conceived by the South African government as the important guide in achieving the goals of the NQF, which comprise, among others, to ensure or to attain access to the Higher Educational Institutions (SAQA, 2002). RPL in the higher training area is supposed to enlarge the pool of person recruits, to ensure equitable opportunities for schooling and for training, and to promote the notion of lifelong learning (SAQA, 2002). Access opportunities into institutions of higher learning is key in the process of RPL for access (Lloyd, 2012). Furthermore, Lloyd (2012) recommends that institutions of higher learning revisit RPL access opportunities in order to enhance lifelong learning for adults.

There are two (2) target groups for RPL in SA. Firstly, it is those who need access and those who require redress. Candidates seeking access may be underqualified adult learners with a skill that needs to be enhanced to improve their qualification (Nel, 2010). Secondly, the other target groups comprise people who are already employed but semi-skilled, and also people who may be unemployed (Nel, 2010). RPL is quintessential to ensure that the workers may receive formal recognition for their competencies and their understanding that has been developed in a range of distinct ways. RPL is additionally about recognising the cost of the abilities that individuals of the working class have received by taking part in various activities during their daily lives (Makole, 2010).

In the early 1990s, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the largest labour movement in South Africa, promoted the recognition of prior learning as the right principle to redress past inequalities (Maboye, 2011). As one of the major unions

representing the demands of the SA workers, COSATU has played a key role in developing a new education and training policy framework, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which acknowledges RPL.

According to Vavi (2002), worker demands and the reasons for wanting RPL are geared towards the ends of justice, to gain entry to schooling and training, the validation of knowledge, non-public empowerment, improving education with well-skilled personnel and gaining access to job possibilities (Vavi, 2002).

COSATU also strongly supported RPL to ensure that the new education and training system is able to meet the needs of the workers and to broaden their access to education and training. As such, Vavi (2002) maintained that RPL is intended to achieve the goals of redress and the advancement of the individual, the society, and the economy. It carries a heavy burden. In Chapter 3 I provided a more detailed account of the forces that influenced the development of RPL in SA.

2.5.1 The benefits of RPL for South Africa

It is the strategic vision of the DHET (2011c: 34-35) that RPL will become a “fully integrated, universally accepted mechanism, allied with education and training provision, to permit the optimum utilisation of knowledge and skills acquired by South Africans, outside the conventional channels of institutional and workplace learning” (DHET, 2011c: 34–35).

In SA, RPL is of particular significance, as it is key to an inclusive and democratic education and training system. Indeed, RPL is part of a national drive to build a culture of learning in every family, village, township and city. It is seen as transformative and students have received increased benefits that stem from self-confidence, motivation, and the option of embarking on furthering their studies at institutions of higher learning. The students who benefit from RPL see the advantage of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the potential for transparency, consistency, and flexibility as an important integration in higher education (Pokorney, 2012).

Osman (2004) opines that credit exchange through RPL offered to students upon assessment is attractive to candidates who qualify and contributes to redress in South African education. RPL is largely meant for individual empowerment, individual growth and self-esteem in South Africa. RPL is also driven by political imperatives to increase

adult's participation in higher education which were disadvantaged by apartheid and also by economic imperatives to allow Black people to compete on the global economy (Osman, 2004).

However, the literature shows that RPL students do not always get the necessary support that they need from their employers. Research done in SA in 1998 shows that RPL was intended to upgrade workers' pay, sharpen performance and lead to certification. Employers on the other hand, are looking to take advantage of workers when looking for employees who are multi-skilled, in order to save costs. The outcome of this aspect was demoralising for the workers (Van Kleef, 2011).

2.5.2 The challenges of RPL in South Africa

In SA, RPL is interpreted in so many different ways that the ideal approach, i.e. that of a holistic and integrated approach within the assessment of prior learning, becomes diluted and thus, RPL becomes a purely technical application rather than a process whereby we can compare it with a particular NQF level (SAQA, 2002). In addition, the concept RPL is often confused with that of credit transfer, especially by students. In short, students lack knowledge, awareness, and adequate support in the compilation of a portfolio of evidence. Compiling such a portfolio proves to be difficult for students at times, as it involves a lot of time and work, and as a result, students often submit it well past the due date (Baleni, 2014).

Another challenge that faces RPL is the lack of trained assessors who share a common understanding of competence in their subject matter, so that the candidates are all assessed in the same way. This could be detrimental to the effective implantation of RPL as RPL depends on the validity, the reliability, and the fairness of the assessment process (Nel, 2010).

2.6 RPL IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In SA, the purpose of the policy on RPL, as developed by the Council of Higher Education (CHE) is to make sure that RPL is introduced and implemented in the higher education sector and to be in the lead for guidelines for a dynamic and for an evolving system of RPL that will accelerate lifelong learning, without neglecting the protection of the quality and the standards of the qualifications and the higher education institutions (Heyns, 2005). RPL in SA is critical to the development of an equitable

higher education system that facilitates access to and the mobility of and progression within the Higher Education Sub-Framework (CHE, 2016).

Hlongwane, (2014) is also of the opinion that that the South African higher education sector was faced with inequalities of resources allocation and learning opportunities due to past injustices. RPL was therefore introduced to address these inequalities. Hlongwane, (2014) continues that for RPL the education, experience, skills learned either at work or anywhere in life indeed build new knowledge which could be given credits.

The CHE (2016:7) regards the following as important with regard to higher education institutions to reflect on and to consider with regard to RPL:

- RPL may be used to grant access to, or exemption from, the modules and/or the courses that contribute towards a particular qualification. Institutions may recognise the forms of prior learning as equivalent to the prescribed formal minimum admission requirements.
- An RPL assessment process should be used to evaluate the knowledge of the applicants who do not hold a National Senior Certificate or an equivalent qualification, with passes at levels accepted for direct admission to higher education qualification programmes. As a result, the higher education qualifications do not depend only on RPL.
- Assessment criteria for RPL should not simply replicate those for mainstream study but it should seek to accommodate the knowledge and the skills gained in practices outside higher education institutions in terms of their value for the envisaged course of study. Faculty assessment should therefore also be done.
- In line with the recognition that RPL is a specialised process, institutions must ensure that administrative and support systems, both prior and subsequent to RPL, are in place. Rules and regulations that inform, influence or govern decisions taken in respect to articulation, should also be transparent.
- Quality assurance policies should also be in place, and the staff must be trained and capacitated for this.

With these stipulations, the CHE wants to ensure that RPL is effectively, fairly and consistently implemented across the HE sectors. This is important to ensure that the vision of RPL is realised in line with the rationale for the implementation of RPL.

2.7 THE RATIONALE FOR RPL

The purpose of RPL in the USA, the UK, and other parts of the world is significant, and it appears to serve as a powerful motivational tool for individuals who seek new learning opportunities and who want to complete a qualification that can be fully recognised. RPL candidates also seek access to higher education (Michelson, 2000). However, in SA RPL has, unlike some countries, a clear purpose. Here RPL is meant to support the transformation of the country's education and training system (SAQA, 2002). Initially, RPL was conceived as a way of helping those who, under the apartheid regime, were prevented from taking part in formal training opportunities and as a consequence from obtaining skills and acquiring qualifications.

It is a reality in SA that many people who have worked for years in a given sector or occupation and who have eventually acquired knowledge and competences on the job did not have access to such an opportunity. However, as Machard, Chisulo and Cameron-Brown (2016) had observed these skills, competencies and knowledge were often not formally recognised. With RPL, these skills, the competencies and the knowledge will henceforth be recognised and acknowledged. It is for this reason that SA adopted RPL as an avenue for gaining access and redress in the HE sectors

2.7.1 RPL and lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is the voluntary, ongoing, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or for professional reasons (Moll, 2008). Lifelong learning is continued learning that is motivated from within; that happens when individuals realise their worth (Frick & Albertyn, 2011). RPL is seen as relevant to lifelong learning because it allows adults to contribute their knowledge, qualification, and skills.

RPL is also seen as the driving motivator for ongoing learning for adults, in that it is giving hope to people and it sustains life (Frick & Albertyn, 2011). The *European Union* (EU) and the *United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation* (UNESCO) have since worked to develop lifelong learning policies or they have adopted lifelong learning as one of the principles guiding their education and their

training. As a result, many countries have since incorporated RPL into their education and training philosophies (Volles, 2016).

Agenda 2020 of the EU sheds the light on the importance of RPL as it focuses on creating smart opportunities, an inclusive economy, producing employment at a high level as well as social cohesion. The importance of making skills and competencies gained throughout life and work experience visible to employers and others was confirmed in a broad public consultation (Volles, 2016). Flowing from this, it is the responsibility of the institutions for higher learning to identify skills and needs for employees and to open opportunities for workers to continue studying. As experiential learning plays such a pivotal role in RPL and it fosters partnerships between the workplace and higher institutions, universities and colleges should use the opportunity created through RPL to foster partnerships with the workplace (Nel, 2010).

2.7.2 Assessment in RPL

Assessment is the process of gathering, interpreting, and using information to facilitate decision-making. The emphasis is on determining competence against certain set standards and outcomes (Scholten & Teuwsen, 2001). In the USA, and throughout most of the world, the use of portfolios has been very common in the assessment of RPL.

Constructing a portfolio of evidence, affords candidates the opportunity to showcase their abilities, their knowledge, their skills and/or their performance. This portfolio is usually assessed to indicate prior learning or to find out the extent of learning that has or was supposed to have taken place.

It is important that the following points be considered and are regarded as important (Whittaker, Brown, Benske, & Hawthorne, 2011).

- Conceptualising RPL as a specialised practice that explores the relationship between learning and knowledge gained through experience;
- Developing a more flexible curriculum;
- Developing problem-solving skills in candidates;
- Clearly setting out the competences that could be understood by the learners;
- Prior learning outcomes must be in accordance with formal learning;

- Learners must be supported; and
- They must focus on individual prior learning.

During assessments it is also important that the assessor's relationship with the learner or the student must be conducive to learning. If the relationship allows for dialogue, it will become mutual, and the learners will become more skilled, experienced, and knowledgeable (Pokorny, 2012). The learners' input during RPL assessment processes will empower them and make them realise that they are part of an assessment team. In addition, assessor workshops and training will also boost the assessor's confidence in their work (Whittaker *et al.*, 2011).

RPL has its primary purpose in higher education as an assessment of non-formal and informal learning for credit associated with obtaining a qualification – this is termed summative recognition (Whittaker *et al.*, 2011). Formative recognition on the other hand, has to do with supporting students to develop and to identify their learning needs, and to clarify their career paths (Whittaker *et al.*, 2011).

Learner-based assessment recommends that RPL in higher education shifts towards an assessment that is work specific. Individuals are assessed within workplace practice. The candidates informal and non-formal learning assessment operates within the workplace and must focus on aspects evidenced in the context of the learner's own context (Travers, 2011).

2.7.3 RPL and social justice

Social justice could be defined as fairness, equality, human rights and social inclusion (Sen, 2009). Social justice is used to increase individual and community wellbeing and it should be understood as the freedom to achieve wellbeing through open opportunities (Sen, 2009). In addition, social justice could also be defined as the wellbeing of an individual, which covers the freedom to access real opportunities to become what they value. This definition of social justice includes human rights, social inclusion, access, fairness, and equality (Wong, 2014). RPL is closely related and integral to all social justice endeavours. Wong (2014) argued that if the intention of RPL is to make visible competencies achieved through non-formal and formal learning; in order to assess performance for the ultimate goal of obtaining a qualification, then RPL becomes a social justice issue (Wong, 2014).

According to Harris, Breier and Wihak (2011), access to higher education through RPL avenue has always been a problem. This is because “it can be very difficult for academics to change their mind set from being gatekeepers of discipline based knowledge to becoming mentors of learners whose knowledge has been gained from life and work experience” (Harris, Wihak & Van Kleef, 2014). RPL is the gateway to human development and it enhances intrinsic motivation for education and continuing studying. As Sen (2009) indicates, when the wellbeing, social justice, and freedom of individuals are prioritised, it motivates them towards continuing their education.

RPL is populated with adult learners and research has shown that, especially in SA, the adult learners are disadvantaged. Even if given the opportunity to present their prior learning assessment, South African adult learners are discriminated against, due to their limited formal education and their difficulty in attaining academic literacy (Breier, 2011).

Cultural influences suggesting that only formal education is recognised have contributed to the communication problems that RPL candidates face (Harris, Wihak & Van Kleef, 2014). The personal, the social, and the environmental challenges that these students face fall within the social justice context (Harris, Wihak & Van Kleef, 2014). These circumstances prohibit them from fully navigating higher education with ease (Wong, 2014). Social inclusion also involves the removal of barriers to learning, the provision of resources to learners on a personal level and meeting their social and environmental needs. This kind of support should include financial aid for RPL candidates (Wong, 2014). An authentic orientation towards social justice therefore warrants the recognition and the appreciation of RPL. This is particularly true for SA where injustice with reference to the teacher education and training methods of the past, warrants and necessitates an approach to teaching and learning that will redress past imbalances.

2.8 THE VALUE OF RPL

RPL plays an important role in the human capital development needs of organisations, industries and economies (Cameron, 2012). The recognition of individual skills is beneficial for both the workers’ employability and enterprises’ competitiveness. The recognition of skills can contribute much to the workers self-esteem and their motivation (Dyson & Keating, 2005: iii). In circumstances where overseas

qualifications might not be accepted and recognised by employers, RPL or the credit transfer could allow you to obtain recognised qualifications, which could enable you to enter the job market (Van Rooy, 2002).

In addition, RPL might also facilitate migration to other countries, as it could serve as a tool for those who have the experience, the knowledge, and the skills required to work in any profession, but who have no official educational qualifications. Furthermore, RPL might also assist one in obtaining the necessary licencing relevant to that profession; especially in conditions where a licence is required to work in a profession (Van Rooy, 2002).

Coupled with the above, McIntyre, Volkoff, Egg and Solomon (2004) also highlighted the following as potential benefits of RPL:

- a) accelerating skills recognition for workers;
- b) The reduction in the costs of training;
- c) Accelerated learning in the workplace;
- d) Identifying where gap for study is effectively;
- e) The potential to break down traditional barriers in education;
- f) Money saving by avoiding duplicate learning; and
- g) It saves time in achieving a qualification, as one does not have to receive training in the skills and knowledge that one already has.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to through a literature review, explore the literature on RPL so as to come to a better understanding of what RPL entails – globally as well as in SA. The literature review reveals that RPL is the cornerstone of lifelong learning for many countries in the world. It supports lifelong learning and it develops people socially and economically. It is considered vital and, as a result, it is accepted by most governments.

The preceding brief also found that RPL is founded on the basis that people already have knowledge and that they learn by doing. It differs from formal learning in that with formal learning one has to go through a learning process, whereas in RPL learning has already occurred through experience, mostly at a workplace. We know now that learning cannot be limited to formal learning only. RPL accreditation and assessment

processes are based on the perception that it is the solution to the unfair distribution of the recognition of knowledge.

In SA, RPL had a specific goal to achieve, which addressed the inequalities from the past, especially as was the case with teacher education and training. It was supposed to do that by redressing past injustices by giving access to higher education to those who were prevented from getting equal opportunities for higher level instruction. RPL is therefore also relevant for and integral to social justice. The following chapter is devoted to a policy analysis of the National Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013).

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF THE *NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (2013)* IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 presented the value and the nature of RPL internationally and locally especially SA with a specific focus on entry and reparation. This chapter presents an analysis of the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* of SA.

This analysis will be done to establish what this particular policy pronounces with regards to the implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning on access and redress in South Africa. Moreover, the policy analysis will enable me to establish the extent the implementation of RPL policy is effective in assuring the access to and redress in education.

Before I embark on an analysis of RPL policy, it was necessary for me to first clarify the meaning of the terms policy and policy analysis. It was important to shed some light on the meaning(s) as the chapter primarily deals with policies and analysis. In addition, defining the concept policy is also important' for Ball (2006) indicated that the current problem within policy research is that analysts fail to define what policy means, conceptually. Therefore, in the next session, I briefly define policy and education policy and explains policy analysis.

3.2 DEFINING POLICY WITHIN THE EDUCATION POLICY

Definitions of *policy* abound in literature. As a result, a single all-encompassing definition of what policy entails, is missing. This was corroborated by Ozga (2000:2) for whom there is no fixed or single definition of policy. Ball (2006) suggested that, the term policy can describe a variety of things and ideas within the same study. On the other hand, Hanekom (1991:65) described policy as an 'attempt to measure the cost and the merits of diverse policy proxies and to measure the cost effectiveness to those that already exist'. However, Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997:22) regards policy

as 'whatever government choose to do or not to do'. The definition suggests that policy is rather subjective in nature and that it is the responsibility of those in power.

In addition, policy is also defined as:

a public statement of intent, including sometimes a more detailed programme of action, to give effect to selected normative and empirical goals, in order to improve or to resolve perceived problems and needs in society in a specific way; thereby achieving desired changes in that society (Cloete, Wissink & De Coning, 2006).

From this definition, it appears that policy is a declaration of particular actions and strategies that are aimed at improving the conditions of citizens. According to Cloete, Wissink and De Coning (2006) the pinnacle of the political character of policies suggests that policies are in response to selected goals aimed at improving perceived problems. The question is therefore who decides on policy goals, and who articulates the *perceived* policy problems? What is clear from this definition is that policy is aimed at achieving some societal aims and objectives. Against this background, the education policy is supposed to be aimed at realising some educational aims and objectives.

This assertion is evident from the definitions in which education policy is seen as a course of action adopted by government, through legislation, ordinances, and regulations and pursued through administration and control, finance and inspection; with the general assumption that it should benefit the country and its citizens (Hartshorne, 1999:5).

Waghid (2004:4) also defined education policy as a set of justifiable prescribed actions to be implemented in education systems, in accordance with a coherent framework, in order to develop them. In addition, education policy is also regarded as a framework that allows for the daily operation of the institutions and their education faculties. It also informs the public, by promoting answerability. Moreover, policy provides valuable statistical data for planning and monitoring, all positions in different institutions in the national department of education (NEPI,2004).

As part of a broader policy framework aimed at ensuring effective governance, education policy expresses the vision for education and the actions needed to realise

and to achieve that vision. It implies that the education policy documents on RPL should articulate and lay down guidelines to be implemented to realise the vision of education particularly its relation to access and to redress. One way of establishing the extent to which a policy will realise the anticipated vision is to do a policy analysis. A brief exposition of *policy analysis* follows next.

3.3 WHAT IS POLICY ANALYSIS?

Dunn (2016) defined public policy analysis as an applied social science discipline that uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce, to assess and to transform relevant policy information that may be utilised in political settings to resolve policy problems.

Policy analysis also informs the patrons, the public and the policy makers about the impact of policy on the target population (Yanow, 2000). Hanekom (1991:65) further indicated that the policy analysis may not only be concerned with explanations of why the government does what it does, but also helps in the determination of whether the intended results have been achieved or not. In essence, it determines whether a policy will reach the intended outcomes and whether it is the right policy for the specific problem faced.

Therefore, policy analysis is also described as the process of systematically evaluating public policy, in order to showcase alternatives to solve public problems (Friedman, 2017). Bardach and Patashnik (2019) stated that policy analysis represents a social and a political activity whereby policies are critically analysed for the wellbeing of the citizens, in order to guide legislation, budgeting and other functions of the country.

Furthermore, Hanekom (1991:65) defined policy analysis as an attempt to measure the costs and the benefits of various policy alternatives or to evaluate the efficiency of an existing policy. Simply, policy analysis could be defined as finding out what works well with regard to a particular policy, or in this case, with regard to the implementation of RPL *National Policy (2013)* to secure access and redress in education.

Policy analysis thus provides information that guides decision-making and the policy directions that governments need to take, in order to realise a particular goal; or as Taylor *et al.*, (1997) put it: policy analysis is concerned with reforming and changing things for the better. An analysis of South Africa's policy will therefore not only enable

me to explore its value in realising access and redress, but it will also determine how it could be improved, to enhance these aims and these objectives in education in SA.

Woodhouse and Lindblom, (1993) distinguished between descriptive and predictive policy analysis. A descriptive analysis describes the development of a policy and its impact on various society groups such as the stakeholders. The impact of a policy on various societal groups is analysed, to balance the impacts of the policy on various stakeholders in the society. For example, a policy may be overly beneficial to members of the society while it may not benefit other parts of the community. Policy analysis places a formulated policy in perspective, to weigh its various impacts, and how it has achieved its purpose.

A prescriptive policy analysis on the other hand, would analyse a new policy to find out whether it addresses what it intends to look. It involves the formulation of policies, which would help the main policy for the betterment of the community. A prescriptive analysis process prescribes policy proposals and alternatives (Woodhouse & Lindblom, 1993). Since this study explored the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education I will embark on a prescriptive policy analysis.

Based on the foregoing, one can deduce that policy analysis is a thorough examination of an existing policy, with the aim of determining whether it meets its intended purpose. I am particularly interested in determining whether the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)*, (hereafter referred to as RPL policy) has succeeded in ensuring and realising access and redress of education students in HEI.

It is with these issues in mind that a policy analysis of RPL policy will be undertaken. This policy analysis will focus particularly on the context and the content of RPL policy. However, in collaboration with the analysis of the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)*, I also intend analysing various other policies.

These policies include the South African Qualifications Authority Act, No. 58 of 1995, the Council of Higher Education Policy (DoE, 1996), (hereafter referred to as White Paper 3) and the Further Education and Training Act No. 98 of 1998. I regard the analysis of various policies as permitted and necessary since I believe that policies do

not exist in a vacuum. As I have indicated, my analysis of RPL policy in SA will focus only on the context and the content of the policy. I will begin with the context of the policy.

3.4 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF RPL POLICY OF 2013

When analysing any policy, it is important to have knowledge about the reasons behind the formulation of the particular policy. It is for this reason that Taylor *et al.*, (1997:44) suggested that policy analysis should involve:

- an understanding of the background and the context of policies, their historical antecedents and their relations with other texts; and
- short- and longer-term impacts of policies in practice.

Policy context may be defined as the set of economic, political, and social factors that shape policy processes. These factors contribute variously to and inform the formation of the policy (Taylor & Henry, 1994). In addition, these factors differ from one country to another, depending on their history and their time change (Wagenaar & Cook, 2003).

Whilst this background or this context could include the economic context, and/or the social or the political context, it could also include pressure groups, broader social movements and the link(s) the particular policy might have with other policies. In other words, the analysis of the context of a policy concerns looking into and developing an awareness of the historical and the various social, economic and political influences that impact the policy development process.

In most cases, an overlooked and yet a very critical issue, in shaping policy-making contexts is the influence from the stakeholders. The influence and the pressure that the stakeholders might have on the government as to why a certain policy should be developed and not another one, should not be ignored (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). An analysis of a policy context is thus expected to shed light on the reasons why a policy was formulated in the first place, and what roles various stakeholders played in the policy gestation.

According to Taylor *et al.*, (1997) context analysis provides more information on the questions *why* and *why now*. In this study, these questions translate into *why was RPL*

policy developed? and *why was it developed now?* The answers to these questions are provided in the various contextual factors discussed below.

3.4.1 Political context

At the conclusion of the first general election of 1994, the world witnessed a new political dispensation emerging in SA, with the birth of the first democratic government. This dispensation embraced, protected and promoted the basic human rights of all people, through its focus on social justice. Coupled with and subsequent to this new focus on human rights and social justice, we experienced various changes in the legislative and in the policy framework.

SA education, in various ways translated into legislation whereby the policies corrected the past injustices to accommodate all South Africans, in education. Changes in the education system were deemed necessary after many years under apartheid, in which education provisioning and access to education was primarily based on and determined by the colour of one's skin.

As a result, teacher education and training in SA was also affected and influenced by apartheid. Policies and legislation were therefore necessary that would bring about radical changes in education in general and in HEI in particular, were therefore necessary to ensure access into and redress of the education sector. One such policy was RPL policy which was introduced to ensure **access** for higher education and to **redress** past injustices (SAQA Act 58 of 1995).

According to the South African Qualification Authority (2002), allowing people access to education and training, to redress the past injustices was crucial, and the two target groups hence identified were:

- Candidates seeking access; and
- Those seeking redress.

The newly adopted, non-traditional entries into higher education encouraged the acknowledgement of various forms of knowledge and participation. The new democratically elected government of SA has since 1994 been under great political pressure to effect changes in the education system after many years of an apartheid government. The anticipation was that a radical change in the education sector might

bring about a positive economic change in the society and in the lives of individuals. Ensuring access to institutions of learning and redressing past injustices is therefore the result of the political transformation that SA has experienced since 1994, which is aimed at eradicating unjust education policies, which prevented Black people in particular from accessing good and quality education and training, but it also redressed educational injustices.

According to RPL policy, it could be argued that the agenda of this transformation was to target those under-qualified and unqualified teachers within the education system who, for political reasons could not get access to the institutions of higher learning of their choice where they could get quality education and training. RPL is therefore the only key to redress the injustices imposed on the Black people to access quality education and training. This is consistent with White Paper 3 (1997) that indicated that the Ministry of Education had a vision which included a transformed democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of HE. In accordance with this, Du Pre and Pretorius (2001) stated that RPL Act 67 of 2008 targeted people who did not have access to higher quality education to provide them with qualifications because of apartheid.

3.4.2 The economic context

The establishment of RPL policy could also be related to South Africa's economic past and the new economic context that the country aspires to. The National Development Plan (2012:09) (NDP), embraced the social justice principles and policy empowerment to balance between rights and responsibilities. This is because it fosters better education, increases economic management and opens international trade principles.

According to the NDP (2012), the benefits that RPL gave forth are not only beneficial to those receiving recognition, but it also benefited the industries within which they worked and the South African economy at large. According to the Employment Equity Act, of 1999, many employment disparities, occupation and income in the labour market were as a result of past injustices and other discriminatory laws and practices. Such laws and practices disadvantaged many people to such an extent that they could not be redressed simply by repealing the discriminatory laws. It was for that reason that the Employment Equity Act of 1999 aimed to promote a citizen's constitutional rights to equality; to abolish discrimination in employment; and to make certain that the employment equity was implemented to redress the outcomes of discrimination.

In addition, it also aimed to render a productive framework for accreditation, for maintaining standards and for conveying education and training at higher education institutions, together with labour market institutions. According to the Skills Development Act of 1998, developing skills involves equipping people with competencies that are highly demanded in the work sphere.

SAQA recognized RPL as an essential model of the skills development strategy. Institutions of higher education who implement RPL offer their students a lifelong learning experience applicable in their workplace (SAQA, 2002). RPL has opened doors to many SAs to institutions of higher education. With such opportunities, people gain knowledge, skills and qualifications that improve the quality of their lives.

As a result, the majority of the working population need upgrading or training to acquire a formal qualification. RPL is the key element for human resource development (DoE, 1996). It is anticipated that such training will variously contribute towards better job opportunities, economic development and an improved quality of life. This radical change would bring about a positive individual and societal economic change.

This human resource development by RPL coheres with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) since both aim at developing the SA nation. The ANC (1994) further stated that all South Africans young or old, male or female, from all racial groups had to be involved in job opportunities, meaning that they had to have skills and an education; hence training programmes for the society were needed to empower people. Opportunities from primary schools to tertiary level as well as from advanced scientific to technological training sources were needed (ANC, 1994).

The South African Government was faced with a lot of challenges after 1994. One of the main aims was to build national unity. The government, therefore, implemented the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) with the following aims and objectives:

- To reverse bitter practices of colonialism, racism, apartheid, sexism and bad labour practices, where women were discriminated, youth and rural people being marginalised.
- Making sure that the economy that was enforced on racial division where well-resourced suburbs were for the whites owning commercial farming. Rural areas for the Black people and underdeveloped.

- Eradicating cheap labour practices focused on Black people and eradicating poverty.
- Creating jobs for all and nation building.

The aim is to have infrastructure that will provide access to modern and effective services for all such as electricity, water, telecommunication, transport, health and education, this is seen as key to close the gap for the Black South Africans. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is therefore, a policy framework for the integrated and coherent socio-economic progress.

SA wants to empower its people through transformation whereby it encourages capacity building via innovation, improving the quality of education and empowering people by developing their skills (National Development Plan (NDP, 2012). The NDP (2012:27) indicated further that the aspects mentioned above would empower people and result in faster economic growth. RPL is therefore about empowering teachers and developing teachers' skills and to hence build confidence that can, in turn, bring about transformation.

3.4.3 Social context

SA is in a phase where the country is also being built socially. This involves improving the living conditions of people and to ensure that everyone gets access to education and other basic human rights. Moreover, it also involves redressing the past social injustices caused by the previous government. RPL is therefore seen as the key to re-address the injustice imposed on the Black people to access quality education. RPL is seen as the way to bring about transformation, fairness, equality, human rights and social inclusion.

The South African Government has implemented RPL policy to improve the access and the quality of education and training in SA to contribute to the development of its citizens (SAQA Act, 1995).

This is in tandem with the White Paper on Education and Training (1995) which states that:

there must be a bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights,

democracy, peaceful co-existence and development opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief and sex.

The overarching goal of education is to promote the value, access to and the success of lifelong education through good quality training. Regarding this goal SAQA, (1995: section 47c) says that:

The education system in SA must increasingly open-up access to education and training opportunities of good quality, for all children, the youth and the adults, and provide the means for learners to move easily from one learning context to another; so that the possibilities for lifelong learning are enhanced.

In some countries, RPL is employed to subdue inequality and repression because of its ability to broaden access to education for the purpose of including the excluded adults in the education system. Because of this capability, Sims (2010:4) sees RPL as a means to help to achieve social reconstruction and improve one's economic capacity to compete successfully in the global market.

To guide the re-building of the SA society, and to redress past injustices caused by the previous government, the South African Constitution (1996, Chapter Two: Section 9) ensures equality, freedom and non-discrimination for all South Africans.

Within this context RPL policy was framed that then influenced the content thereof. What follows next is a content analysis of RPL policy. This analysis establishes the degree to which the policy provides RPL particularly, with the provision for access and redress.

3.5 CONTENT ANALYSIS OF RPL POLICY

Content analysis involves the analysis of a policy text or its content. Although content analysis can be conducted at various levels, it primarily answers the *how* and the *what* questions arising from the policy (Taylor *et al.*, 1997:48). These questions enable one to determine *how* a policy addresses or articulates a specific policy problem; *what* the policy aims to achieve are and *how* it aims to achieving these objectives.

In answering these questions one can analyse the aim of the policy, the values and the principles that informs the policy, the priorities or the perceived problems identified by the policy, and the assumptions that underlie the policy. In addition, one should

also analyse the directives aimed at achieving the desired result. However, what is not overtly stated in a policy is just as important as that which is stated. Hence Taylor *et al.*, (1997) suggested that a policy analysis should also include an analysis of the silences, the omissions and the contradictions in a policy. Such an analysis is important as Ball (2006) described policy as comprising both text and discourse.

As a text, policy is open for interpretation and as a discourse policy creates certain understandings. Codd (1988) conceded that a policy text can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the context within which they are read. An analysis of the content of RPL policy will thus not only highlight the aims, but the objectives and the values written into the policy but also the (deliberate) silences and the omissions which enable a particular reading and understanding of the policy.

An analysis of RPL policy will be insufficient without a reading thereof against the backdrop of other policies which either informed it or contributed to its development. In this regard, it is therefore also important to draw on other policies in one's analysis of RPL policy. While such a reading will demonstrate that policies are not operating in a vacuum, it will also allow for the establishment of links and relationships between RPL policy and other policies. For Taylor *et al.*, (1997) this amounts to intertextuality.

For Voithofer (2006:204) intertextuality suggests that the "discourse within a particular text does not exist in a vacuum". In addition, White and Marsh (2006:28) say that the "policy text is related to what precedes and what follows it; as well as to other similar text". Furthermore, Stevens and Bean (2007) claimed that educational policies are related, and that no policy comes to the teacher without being preceded by others, and that we make sense of existing policies against the background of other policies that have come and gone.

Within the scope of this study, intertextuality prompted me to read RPL policy in relation to other policies. Moreover, it assumes that I will also get a better understanding of RPL policy if it is situated within the bigger scope of SA socio-political and education policy context within which it operates.

To give effect to the principle of intertextuality, I intend making use of various relevant SA policy documents. What follows is a content analysis of the PRL policy. In this content the focus will be on the aims and the objectives, the values and the core

principles, and the directives pertaining to assessment and the functions and the duties of various entities in RPL process. Although Taylor *et al.*, (1997) suggests that policy analysis also considers the silences and contradictions embedded in policy, this study will only focus on the context and the content of RPL policy. Silences and contradictions will not be attended to.

3.5.1 RPL within the SA context

The RPL policy gives insights into how RPL within the SA context should be implemented and understood. In this regard, RPL process is regarded as a multi-pronged one (DoE, 2013:30). As such the DoE (2013:30) view it as:

A process through which non-formal and informal learning is measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts and certified against the requirements for credit, for access, for inclusion or for advancement in the formal education and training system, or in the workplace. RPL processes may therefore include guidance and counselling, and extended preparation for assessment.

RPL is also regarded as a multi-contextual process (DoE, 2013: Section 32). This implies that RPL is context specific and how it takes place and how it is implemented will differ from one context to another. This also supposes that RPL may be advanced and that it will be executed differently for different purposes. For example, RPL for the purpose of personal development, might differ from RPL for the purpose of further learning and advancement in the workplace. RPL may also be administered by using various methods which combine teaching-learning, mentoring and/or assessment approaches, according to what is deemed as appropriate and contextual (DoE, 2013: Section 32). Thus, it appears that its purpose and its context will determine the practices and the outcomes of RPL in each case.

In line with what it tries to achieve, RPL policy furthermore distinguishes between two main forms of RPL. These forms are RPL for access and RPL for credit (DoE, 2013: Section 34). According to this section, their purposes and the processes within RPL in SA are different. Whilst RPL for access aims at providing other ways of access into the learning programme for those who do not meet the formal entry requirements for admission, RPL for credit aims to provide for the awarding of credit towards, a qualification or part of a qualification that is registered on the NQF.

According to the DoE (2013: Section 34:c):

“RPL processes may take place by using a diagnostic, a formative, a summative point, or in-curriculum, to create opportunities for advanced standing or recognition in the workplace”.

The Council of Higher Education (CHE, 2001:6) is very clear in terms of RPL policy. It stated that being cognizant of an individuals’ existing knowledge and its application is powerful. RPL is founded on the assumption that learning occurs from both internal and external structures. Such structures can be work and life experiences and that these experiences can be acknowledged and credited. Those who seek admission into certain courses, or they require advanced qualifications for courses, use RPL. Even those who seek employment, promotion or self-development use this programme (CHE, 2001). RPL policy changes RPL candidates’ lives drastically. In SA the groups of candidates where this change is observed include:

- the workers and the learners of all ages;
- unemployed people; and
- other marginalized groups (Samuels, 2013).

3.5.2 Core values informing RPL policy

Bandura (1997) defined values as expectancies for success or as individuals’ beliefs about how well they will do on upcoming tasks, either in the immediate or in the long-term future. According to Bandura (1997) these expectancy beliefs are measured as personal efficacy expectations.

Bandura (1997) further claims that expectancy value theories are outcome based. The focuses in this model are on personal or on efficacy expectations. This point is further explained by (Wigfield & Eccles, 2001) who linked values to achievement performance, persistence, choice and most directly to individuals’ expectancy related and task value beliefs.

Values are central to the transformation of both the South African society and in the South African education system. So integral to the transformation of society are the values that inform our education that Asmal and James (2001) refers to as the glue that will hold us together. The values that inform and underlay RPL policy and that are

supposed to contribute towards the transformation of both society and education are access, redress, quality, and lifelong learning. These values are briefly explained and their relevance to RPL policy are highlighted in the section that follows.

a) Access

Access to HET, as defined in the White Paper on Post-Education and Training (DoE, 2013:3) could be regarded as the opportunity to fulfil the vision of opening the doors for good quality education for the young and the old, throughout SA. The White Paper (DoE, 2013) further stated that there must be access to basic education for all. The White Paper to Post-School Education and Training (2013:1) explains access as expanding opportunities for HE, overcoming unfair discrimination and improving one's quality of life. This White Paper (2013:5) continues, saying that access does not guarantee economic growth, but without it, economic growth is not possible as then, society hasn't fulfilled its full potential for development.

The South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996: Section 29) assures access to education by stating that:

- Everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education;
- All have the right to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

Access to education is also important for all South Africans. In this regard, the Department of Education (2001: IV) regards access as the single most important resource when addressing poverty.

RPL policy (2013: Section:34(a)) acknowledges access as an important value of education, by making it one of the objectives of policy. Hence, it is stated that the policy aims to facilitate access to, the mobility of and the progression within, education, training and career paths.

Similarly, Section 46(b) of the RPL policy (2013) also makes provision for equitable access by stating that resources and opportunities must be provided for equitable access to RPL programmes and services. In addition, so significant is access that RPL policy identifies it as one of the two main forms of RPL (SAQA, 2013: Section

34(a)). RPL for access provides an alternative access route into a programme of learning for those who do not meet the formal entry requirements for admission.

The RPL policy of the University of the Free State (UFS) (2011) reflects a sensitivity towards issues of access. In this regard, it appears as if the UFS in its RPL policy also indicates the importance of RPL in ensuring access to education in general and to HE in particular. The UFS RPL policy states that the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which is also described as prior learning that is given a value, by having it affirmed, acknowledged, assessed or certified, is an important and a recognised feature of qualification frameworks and educational practices (UFS RPL Policy, 2011). The RPL policy of the UFS also commits the University to broaden the access to higher education and to the principle of recognising prior learning achievements (UFS RPL Policy, 2011: Section:3). By ensuring access, RPL is intended to contribute towards the transformation of South Africa's education system and to act as a vehicle for lifelong learning. To promote transformation, RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 47(d)) states that RPL as a tool for transformation should benefit all languages, not only the dominant languages, and that mechanisms should subsequently be put into place to accommodate such individuals.

In line with its commitment to ensure access to education and to HE institutions, the national RPL policy (SAQA, 2002: Chapter Two: Section: 2.6) stated that fees for the delivery and for the administration of assessment and RPL services should not create barriers for candidates. For this reason, the national RPL policy (2013:7) also indicated that "high start-up costs, cost recovery and a common fee for RPL are some of the issues that need to be addressed to prevent them from becoming barriers to the implementation of RPL".

The national RPL policy (2013:7) further suggested that "qualifications and part qualifications registered on the NQF must include provision for alternative entry-level requirements, so that the candidates can be admitted to study towards the qualification, or part qualification, through RPL". In addition, the policy (SAQA, 2013: Section 47(b)) encouraged and resourced the youth's and the adults' returning-to-learning, in collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders in the labour market and the national learning system. These stipulations are imperative to ensure that

prospective students get access to education via alternative entry requirements such as RPL.

To ensure the access to education, the Occupational Qualification Sub-framework (OQSF) (Notice 1040 of 2012; Government Gazette, 36803,) makes provision for RPL service providers to: recognise other forms of prior learning, as being equivalent to the prescribed minimum admission requirements, and to recognise other forms of prior learning for entry into a programme or for granting advanced standing in given components (RSA, 2013: Section II; P;21). However, it is stated that to identify the competent applicants, skills development providers must furnish their admission requirements in all cases. This serves as a transparency measure for public accessibility to these requirements.

b) Redress of past discrimination in education

Redress means reversing the effects of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities (SAQA, 2002:8). Redress is further defined by Nel (2010:1) as an effort to help individuals to return to education and to work at their own pace, as the discrimination of the past is being phased out. Nel (2010:11) argues that redress is associated with candidates who were prevented from developing and growing or receiving recognition for their knowledge and their skills. Redress is characterised by reversing past prejudice in education and training as well as employment opportunities that contributed to the whole personal development (Wong & Wihak, 2007:189).

The DoE (1995: Chapter 4: Section 7) displays redress of educational inequalities as a backlog that has made SAs suffer. The highly disadvantaged groups include:

- street children;
- out-of-school youth;
- the disabled;
- citizens with special educational needs, (illiterate women);
- rural communities;
- squatter communities; and
- communities damaged by violence.

All these groups are vulnerable and because of such they have become the main South African priority.

Redress of historic prejudices and injustices in education training and employment is one of the issues that the South African government aims to solve with RPL. With respect to this, the Ministry of Higher Education envisions an education system that will promote a fair chance of success to all who wish to unleash their potential through training in higher education, while eradicating all forms of injustices and fostering redress for past inequalities (CHE, 2016).

The CHE (2016) further focused the attention on redress in HE. This is observed in (CHE, 2016:iv) which states that RPL policy is to develop and to facilitate the implementation of RPL across the higher education sector and that it should be based on the principles of equity, access, inclusivity and the redress of past unfair discrimination, with regard to educational opportunities.

To further ensure redress, the national RPL policy (SAQA, 2013: Section 44) stated that: no distinction, other than that required for data analysis, must be made between records of learner credits and the achievements for qualifications and/or part qualifications awarded as a result of RPL processes and those obtained via conventional means. This stipulation is of importance to safeguard the integrity of qualifications obtained through RPL.

The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996: Section 29) places the responsibility on educational institutions to ensure redress of past educational injustices by stating that: in order to ensure the effective access to, and the implementation of this right [to education], the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, [and] the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

This Constitutional imperative is articulated in the Higher Education Act (DoE, 1997: Section 1), which singled out access and redress as the core of the Act, by stating that it was desirable to redress past discrimination and ensure representivity.

These same sentiments were found in the Education White Paper 3 of 1997 (DoE, 1997: Section:1.1), where it was stated that: the higher education system must be transformed to redress past inequalities; to serve a new social order, to meet a pressing national need and to respond to new realities and to opportunities. The White

Paper (DoE, 1997) also indicated that: the higher education system must be transformed to redress past inequalities, to serve a new social order; to meet pressing national needs and to respond to new realities and opportunities.

Taking its cue from these policy documents the national RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 46(b) stated that: “resources and opportunities must be provided ... in a manner that is consistent with government’s commitment to redress imbalances that still exist in our greatly unequal society and specifically in the labour market”. So, whilst RPL policy promotes redress, it is doing this with a broader aim in mind – namely to correct imbalances that still exists within our society.

The RPL policy (DoE, 2013:36) stated that the NQF in SA is an expansive system mandated by the Minister of Higher Education and Training. This system is instituted for the classification, the co-ordination, the registration, and the publication of articulated and quality assured national qualifications and part qualifications that was established under the DoE Act (Act 58 of 1995). Currently, it is operating under the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008), in fast tracking the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities. The DoE, (1995) assumes that redress will contribute to two sections of development in individual learners. Such sections are personal development and socio-economic. With this assumption the NQF not only endorses redress as the main purpose of RPL, but it also centres redress in education as one of the mechanisms to redress social ills and injustices in society. The RPL policy (DoE, 2013:45) states clearly that it monitors the following:

- RPL admission rates of providers;
- makes information public in an appropriate way; and
- maintains the strictest confidentiality with respect to individual candidates and individual institutions.

c) Lifelong learning

Having its roots in the era of intense social and economic change in the 1960’s, lifelong learning may be defined as a chance made reachable by institutions for continuing studying together with the process where individuals may acquire knowledge and abilities, cultural believes, emotions and a sense of unity with the global society (Duvekot, 2007). Lifelong learning is the art of acquiring skills, development, education

and training that is ongoing (Nel, 2010). UNESCO (2002b; 2007:125) stated that lifelong learning does not only involve adult learning but it also involves gaining knowledge out of school in a number of ways such as home, vocational and technical settings as well as the community and the knowledge gained through work experience and all media bodies.

South Africa as a growing state desires continues learning that allows for fast and progressive response to the needs of a financially developing state and one that changes. Focusing on lifelong learning means continued productivity improvement. In order to cope with the fast-growing technological changes, there must be an equal production of human resource production from the institutions of Higher Learning to close the gap in the labour market. This as the economic performance of SA is comparatively not doing well (Aucoin & Cilliers, 2016).

The labour market depends primarily on the production of human resource from the institutions of higher learning, it therefore calls for the restructuring of these institutions of academic training. Since the country needs quality human resource, it would be a positive development to encourage lifelong learning, and to make such available through the recognition of prior learning.

According to the White Paper on Adult Education (DoE, 2013 Section 3.3) lifelong learning gave a coherence and a framework to the concept of a continuum of learning, from the cradle to the grave. Additionally, it strengthened the arguments against a singular focus on the front-loading of education and its legitimized arguments for progression, credit accumulation, diversification of provision and flexible balancing between home, work and education. From the RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 29) it appears that RPL has been aligned to the main elements of the South African national policy discourse since 1994, which not only includes transformation, access and redress but also lifelong learning. The importance of lifelong learning within RPL is emphasised by the objectives of the national policy on the implementation of RPL which aims at developing a shared understanding of RPL within a broader lifelong learning context (DoE, 2013: Section 7).

Within the RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 17) lifelong learning is defined “learning that takes place in all contexts in life from a life-wide, life-deep and lifelong perspective. It includes learning behaviours’ and obtaining knowledge, understanding, attitudes

values and competences for personal growth, social and economic well-being, democratic citizenship, cultural identity and employability.” By making it one of the aims and the objectives of RPL policy, the DoE endorses and recognizes lifelong learning as an important learning experience that carries the same weight as any other learning experience.

Motshekga-Sebolai (2006) maintained that lifelong learning in SA has been developed and groomed by the trade unions organisations, especially the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Within this context, lifelong learning was viewed as one of the aspects of a reconstructed education system capable of meeting the equity as well as the developmental needs of the country. It is within this context that RPL is considered as a system that knits together formal and informal learning, and so contributes towards the incremental skilling of workers (Nel, 2010).

A link between lifelong learning and access to education was established in White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997: Section 8) which continuously stated that higher education must open doors for lifelong learning, so that all South Africans can get access to higher education. White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997: Section 8) also suggested that such a system of education will enable the removal of obstacles which might hinder the learners access to programmes, and it would enable proper academic recognition to be given for prior learning achieved, thus permitting greater horizontal and vertical mobility for the learners in the higher education system.

The European Commission, (2009:2) have the view that lifelong learning promotes democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue. The assumption is that personal, social and professional fulfilment go hand in hand. Lifelong learning objectives are to shape the citizens who favour to learn and who take accountability for their own learning for employability (Fejes, 2010). My view is that lifelong learning calls for commitment and dedication for individuals to eventually get access to higher education, in order to get recognition for skills learned at work, formally, informally or otherwise, for final accreditation.

d) Quality

Quality control and quality assurance are important aspects of ensuring that quality is delivered. The American Society for Quality (ASQ) and the American Society for Quality Control (ASQC),

defines quality control "part of quality management focused on fulfilling quality requirements"; while quality assurance relates to how a process is performed or how a product is made. Quality control deals more with the inspection aspect of quality management. An alternate definition is "the operational techniques and the activities used to fulfil the requirements for quality" (ASQ/ASQC, 2015).

According to the *National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations* (2013) in SA, "quality means meeting the requirements of nationally agreed outcomes and a performance or an assessment criterion, thus facilitating both provision and monitoring".

Quality assurance is all about making sure that requirements and standards are clear, exact and consistently meant for a product or service (Ellis, 1993:5). Although quality assurance takes place at all stages of RPL, it becomes more critical during accreditation, which is the final stage of endorsement before RPL can be granted.

Consequently, a good system of quality assurance must meet the following conditions:

- ✓ Rigorous standards;
- ✓ Robust assessment system;
- ✓ Pressure in terms of accountability; and
- ✓ Equity of opportunity (Ellis, 1993:5).

In addition, a good RPL system must also review its systems regularly (Nel, 2010).

Quality assurance is all about methods, standards and quality requirements as may be set by a body of experts, this goes along with evaluation that includes examining the extent to which the practice meets these standards (Motaung, 2007). To establish confidence all quality-related activities must be performed effectively.

According to the RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 48):

- 1) RPL quality assurance is manifested by the establishment of, and the adherence to, policies, standards, processes, and associated practices.
- 2) Standardized quality assurance practices must grow within sectors, as a single approach does not necessarily work across different contexts.

- 3) RPL must adhere to generally agreed quality assurance principles, including qualified personnel, fitness for purpose, transparency, and fair outcomes.
- 4) Quality assurance of RPL must be undertaken with the explicit intention to protect the integrity of the processes and the outcomes concerned.

The following parties are variously involved in the quality insurance; the facilitator, who acts as a mentor to candidates, the assessor who verifies that evidence for prior learning is sufficient, the moderator to ensure that assessment meets requirements and the verifier who will ensure that acceptable standards are met (Nel, 2010).

The RPL policy aims amongst other things, to ensure the implementation of RPL, and it also focuses particularly on quality assurance (DoE, 2013: Section 7). Ensuring quality during the implementation of an RPL policy requires that at least two (2) important activities be conducted.

According to RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 51):

- 1) There must be a design of a process that will be followed throughout the phase of RPL.
- 2) After the system has been implemented it has to be reviewed continually.

In line with this, it is important that RPL adheres to quality principles such as qualified personnel, transparency and fairness (DoE, 2013: Section 52(b)). In addition, quality assurance of RPL must also be undertaken with the explicit intention to protect the integrity of the processes and outcomes concerned, whilst it is manifested by the establishment of, and adherence to, policies, standards, processes, and associated practices.

To ensure the provision of quality services, the (DoE, 2013: Section 52) places a responsibility a responsibility on education institutions to ensure that they have the necessary staff capacity to deliver quality RPL services and programmes. Qualifications and part qualifications registered on the NQF may be awarded in whole or in part through RPL (DoE, 2013: Section 43). In a similar way the CHE (2016) and RPL policy intends to implement and to facilitate RPL in all HE institutions in order to promote lifelong learning in this fast growing dynamic world, and in the process protecting all quality standards of the institutions of higher learning.

RPL in SA is an important tool for giving access to many South Africans (mostly Black) who were previously denied access to formal education. With RPL in place, it is hoped that lifelong learning will continue to motivate individuals to study further. As quality is maintained, it's important to note that individuals come with different experiences; hence assessment has to be as flexible as possible.

3.5.3 Principles informing the RPL process

In order to ensure fairness and to secure access and the redressing of past injustices, the RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 35(a)) laid down certain principles that are supposed to inform RPL processes and the application and the implementation of RPL. Accordingly, the focus of RPL needs to be on what has been learned and not on the popularity of the institution and the organisation where learning was obtained (DoE, 2013: Section 35(b)).

In order to achieve fairness for the recognition of prior learning the emphasis should therefore be on the skills and the knowledge itself, rather than on where and how the knowledge and the skills were acquired (DoE, 2013: Section 35(c)). In practice however, academic study for which certificates, diplomas and degrees are issued is often readily recognised, whereas knowledge and skills acquired at the workplace is either not recognised at all or seen as inferior to formal studying (Nel, 2010).

The DoE (2013: Section 35(c)) points out that credit should be awarded for the knowledge and the skills acquired through experience and not for experience alone. In addition, prior learning should be made explicit through assessment and/or other methods that engage the intrinsic development of knowledge, skills and the competencies acquired.

Lastly the RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 35(d)) continues to say that candidate guidance and support, the preparation of evidence and the development of an appropriate combination of further teaching and learning, mentoring and assessment approaches are core components for an RPL practice.

3.5.4 Objectives of RPL

RPL is informed by various objectives. These objectives are supposed to guide what is happening, in terms of the implementation of the RPL policy within the SA HE

sectors. The objectives convert visions into clear-cut measurable targets. The objectives also motivate the employees as they set out a clear way showing what they are expected to achieve and when. The objectives are a way to fill in the details from the visions (Woodruff, 2019), and the setting of the objectives focuses attention and action. In addition, the objectives do give one a goal to achieve, and to help to direct energy and effort. They stimulate the need to act and to motivate the workers (Locke & Latham, 1984).

The main objectives of RPL as suggested by the national RPL policy (2013) (DoE, 2013: Section 7) are to:

- 1) Provide for further development and implementation of RPL, including its resourcing, effective delivery and quality assurance.
- 2) Develop a shared understanding of RPL within a broader lifelong learning context.
- 3) Provide the basis for national guidelines and priorities for implementing RPL, and for effective monitoring and evaluation of the practices against these priorities.
- 4) Enable potential candidates to attain recognition of the appropriate knowledge and the skills required for personal development and for the employment market.
- 5) Recognises the roles and the functions of employers, public and private providers, and RPL practitioners in the provision of RPL across the education and training system.
- 6) Enable the national coordination of RPL by SAQA will focus on research, support, advocacy and the mainstreaming of RPL.

These objectives are in line with the South African Constitution (Act 200 of 1996: Chapter 3: Section 4) which states that:

This Constitution provides the historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence and development opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief and sex ... The pursuit of national unity, the wellbeing of all South African citizens

and peace requires reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society.

With these objectives in mind, the SAQA therefore aims at ensuring that RPL becomes an integral part of the education landscape of SA, as a mechanism that would ensure redress and access in education.

3.5.4.1 RPL Policy Objectives at the UFS

The UFS's RPL policy (2011: Section 3) stated that the purpose of the institutional RPL policy was to facilitate the access, the mobility, the transfer and the progress of students within the national qualification's framework, by means of the recognition of prior learning. In order to achieve this, the policy aims to:

- a. establish a clear definition of RPL, accepted by all those involved with RPL at the UFS;
- b. provide guidelines aimed at introducing the necessary measures for effective, appropriate, reliable, fair, valid and practicable assessment of a prospective student's prior learning; and
- c. enhance the UFS's efficiency by developing and maintaining institutional systems by means of which alternative forms of learning can be recognized in a reliable, fair, and viable manner."

3.5.5 Assessment of RPL

Assessment could be defined as gathering and making evidence available to facilitate assessors to make informed decisions on the competence of a student. Osman (2004) stated that assessment is about gathering, interpreting and making use of strategies, techniques and an assessor's knowledge to aid decision making for a student's competence.

Assessment is also concerned with student's learning or performance, and thus provides one type of information that might be used in evaluation (Cameron, 2001). Assessment is an imperative part of the teaching and the instructional processes and it is not used to measure effects and outcomes alone however it is additionally a means to increase lifelong learning. Assessment procedures and policies should

therefore be credible, transparent, show educational integrity and promote fairness to as well as fostering equality and social justice to all (Baijnath, 2016).

The RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 31) regards and promotes assessment as an integral feature of the entire process. It asserts that assessment does not exist in isolation from a range of other strategies that allow for different sources of knowledge and forms of learning, to be compared and judged. More than just being an integral part of RPL processes, the policy” (DoE, 2013: Section 32) also makes provision for RPL to be conducted by employing a variety of methods, using a combination of assessment approaches. Not only are assessment practices core to RPL, but assessment also serves as a mechanism to make explicit prior learning (DoE, 2013: Section 35(c)). For this reason, assessment must be fair, and feedback must be given to the candidate in due time to accelerate certification.

The UFS’s RPL policy (2011: Section 5) stated that “applications for assessment of prior learning are governed by the regulations of the UFS’s RPL policy (2011) and is supported by RPL centre; in collaboration with the heads of departments and programme directors. In cases where specific admission requirements and an RPL developmental approach in terms of admission apply, RPL process and assistance are managed within the programme itself”. If a student needs specific admission requirements, RPL assessment is referred to the specific department for management guidance.

3.5.6 Resourcing of RPL

To ensure an effective RPL sector, and thereby realise access and redress in education, one must ensure that mechanisms and infrastructure are put in place. Resourcing of RPL has to do with direct and indirect physical structures, human and economic capabilities required to sustain RPL programme countrywide (DoE, 2013: Section 46).

In terms of the provisioning of resources, it is stated that resources and opportunities must be provided for equitable access to RPL programmes and services in a manner that is consistent with the government’s commitment to redress imbalances that still exist in our greatly unequal society and specifically in the labour market (DoE, 2013: Section 46(b)).

Creating sustainable RPL programmes requires and needs financial investment in infrastructure as well as in human capital. Hence the RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 46(c)) places a responsibility on the SAQA to identify government and other forms of subsidisation, to ensure the provision of RPL programmes and services, for the development of context-specific RPL instruments, and for bursaries to support RPL candidates. In addition, it is also the SAQA's responsibility to develop guidelines for consistent and fair costing of RPL programmes and services, in both the private and in the public sectors (DoE, 2013: Section 46(e)).

3.5.7 Responsibilities for the implementation of RPL

To ensure the effective implementation of the national RPL policy, requires the commitment of various stakeholders. In this regard, the national RPL policy lays down various tasks and responsibilities that are to be performed by various interest groups. Various institutions are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of RPL policy and to ensure that access and redress are realised. So, it is the responsibility of the SAQA to run RPL programmes to achieve the SAQA objectives and to ensure that all stakeholders may reverse or mitigate old apartheid discrimination.

It is also the responsibility of educational institutions to ensure that they have the necessary staff capacity to deliver quality RPL services and programmes, and to ensure effective planning and funding for RPL administrative and logistical systems, to support all the programmes (DoE, 2013: Section 51).

Educational institutions are also encouraged to give full support to the candidates of RPL prior, during as well as after, counselling support would also be important for this process (DoE, 2013: Section 52).

In summary, institutions are responsible for establishing the formal procedure of appeal for RPL and ensure fair judgement for candidates and furthermore an equitable fee structure for all is imperative, this includes the assessment for experiential learning (DoE, 2013: Section 53).

3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I analysed the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* (RPL policy). This analysis focused on the

context and the content of RPL policy. I noted that various economic, social and political factors influenced the evolution of the said policy.

Furthermore, the content analysis revealed various pronouncements that need to be affected if RPL policy is to be implemented effectively. It is essential that the policy lays down guidelines to ensure that under and unqualified teachers get access to higher education, and that previous imbalances in teacher education and training are redressed. Transformation is indeed an important role for SA in general and the transformation of teacher education and training.

In the next chapter, I present the findings of the empirical leg of this study.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I analysed the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013) of SA*. The intension was to establish what is the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

In this chapter, I will present the findings of the empirical research. Against the backdrop of the aim of this study which is to determine the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education, this chapter, which represents the empirical leg of the study aims to determine the perceptions and the experiences of teachers about the value of RPL in providing redress and access in teacher education.

Before I present my results, I will first discuss the research methodology used in the study. Thereafter, the empirical results will be presented, analysed and interpreted to come to a sound conclusion about the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

4.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE METHODOLOGY

4.2.1 Research methodology: The mixed methods approach

Based on Chapter 1 (cf. 1.5), in this study I will use a mixed methods approach to explore the perceptions of the participants about the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education. The mixed methods approach assumes that both quantitative and qualitative research methods will be used to extract certain data and information from the participants. Padgett (2017) defined the mixed methods approach as a combination or the mixture of both *qualitative and quantitative* methods for us to be able to understand the research problem better.

A mixed method approach utilises a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods and data. Quantitative analyses make use of descriptive and or inferential statistics, whereas qualitative analyses use expressive data that gives the opportunity for descriptive data analysis (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007:124).

Quantitative data may be collected through self-reports and physiological tests and questionnaires, whilst qualitative data are collected via focus groups, structured or semi structured interviews, action research and observations (Creswell, 2013:119). While a qualitative approach will enable me to explore the multiple realities and the experiences regarding the value of the recognition of prior learning in enhancing access and redress in teacher education; a quantitative approach will enlighten me on whether the majority of the participants perceive and experience RPL as enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001) also identified differences between quantitative and qualitative research. According to them, quantitative research enables one to identify the variables that I intend to study, and it collects data related to them, using specific measuring instruments such as questionnaires obtained from a sample that represents the target population.

By contrast, in qualitative research one mostly uses interviews to get bulk information derived from personal involvement with a few participants. These participants are carefully selected to clarify the problem which is being studied. In addition, whereas quantitative research seeks understanding and information to guide me to make a general prediction and confirm the theory being stated, in qualitative investigations, a fuller understanding is sought, and the research is more exploratory in nature.

Quantitative research uses numbers to represent data, which is then presented in statistical form, with a larger number of the scores giving the average of the group's performance, in qualitative research, narratives and words from the participants are used and interpreted. Tashakkori and Teddlie, (2003:15) confirmed by using a mixed methodological approach, one can at the same time find information which may answer exploratory and confirmatory questions and create theory for the study.

The integration of the quantitative and the qualitative data in a mixed methods approach has great potential to elicit the experiences of participants regarding the value of RPL, in enhancing access and redress in teacher education. I am therefore convinced that the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and their related research methods would enable me to have a better understanding of human nature and the social reality; especially as it relates to the recognition of prior learning and its value for access and redress in education.

During the qualitative part of the research, I interviewed five (5) participants. The interviews created time for me to ask the participants questions about their perceptions and their experiences, regarding the value of RPL in access and redress, as they were valuable sources of information.

Each interview lasted approximately forty-five (45) minutes. To generate quantitative data, a questionnaire was given to a hundred and five (105) participants for completion. From this questionnaire, one hundred and one (101) copies were returned with only one (1) spoiled questionnaire. One hundred (100) questionnaires were usable and is used in this study. The data generated by both the quantitative as well as the qualitative methods were used to come to well-informed conclusions regarding the participant's experiences and their views on the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

4.2.2 The selection of the participants

From the one hundred (105) respondents who was selected to take part in the quantitative leg of the study, five (5) participants volunteered to also participate in the interviews. Both the participants as well as the respondents gained access to the university by applying for and submitting evidence of having been teachers for a minimum of five (5) years.

As specified in Chapter 1 (cf. 1.5.4), I obtained a list of all the NPDE registered students from the UFS's RPL office, and I assigned a number to each member of the population. I selected every second person on the list, irrespective of race, gender or status, until I reached a number of a hundred and five (105). The five (5) participants who took part in the interviews volunteered from this group – so they completed both the questionnaires and they took part in the interviews.

As RPL coordinator at the UFS South Campus, I had access to RPL students. However, my involvement with the students did not mean that I had unlimited access to any of them or information pertaining to them. Rather, I had to comply with and apply for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State and obtain permission from the principal of the School of Open Learning to conduct the research and to gain access to information from RPL students.

Individuals who were eligible to participate in the study, were either people currently in an academic programme who applied through RPL or needed to have been in such a programme before. I opted for these participants as they had experiences with RPL as it is administered at this institution as part of the academic programme which they enrolled for.

After selecting the participants, they were individually approached through the telephone, to take part in the research. I regarded the telephonic communication with the participants as a convenient way of soliciting permission, since some of them resided in another province. Those called suggested a meeting in the month of January before the schools opened as I had called during the first week of January 2019. We agreed that I would identify a school in close proximity for them to attend. I therefore identified and organised a venue on the date agreed upon with the students, at a local school, with the help of one (1) participant who worked at the same school. On this day, thirty-three (33) students attended and nineteen (19) students were given money for transport to the venue, the other fourteen (14) were local students who did not travel. Students volunteered to take the questionnaires to other students to give during their first class which I agreed. I then collected the filled out questionnaires during the second class at South Campus. One (1) student who had completed the NPDE also completed the questionnaire. Of all the participants only one was therefore not a NPDE registered student anymore

Five (5) of the participants resided in Lesotho, where they also teach. I did not ask permission to conduct research in Lesotho schools since I agreed with the Lesotho participants that we would conduct the interviews and questionnaires at their residences and in a neutral venue in Lesotho. They agreed to this arrangement, and I visited some of the Lesotho participants at their places of residence, while I met others in a well-known establishment in Maseru, Lesotho. I communicated the venue to the prospective participants and then requested that all of them were to be there on the scheduled date.

On the day of the participants arrival at the school, I was allocated two (2) classrooms, to use during the session. One (1) classroom was used for the questionnaire and the other classroom was used for the interviews. I first addressed the students on the motive and intention of the study and the ethical issues of the research.

The participants were first given information about the aim of the study and they were told that they were free to take part in the study or to decline to take part. They were also told of their right to discontinue taking part in the study whenever they wanted to do so.

The participants who were required to participate voluntarily in the study signed the consent form, after which they completed the questionnaire while the five (5) volunteers sat down for the interview. It took about twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) minutes for the students to complete the questionnaires. Once this was done, I collected all the questionnaires.

The participants were selected on the assumption that they had insight knowledge, an understanding of the purpose and experience about RPL. Their input regarding their experience of RPL during their studies was regarded as valuable for me to come to sound conclusions about the value of RPL in enhancing the access and the redress in teacher education.

The participants were also informed of the importance of their involvement in the study and about how the result of the study would benefit them and other citizens who were affected by the past system of education.

I confirmed to the participants that the results of the findings would be availed to all who had elected to take part in the study. The participants were informed that their names and their student numbers would not be recorded in any way. The participants were also informed that everything that took place during the interview was kept confidential. All the participants who were present, all signed the informed consent form (see Appendix 5B).

4.2.3 The data collection methods

In this section I will discuss the data collection methods used in this study. Data collection may be defined as the technique used by the researcher to obtain data but need to be carefully used to collect relevant data (Johnson & Christensen, 2019:162). Commonly used data collection instruments include questionnaires, tests, individual and interviewing focus groups (Johnson & Christensen, 2019:162). For this study, I used a questionnaire together with interviews. It is anticipated that these methods will give insight into the value of RPL in enhancing the access and redress in teacher

education. An explanation of these methods, their characteristics and their relevance to the study follows in the next section.

4.2.3.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are one data collection method for this study to collect quantitative data. A questionnaire may be described as a structured form, both written or printed, consisting of a formalised set of questions designed to acquire information on a subject or subjects from one or more respondents (de Vos *et al.*, 2005:206). It is a set of questions, which follow a fixed scheme in order to collect individual data about one or more specific topics (Lavrakas, 2008:2).

I opted to use questionnaires as they are relatively quick to use for data collection. They offer objective answers and large amounts of information can be collected (Milne, 1999:52). Despite their advantages, questionnaires sometimes tend to take a long time to complete and the participants may want to rush to complete them (Milne, 1999:52). Too many questions should therefore be avoided. Questionnaires also hold the possibility that the participants may not be willing to reveal information that might be of benefit for the research (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2002). To overcome this, I encouraged the participants and the respondents to give truthful information in their answers and to remember that unless they write their names on it, that no questionnaire can be linked to anyone.

The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions (cf. Appendix 5A). These questions were used to obtain the views of the participants on the value and the effectiveness of RPL in enhancing access and redressing past imbalances in teacher education. Close-ended questions are a common method used in quantitative research and the possible options are pre-determined (De Vos, & Strydom, 2012). In the questionnaire, the participants are also given a fixed number of questions and answers to choose from (Johnson & Christensen, 2019:164). As such, they give the respondents options to select from such as multiple choice or yes and no questions.

The advantages of closed-ended questionnaires include the fact that options are less confusing for the respondents, that the respondents can easily select the most appropriate option and that data can easily be analysed statistically (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 2002). I opted for close-ended questions because they are time efficient, the

respondents can easily answer the questions and the responses are easy to analyse. Comparatively, closed-ended questionnaires are faster and easier to answer, and they can contain fewer irrelevant or confusing answers. The questions were developed from the available literature and from the policy analysis and they were designed to respond to the main question of this study and to respond specifically to this sub-question: What are the perceptions and the experiences of the teachers about the value of RPL on redressing and access in teacher education?

The Questionnaire comprised the following sections:

- **Section A:** The demographics;
- **Section B:** Questions that were intended to answer the main question of the study: What is the value of RPL in enhancing access and redressing in teacher education?

In this section, the participants had five (5) options to choose from:

- 1) Strongly Disagree;
- 2) Disagree;
- 3) Neutral;
- 4) Agree; and
- 5) Strongly Agree.

The last question of the questionnaire was qualitative in nature where the participants had to state their views on the termination of NPDE, and its impact on getting access through the implementation of RPL.

4.2.3.2 Interviews

The second data gathering instrument was the interviews (see Appendix 5B). When used properly, face-to-face interviews are valuable as they give insight into the problem under investigation. The questions must lead to the topic under investigation (Padgett, 2017). As an active conversation intended for the interviewer and the respondent, the face-to-face interview aims at achieving a purpose and gathering information on the respondent's experiences on the topic (May, 2002:225).

The purpose of an interview is to assume someone's perspectives (Patton, 2002:341). Face-to-face interviews remain a popular data collection method, especially in areas

where there is a low literacy percentage (Wyse, 2014). Furthermore, the approach was user friendly in that I had the opportunity to probe for clarification and for more information from the respondent (Guest, Mack, MacQueen, Namey, & Woodsong, 2005).

Interviews are characterised by allowing the interviewer to interpret language reflected by both the body and face and the voice language, which may guide the interviewer to extract the [inner] feelings of the interviewee and hence he or she will ask leading questions (Opdenakker, 2006). The other advantage of interviews is that they are answered immediately as both the interviewer and the interviewee can respond timeously to each other. Moreover, the interviewee doesn't have to think about an unclear question (Wengraf, 2001).

The questions for the interview sessions were constructed to draw information that was relevant to the main aim of the study. Moreover, they were constructed to address the following objective: to determine the perceptions and the experiences of teachers regarding the value of RPL to assess and to redress. The questions were also inspired by the literature review and the policy analysis.

Despite their popularity as quantitative data gathering tools, the interviews also yielded several disadvantages. Interviews are regarded highly costly looking at time and money; time with having to decide to meet the participants and money, because of having to travel to meet the participants (Wyse, 2014). The other disadvantage is that to be a researcher depends on the information from the interviewee and that this is dependent on the skills and the know-how of the interviewer to get the information that he or she is looking for (Guest *et al.*, 2005).

The interviews were administered by me and the responses were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were conducted on the same day and at the same venue that the questionnaires were completed by the students. As was indicated (cf. 4.2.3.2) all the targeted students gathered at the identified school and after I had explained the purpose of the research as well as the applicable ethical considerations, I then invited the students to ask questions where anything was unclear to them. I also handed consent forms to the respondents.

The students voluntarily availed themselves to take part in the interview as well as to complete the questionnaire. Regarding the ethical considerations, I raised this with them during the completion of the questionnaires. I also requested permission from participants to record the interviews. The participants had no objection to this, and they signed the consent letter (see Appendix 4). The interviews were conducted in a classroom at the school where I met the participants. Each interview lasted approximately fifty (50) to sixty (60) minutes.

A total of five (5) participants took part and the interviews were recorded. During the interview I read the questions, listened to the responses and looked at the interviewee as they responded and elaborated on the questions when necessary.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Analysing data includes arranging ways that help to detect patterns or problems to explore and elaborate on relationships (Berg, 2004:37). Data analysis is also the process of transforming, cleansing and inspecting data, in order to come up with useful information so that one can make conclusions and thereby support the decision making (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:214). Furthermore, data analysis is also explained as the way of examining data analytically for logical reasoning, to examine each piece of data that has been produced (Merriam, 2009). What follows is an exposition of the data analysis methods used in the analysis of the research questions.

4.3.1 Questionnaires

The data collected from the questionnaires were analysed by means of both descriptive and inferential statistics in which tables and percentage distributions were used to display the data. The collected data was first recorded in *Microsoft Excel* and later transferred to the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)* for reliability testing. The SPSS is a set of statistical software programmes combined in a single package. The SPSS is used for logical statistical analysis.

This software is one of the most popular statistical packages which can analyse and explain highly complex data with simple instructions (Huizingh, 2007). The SPSS was the most convenient software for the type of data that I was working with and it was the easiest programme to work with since she had a hundred (100) participants.

Descriptive statistics was used to represent the data in graphs as well as in tables for easier interpretation. Descriptive statistics involves summarising and organising the data so that it can be interpreted and understood easily and well. Data is broken down to central numbers which would best represent the population (Kothari, 2004). The advantage of descriptive data analysis is its high level of objectivity as well as preservation of the neutrality of the researcher (Lans & Van Der Voordt, 2002).

I opted to use this method as it would enable me presenting the data more meaningfully and allowing easy interpretation. Descriptive statistics helped me to summarise the data using tabulated descriptions such as tables and graphs, which are easier to interpret. This approach helped me to clearly present the analysed data clearly in a simple and in an understandable method.

For this study, internal reliability, which measures the degree of similarity among items was used for the calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Creswell, Ebersohn, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Neiuwenhuis, Pietersen, Plano Clark & Westhuizen, 2011). The acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficient minimum is 0.7 and it ranges from zero to one (0 to 1), if the value is closer to one it shows a high degree of internal consistency and poorly formulated questionnaires will be close to zero (Giavarina, 2015). The Cronbach's alpha for this study was found to be 0.784, which is an acceptable threshold value, as described above.

Furthermore, I had to run a test in order to understand the participants who I was working with and to assess how they understood the main aim of the study which was: exploring the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education. For this purpose, I compared males and females and the analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to find out if there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups (Hopkins, 2000).

In order to come up with the key variables, a factor analysis was done using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA), in order to reduce the data. The PCA or the factor analysis enabled me to identify the key variables to reduce data to a smaller number of variables. Factor analysis or (PCA) is a mathematical procedure that reduces large variables to smaller variables called principal components (Schölkopf, Smola & Müller, 1997).

The components identified, are normally key variables. Before factor analysis could be done, an adequacy test had to be run, to find out whether the variables or the data were adequate for factor analysis. The *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)* adequacy test in SPSS was run (Pallant, 2013). The KMO test results gave 0.783 for this study, indicating sufficient items for factor analysis. The minimum acceptable value for a KMO test is 0.6 or more (Kaiser & Rice, 1974).

The *scree plot* is a line segment that shows the total variance in the data in descending order (Velicer, Eaton & Fava, 2000). The scree plot was used to determine the number of factors for factor analysis and the plot indicated four (4) dots from one (1). The values acceptable are one (1) and above (Frey, 2018). For this research, the scree plot identified four (4) dots which indicated four (4) components and it also confirmed the KMO results.

For further analysis, the Canonical Correlation analysis was used to answer the question: What are the perceptions and the experiences of the teachers about the value of RPL on redress and access in teacher education? The Canonical Correlation analysis is a multivariate analysis of correlation and it is a method employed to investigate the strength of the association between variables (Afifi, May & Clark, 2003).

4.3.2 The interviews

Qualitative data analysis is a way of making sense of the participants views and opinions, with the intention to develop themes in order to report (Flick, 2018). Qualitative data analysis can also be used to organise and to explain data in a short but clear form using important points to make sense of the data from the participants and the noting themes (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). There is no single or correct way to analyse and or to present qualitative data. Rather, how one does it should abide by the issue of fitness for purpose (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). For this study, I used thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis could be explained as the theoretical analysis of the theme under investigation (Kvale, 1996). Thematic analysis is the system of figuring patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In a similar way, O'Reilly, and Kiyimba (2015) used in Boyatzis (1998) description of thematic data analysis as the type of qualitative analysis used to classify data and to put it into themes. Thematic

analysis is further explained as capturing notable and interesting things from the participants' data and that there are no specific rules on what comprises a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is much more than simply summarising the data; a good thematic analysis interprets and makes sense from data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). By using thematic analysis, I was able to distinguish themes informed by the research question(s) (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

During the data analysis stage, I made use of coding, generated initial themes, reviewed the themes, and then defined and named them. Coding means, interpreting the respondent's answers from the questions into categories in order to identify themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). I used the research questions to guide the coding, and the generation of the themes. In this way, the data was organised and reduced to several logical concepts. The transcribed data was sorted to identify similarities and differences. The interviews were conducted with two (2) secondary school teachers and three (3) primary school teachers – all who were subjected to the RPL process at the UFS when they enrolled for the NPDE. Data were collected with the purpose to answer the following question: What are the perceptions and the experiences of the teachers about the value of RPL on redress and access in teacher education?

4.4 QUALITY CONSIDERATION

In this section, certain aspects that I employed to enhance the quality of the study will be discussed. This study used a mixed methods approach. Quality considerations for a qualitative as well as a quantitative approach took into consideration certain issues such as validity and reliability, as well as issues of trustworthiness. Validity and reliability usually enhance the credibility of research.

In this study, quality issues were dealt with in several ways. A brief overview of the quality issues that I considered and attended to in order to enhance the quality of the study follows, and will be discussed, to generate trustworthy data and to arrive at reliable findings. These issues are reliability, validity, and trustworthiness. Validity and reliability are concepts used in quantitative research to establish the value of the research; whereas in qualitative research, the concept of trustworthiness is more

commonly used (Shenton, 2004:63). In order to establish trustworthiness; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are issues that need to be dealt with.

4.4.1 Quantitative quality considerations

4.4.1.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to how stable the measurement is and its consistency (de Vos *et al.*, 2005:162). Reliability denotes the consistency of a measuring instrument (Padgett, 2017). In addition, reliability explains how far findings could be replicated (Merriam, 1998:170), and it is furthermore defined by Maree (2010:80) saying it measures how far a measuring instrument is repeatable and reliable. As stated, (cf. 1.6.3.1) reliability is the degree of consistency of the readings that a measuring instrument measures. Poorly constructed questions may be a threat to reliability. It is therefore important that questions asked during research should be subjected to a reliability test. To ensure the reliability of my questionnaire, it was subjected to a pre-tested. The pre-test ensured that I could make amendments to the questionnaire when needed, and thereby enhance its reliability.

Pre-testing a research instrument entails testing the instrument with fewer represents ahead of the take-off of a full-scale study. This identifies unclear words or sentences from the questions that help to make amendments (Backstrom & Hursch,1963). To ensure the reliability of the questions, the questionnaires were pre-tested. I handed the questionnaire to some lecturers and the ad-hoc RPL assessor and moderator to scrutinise, so that they could answer and alert me of any possible ambiguities in the questions. The amendments proposed by these experts were used to correct any errors in the questions, to erase all uncertainty and to ensure clarity and a better understanding by the respondents.

4.4.1.2 Validity

Validity reveals whether an indicator really measures the concept in question, and it assesses whether the concept in question has been measured accurately (Mouton & Babbie, 2001:122). Validity asks a question as to whether the instrument measures what it is meant to measure (Merriam, 2009). Validity therefore depends on the careful

construction of the instrument (Patton, 2002:14) as there are various forms of validity. In this study, I ensured the validity of the questionnaires, by focusing particularly on content validity. As for content validity, it measures the extent questions on the instruments are representative of the entire subject to be measured (Merriam, 2009). To ensure that validity was achieved, I handed the interview questions and the questionnaires to experienced experts in the field of study to read. I used lecturers at the University of the Free State who are experienced in education and with RPL. The suggestions that they made were incorporated into the questions.

4.4.2 Qualitative quality considerations

4.4.2.1 Trustworthiness

To establish the worth of a study, a qualitative researcher has to address the concept of trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004:63). Trustworthiness is the degree of confidence in the data and its interpretation; including all the methods used for the study (Polit & Beck, 2012). It is important that I consider all the procedures necessary for the study, for the reader to consider the study worthy of consideration (Amankwaa, 2016). Trustworthiness includes issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Mertens, 2005). A brief exposition follows in which such concepts are described. I also alluded to the measures that were taken to adhere to each of these quality considerations.

a) Credibility

Credibility is described as the internal validity which deals with the correspondence between the respondents (Yin, 2003). Credibility of the study measures whether the research data collected during the data collection process represented the original participant's data, by measuring what it intended to achieve (Shenton, 2004). To ensure the credibility for this study, I interviewed one lecturer working with RPL. The data were then interpreted to ensure that the data collected reflected what the participant had said. Furthermore, I and the lecturer looked at the data together to ensure that it reflected what the participant had said.

b) Transferability

Transferability may be defined as the degree to which findings of the study could be used in other situations (Shenton, 2004:69). Furthermore, transferability is concerned

with how far the results could be generalised to other situations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To ensure transferability, I described the methods used in this study in detail as well as the research findings that would enable other researchers to check the findings of this study for the application to other and further studies.

c) Dependability

Dependability is consistency and the reliability of the research results (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Dependability also means that the replication of the findings of the study in a similar context and with the same population sample would produce similar results (Shenton, 2004:71). To ensure dependability, a clear description of the research methods is given (cf. 4.2.3).

d) Confirmability

Confirmability is how far the researcher's view may be minimized so that objectivity is maintained (Mertens, 2005). Confirmability may also be viewed as a confirmation that the research findings are a true reflection of the participant's views (Shenton, 2004). To ensure confirmability, I transcribed the data from the voices of the participants and then used original information from the interviews to support the arguments. The participant's original views were transcribed to ensure objectivity.

The authenticity of these results is based on the notion that both the interviews and the questionnaires were conducted and administered to a range of participants who were involved and who were still involved with RPL. The hundred (100) participants partaking in the quantitative leg of the study, could be regarded as representative of the entire population of students enrolled for the academic programme that offers RPL. Furthermore, the interviews gave a more detailed perspective on how teachers feel about and how they experience RPL. For this reason, the results of the research can be said to be based on good representation from the entire RPL population as well as the results derived from the investigative study.

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are a number of motives why it is necessary to adhere to moral norms in research. One of the reasons is that the norms and the ethics promote values that the researcher expresses and observes in his or her professional and scientific work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Research ethics create a base for trust between the

researcher and the participants (Guest *et al.*, 2005). Marshall and Rossman, (2011:47) contended that informed consent and free participation privacy and confidentiality and causing no harm to the participants are some of the key ethical considerations that need to be observed during the data collection.

For this study, I applied for ethical clearance from the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State, which was granted (cf. Appendix 1). Furthermore, I applied for permission from the Free State Department of Education to involve teachers from Free State schools (see Appendix 2).

I also requested permission from the Principal of School of Open Learning (South Campus) at the University of the Free State, to interview and to hand the questionnaires to then current RPL students. Permission was also granted (see Appendix 3). Ethical considerations were taken seriously, and important and relevant guidelines were followed.

4.5.1 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation addresses the point where the participants decide in a conscious way whether they are prepared to participate in the research or not (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). The informed consent form, (see Appendix 4), was used for this purpose. To obtain informed consent from the participants I alerted them about the purpose of the study, as well as the issues of confidentiality and anonymity and I assured them that no harm would be done to any participant (Guest *et al.*, 2005).

The participants of this study did so voluntarily, and they were free to withdraw at any given time. I protected the participants' rights by consulting with them before the interviews began and by informing them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to do so. To ensure their voluntary participation, I also clarified why we do this research, what they would be doing and how long it would take.

The participants were also assured that they would be protected from any possible harm. Furthermore, participants were not obliged to participate. The participants were also informed about the benefits of participating, both for themselves as well as for society in general. The issues of confidentiality and anonymity were explained, and the participants were assured that they would be protected. This information was provided clearly through the informed consent forms, which were read and signed by

the participants before involving them in the study (see Appendix 4). None of the participants declined to participate in the study.

4.5.1.1 Informed consent

The literature indicates that getting informed consent from the participants was important, and that it must go together with clear explanations as well as the information from the researcher (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Informed consent is compulsory as it allows the participants the chance to make a clear and conscious decision as to whether they want to continue with the study or not; especially after listening to the aims of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2019:102).

For this reason, the aims of the study were clearly read out to the participants (see Appendix 4). All the participants gave their consent to participate in the research by signing the informed consent form (see Appendix 4).

4.5.2 No harm to the participants

For the purpose of addressing the issue of no harm to the participants, I had to address confidentiality and anonymity in detail. Harm could be physical or psychological. When one conducts a research, it is important to identify and to address potential hazards before the data collection takes place (Walliman, 2016). For this study, no potential hazards were identified.

4.5.2.1 Anonymity

Anonymity is defined as making sure the identity of participant is kept a secret so that the participant's information remains unknown (Johnson & Christensen, 2019:112). Confidentiality means not to reveal the participant's identity in any way to anyone (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). To make sure of anonymity and confidentiality, the names of the participants and the schools where they worked were not mentioned during the interview or written on the questionnaires.

To ensure that there was no harm, I also selected a suitable venue for all the participants. I was also cognisant of the language used. The interviews questions and the questionnaires were drafted to ensure that they would not harm any of the participants.

For example, calling a participant by using his or her name could be regarded as offensive in other cultures. Care was taken to ensure that any words used showed respect and expressed the value of the participants.

None of the participant's names were recorded, when transcribing the data and analysing the data. I ensured the participants verbally that their personal information would not be revealed to anyone.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

4.6.1 The reliability test

A reliability test is a tool measuring reliability and whether the measurement would produce similar, consistent and accurate results whenever it was used under the same conditions (Cortina, 1993). It is good knowing that instrument being used produces consistent and reliable responses even if we may happen to change questions with different ones. Having a stable response means that a tool is reliable.

This is what Nunnally (1967:206) has to say:

Reliability can also mean the degree at which measured results are repeatable and that any random influence which tends to cause different measurements from time to time becomes a source of measurement error.

Testing reliability implies the internal validity of a test and assures that the measurements obtained are stable over time. As the researcher, I must be sure and able to trust that the data provided by the measurement is an accurate representation of the participant's performance with good reliability (Lowe & Rabbitt, 1998).

Cronbach's alpha coefficient measures the internal correlation between items, and it ranges from zero (0) to one (1). A well formulated questionnaire will have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient close to one (1), while a poor questionnaire will have one closer to zero (0).

The acceptable minimum threshold value is 0.7 (Giavarina, 2015). The calculated Cronbach's alpha, as depicted in Table 4.1 below was found to be 0.784, which is above the acceptable minimum threshold value, as stated above.

Table 4.1: The Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.784	.791	35

I continued using another statistical test, the *Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)*, to confirm and to compare the understanding of the participants with the aim of the study (see Table 4.2 below). ANOVA can be used when comparing two groups as it is a statistically powerful test.

The acceptable significance level is 0.05 and the calculated figure is 0.000, which is acceptable (Kao & Green, 2008). For this study, I compared males and females.

Table 4.2: The Analysis of the Variance

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		219.543	98	2.240		
Within People	Between Items	1442.244	34	42.419	87.706	.000
	Residual	1611.527	3332	.484		
	Total	3053.771	3366	.907		
Total		3273.315	3464	.945		
Grand Mean = 3.9674						

4.6.2 The participant's personal profile

As indicated earlier, an ANOVA test was run with the aim of understanding the participants I was working with and how they perceived the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education. Table 4.2 above shows the results with a p-value = 0.00, which implies a statistically significant difference between male and female as far as achieving a better understanding of the value of RPL, in enhancing access and redress in teacher education. This information may be helpful as it shows

that in the workplace, there are more females than males. Empowering women means empowering the education system of SA.

4.6.2.1 Demographic information

Table 4.3: Age Group and Gender

Age group	Gender		Grand Total
	Female	Male	
21 to 30	2	5	7
31 to 40	18	9	27
41 to 50	32	20	52
51 to 60	11	3	14
>60	0	0	0
Grand Total	63	37	100

The participant's gender ratio was included to gain perspective on the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education in respect of females and males in Table 4.3 above. The results indicated that the most participants were females who comprised sixty-three percent (63%) while the males who contributed comprised only thirty-seven percent (37%). Everyone participated in the study by completing the questionnaire. This might imply that the teaching profession is predominantly occupied by females which might indicate a higher percentage of access and redress for females.

4.6.2.2 Years of teaching and gender

Table 4.4: Years of Teaching and Gender

Years of Teaching Experience	Gender		Grand Total
	Female	Male	
0 to 5	0	0	0
6 to 10	14	7	21

11 to 15	26	19	45
16 to 20	17	7	24
>21	6	4	10
Grand Total	63	37	100

Table 4.4 above depicts the teaching service versus gender. It is important to know the number of years that the participants have been in the teaching arena. The experience that they have is important in respect of the information that they offer regarding the perceptions and the experiences that they have on the value of RPL in teacher education. The table above shows that forty-five percent (45%) of the teachers; both males and females, have eleven (11) to fifteen (15) years' experience, twenty-four percent (24%) have sixteen (16) to twenty (20) years' experience, twenty-one percent (21%) have six (6) to ten (10) years' experience and ten percent (10%) have over twenty-one (21) years' experience. The conclusion that I can reach from this information is that most of the teachers had enough experience to give reasonable information for this study.

4.6.2.3 The respondents RPL experience in relation to their gender

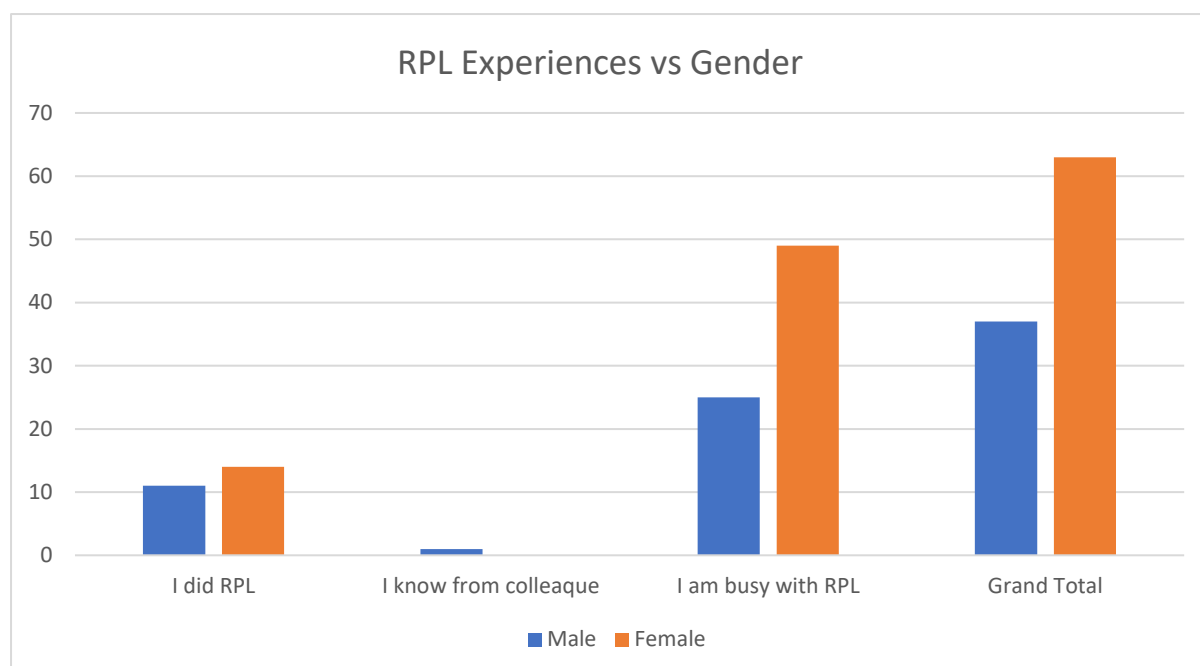


Figure 4.1: Respondents RPL Experience in Relation to their Gender

Figure 4.1 above indicates whether the respondents are busy with RPL or whether they have completed their RPL. This information is important as it indicates whether the participants had enough knowledge of RPL to be able to give their perceptions and their experiences about the value of RPL on redress and access in teacher education. According to Table 4.1, ninety-nine percent (99%) of the participants were involved with RPL within DPDE. Twenty-five (25%) already completed it, while seventy-four percent (74%) are still busy with RPL. Students did not complete RPL portfolio prior to their admission to the NPDE programme. For admission into the NPDE programme, students needed a letter proving that they are teachers and that they are in the profession for at least five (5) years or more. Students completed their RPL portfolios during the course of their studies. They started with the RPL portfolio in the second year of their studies. The portfolio was part of a module they took, and for which they were credited.

4.7 DATA SUITABILITY

4.7.1 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test

Table 4.5: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.783
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	564.171
	Df	91
	Sig.	.000

The *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)* test, measures the suitability of data for factor analysis by grouping the data in order to indicate the proportion of variance in variables that might be caused by underlying factors (Cerny & Kaiser, 1977). Grouping items into interpretable items can better explain the constructs under investigation (Burton & Mazerolle, 2011). The bare minimum acceptable threshold is 0.6. Any amount closer to one (1) is acceptable and less than 0.6 which will be closer to zero (0) is not acceptable for continuing with the analysis. According to Table 4.5 above, the KMO test results give a value of 0.783. This value indicated sufficient items for each factor, which is adequate for further analysis. In line with the aim of this study, namely, to explore the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education, I settled for four (4) factors or components which form the core of the investigation. These factors are perceptions, experiences, access and redress.

4.7.2 The scree plot

Figure 4.2 below shows the scree plot graph against each factor or component. A scree plot is a graph used for the selection of relevant components or factors to be considered for factor analysis (Frey, 2018). The *scree plot* is a line segment that shows the total variance in the data, in descending order (Velicer *et al.*, 2000). In Figure 4.2 below there are four (4) dots above one (1) which is an indication that four (4) components may be used for analysis, while the other components can be ignored. I used an eigen value greater than one (1) as a selection criterion, to determine the number of components, as depicted in the scree plot from Figure 4.2 below.

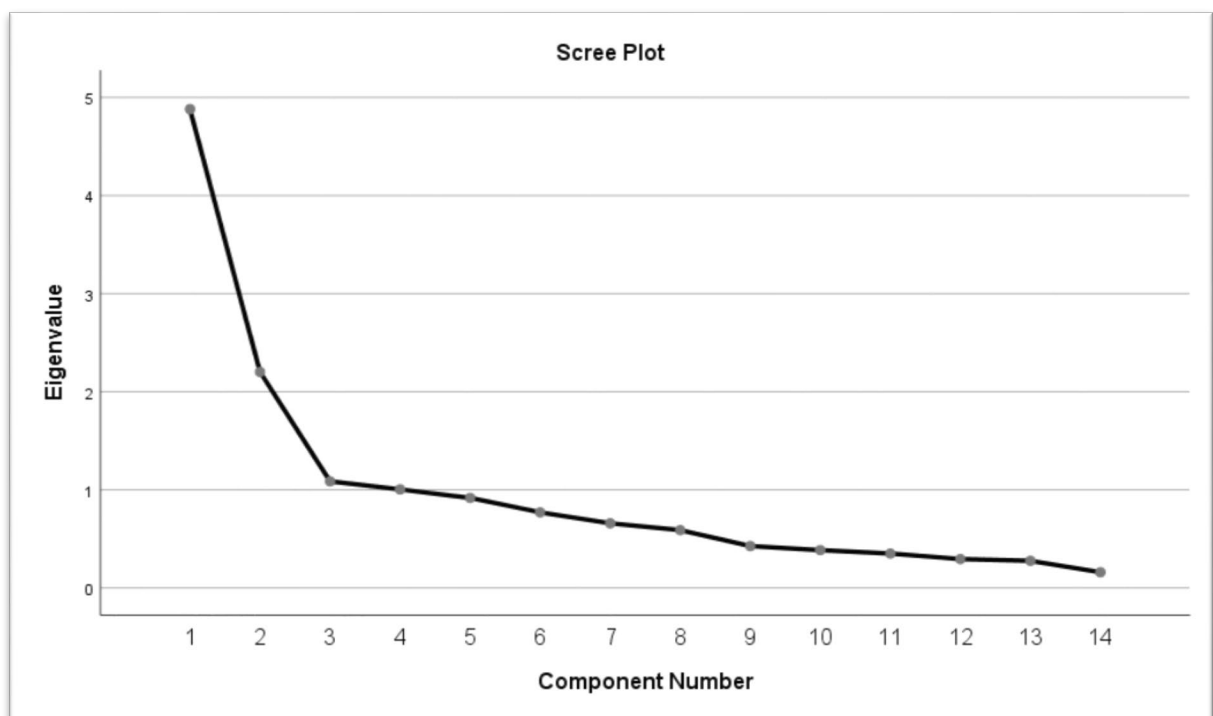


Figure 4.2: The Scree Plot

4.7.3 The rotated component matrix

Table 4.6: The Rotated Component Matrix

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Q5	.257	.759	-.258	.206
Q11	.678	.370	-.082	-.251
Q13	.776	.257	.028	-.233
Q21	.797	.248	.069	-.048

Q22	.870	.082	-.025	.080
Q23	.279	.736	.215	-.363
Q24	.356	.499	.237	-.400
Q33	.496	.167	.482	-.169
Q35	.444	.439	.190	-.146
Q15	.167	.655	.221	.142
Q26	-.200	.108	.171	.819
Q27	.060	-.124	.609	.558
Q28	-.130	.020	.813	.196
Q29	.098	.194	.664	-.019

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in seven (7) iterations.

The *Rotated Component Matrix* brings the idea of reducing the number of factors on which the variable under investigation has the highest loadings (Bryant, Yarnold, Michelson, 1999:375). The Rotated Component Matrix does not change anything, but it does make data easier to understand and to interpret.

The Rotated Component Matrix is sometimes referred to as loadings or as a simple structure (Williams, Brown & Onsman, 2010). Loadings of 0.6 and above are acceptable and according to Table 4.6 above there are four components with acceptable loadings. The scree plot also depicted four (4) components, as shown in Figure 4.2 above. Table 4.6 above shows four (4) components highly loaded on factor one. Table 4.7 below will clearly show these new components.

Table 4.7: New Components as Depicted from the Rotated Component Matrix

Component	Name of Factor/Unobserved Valuable	Variables Include
1	RPL transforms lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NPDE is a good diploma for underqualified/unqualified teachers; • I know about the SA RPL policy; • My interest in learning has increased; • To study while working is good for me.

2	RPL's value to redress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know the value of doing RPL in the NPDE; • I know that RPL policy has given me access to admission into universities with my teaching experience; • I am enthusiastic in class with my students.
3	New qualification with access through RPL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes I had to take a loan to pay for my studies since I had no funding; • I know that the NPDE has come to an end. I am disappointed that the programme has been terminated, (come to an end); • A similar diploma that recognizes the teachers experience (RPL) must be introduced.
4	Continuation of RPL in the HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would love RPL to continue.

Looking at Table 4.7 above, it confirms that this study came up with a new model that is shown in Figure 4.3 below on how to measure the perceptions and the experiences of the teachers about the value of RPL on redress and access in teacher education.

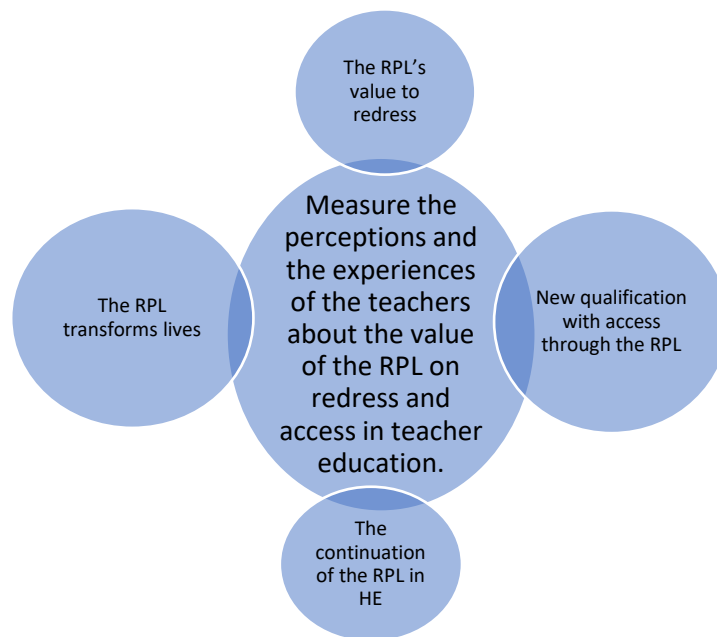


Figure 4.3: Perceptions and Experiences Model

Figure 4.3 above will be discussed below.

RPL respondents consider that:

a) RPL transforms lives

The respondents consider that RPL transforms lives. This becomes clear as more than eighty percent (80%) of the respondents confirmed that RPL transformed the lives of

underqualified and unqualified teachers when they gained access to higher education. Figure 4.3 above indicates that the respondents know the main objectives such as to redress past injustices in the education sector. The respondents continued by saying that their enthusiasm to study had increased after having access to higher education. Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents also said that their interest in learning had increased. In the past, teachers, especially Black teachers, were denied access to good education especially the HE and they could not go to the universities of their choice. Now they can study while working. This is a process that more than sixty percent (60%) of the teachers prefer, as it motivates them.

The literature confirms that the teachers who have not studied for a long-time become more motivated when they gain access to HE and that they are credited for the skills that they have been acquiring for years (cf. 2.2). Access to HE brings personal empowerment and it builds better-skilled teachers who have the potential for promotion. This motivates the teachers (cf. 2.5). RPL is characterised by bringing pride to teachers and it gives them self-esteem which in turn, motivates them to continue studying (cf. 2.5.1).

b) RPL's value to redress

The value of RPL is shown by the fact that access to HE has been granted after a long period of discrimination has been redressed. More than seventy percent (70%) of the respondents indicated that RPL policy has given them access and admission into universities due to their teaching experience. Opportunity has changed their lives. They also indicated that their approach to work in the class has improved and has changed and that they love and cherish their work more since they have sharpened their skills (cf. 4.7.2, Table 4.7). The evidence for this is shown by the fact that around seventy percent (70%) of the respondents said that they were enthusiastic in class with their students (cf. 4.7.2).

In answering the main research question: What is the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education? The literature confirmed the teacher's input that the core values of RPL policy are access and redress in order to bring about transformation and lifelong learning (cf. 3.5.2). RPL is seen as the key to redress and access as well as the corner stone towards bringing unity (cf. 2.5).

c) New qualification with access through RPL

After rotation, the component that had the highest loading was the new qualification that needs to include access through RPL. More than seventy percent (70%) of the respondents believed that having access to HE through RPL is essential and that it needs to continue with the continuing qualification, so that access can continue (cf. 4.7.2). More than sixty-five percent (65%) of the respondents said that a similar diploma that recognizes teachers' experience (RPL) must be introduced (cf. 4.7.2). They also showed awareness that the NPDE programme which applied RPL, has come to an end, and they indicated that they are disappointed that the programme has been terminated. When asked how they paid their fees, the respondents indicated that they had to take loans to pay for their studies since they had no funding (cf. 4.7.2).

The education policy and the subsequent acts confirm that the injustices of the past and other laws of the past regime created negative pressure in the labour market and that the people who were affected negatively by the times before 1994 have severe disadvantages if the laws persist and continue to discriminate against them (cf. 3.4.2). This part's data resonates with the findings shown above where the higher percentage of participants feel that RPL must continue to be part of the new qualification when the NPDE is terminated (cf. 4.7.2). Two (2) of the key aspects of RPL were redress and access. The issues which have been highlighted by the findings of this research were shown by the participants to be important, as the findings clearly show that many still need access (cf. 2.5). The benefits of RPL in the South African education system can be clearly seen as was discussed in Chapter 2 (cf. 2.5.1).

d) The Continuation of RPL in HE

About sixty-five percent (65%) of the respondents perceive RPL as important and that it should continue to be implemented. The experience that they had with the payment of fees and having to pay loans created a scenario where they had to spend years accumulating money, and hence many were still left behind in completing the academic programme that they had enrolled for which has now been terminated (cf. 4.7.2, Table 4.6).

4.8 THE CANONICAL CORRELATION TEST

A canonical correlation analysis is a statistical analysis method that is employed to investigate the correlation relationship between two (2) or more variables (Thompson, 2005). Canonical correlation analysis is a multiple analysis tool that is used to assess variables which are not directly observed, to find their relationship (Knutsson, Borga & Landelius, 1998). The intention is to show the strength of the relationship between perception, experience, redress and access towards RPL.

4.8.1 The Wilks' Lambda Test

The results from the canonical correlation are measured by the Wilks' Lambda test which looks at the strength of the relationship between variables and how much they correlate. The significant value that is considered strong for the Wilks' lambda test is a value closer to zero (0 – 1). If the coefficient is closer to zero (0), the strength of the relationship is strong that is from 0 to 0.4 (Patel & Bhavsar, 2013). The results are shown in Figure 4.4 below.

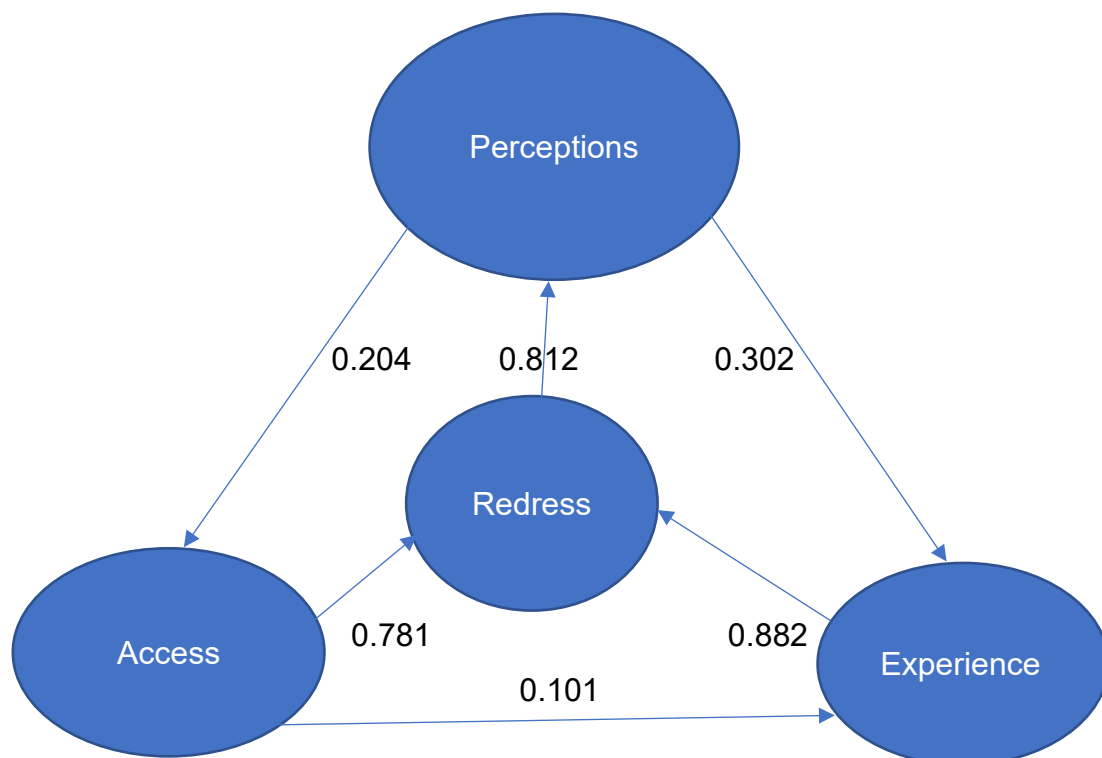


Figure 4.4: Wilks' Lambda Test

From the data analysis results where I checked how the respondents perceive access, redress and experience as shown in Figure 4.4 above, indicated that there is a strong relationship between perception and access. This relationship is shown by the

coefficient of 0.204. The strong correlation indicates the value of access to HE through RPL. This relationship may also mean that access through RPL should continue, as it has motivated teacher education.

There is a strong relationship between access and experience with a coefficient of 0.101. Teachers gained access through RPL by virtue of the experience that they had in teaching. The respondents therefore perceived access through experience as vital as it awarded them with credits. There is also a positive relationship between perception and experience, 0.302. Teachers perceived that enthusiasm, growth and self-esteem had been greatly impacted by their recognised experience.

Figure 4.4 above (cf. 4.4) also shows a poor relationship between perception and redress, access and redress, as well as experience and redress. The results may mean that in order to answer the question; What is the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education? - we may not need to know much on redress as the relationship is low. This may also mean that the respondents may not have understood the meaning of redress well enough or that they did not value or find redress as significant as access.

4.9 THE TERMINATION OF NPDE AND ITS IMPACT ON RPL

When they were asked to write their feelings on the termination of the NPDE as a way of gaining access to institutions of higher education through RPL, the respondents gave the following responses: thirty percent (30%) of the respondents said that RPL was the key in education and so they felt bad and unhappy that the NPDE through which RPL was administered and which gave them access to HE had been terminated.

The other respondents, about thirty percent (30%), said that they felt highly embarrassed and disappointed about NPDE's termination in teacher education as it gave them a motive to work. The other respondents said that: *it was key to the South African governments human resource*. About twenty percent (20%) proclaimed that there were still teachers on the payroll who needed access to HE through RPL. One of the teachers indicated that RPL provided teachers who were disadvantaged with fairness and justice.

One of the respondents also said that, the termination of the NPDE programme which applied RPL has created a shortage of qualified teachers and that those who had

developed skills informally would not get access to higher education to be qualified. Other respondents indicated that it made them happy that the NPDE had been terminated as it was time consuming and that it interfered with other parts of their work and that it required money which they did not have. About twelve (12) respondents did not respond to question thirty-seven (37) of the questionnaire.

In summary; about eighty-seven percent (87%) of the respondents saw the need and the importance of the application of RPL in teacher education and they felt that its termination without a qualification that would give them access through RPL was a mistake. One percent (1%) said that RPL was time consuming and twelve percent (12%) did not respond.

4.10 CONCLUSION

An analysis of the questionnaires was completed. What I deduced from the data was that in answering the question; *what is the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education?* The evidence from the participants clearly supported the notion that RPL has value in allowing access to HE and to bring about transformation by redressing past injustices. This was confirmed through evidence that the participants revealed when they said that doors opened for them to access, HE through RPL. In the following section, I will analyse the data from the interviews.

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN the INTERVIEWS

4.11.1 Introduction

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with five (5) participants to establish their perception and their experiences about the value of RPL in redress and access in teacher education. The findings that were discussed below were geared towards answering the following primary question: What is the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education?

4.11.2 The participant's demographic details

In this section, I briefly provided a description of the research participants and their responsibilities. In these descriptions, I provided a breakdown of the roles, the race, the gender and the age range of the participants.

Table 4.8: The Participants Demographic Details

Respondents	Gender	Age	Experience	Responsibilities
1	Male	49	23 years	Assistant teacher at a high school.
2	Female	38	11 years	Assistant teacher at a primary school.
3	Male	40	15 years	Assistant teacher at a primary school and an SGB Member.
4	Male	31	10 years	Assistant teacher at a primary school.
5	Female	53	18 years	Assistant teacher at a primary school and the head of sport.

Table 4.8 above shows the distribution of gender and age, in relation to experience and responsibilities of teachers. Most of the respondents were males with ages ranging between thirty (30) and fifty (50) and females with ages ranging between thirty-five (35) and fifty-five (55). All the respondents were assistant teachers in their respective schools. The teaching experience of the respondents ranged from ten (10) to twenty-five (25) years, all the respondents would qualify to have access to HE through RPL.

4.11.3 The interviews

What follows are the responses of the respondents to the interview questions. These responses are presented under the following headings:

- Perceptions about RPL;
- Understanding the core values informing RPL;
- RPL and its contribution towards fairness and justice in education;
- Access through RPL;
- Experiences and challenges with RPL;
- Experience with RPL portfolio; and
- RPL at the UFS.

4.11.3.1 Participant's perceptions about RPL

From the response, it appeared as if the participants valued RPL in various ways. Respondent 1 said that RPL was *very valuable, [because] it motivates us and gives us courage to study and the awareness of what we have learned on our own.*

In a similar fashion, Respondent 2 regards RPL as very valuable because *it motivates me as a teacher and gives me ways to study. Ever since I have been on RPL I am able to do things on my own.*

Whilst Respondent 4 values RPL *for teachers who never had the opportunity to go to University.*

For Respondent 5 the value of RPL lies in its potential to *build a person as a whole.*

Respondent 3 regards RPL *as valuable as it gives recognition to her prior knowledge.* Respondent 3 says *RPL is very important, it motivates us as teachers and it gives us courage to study since it values my experience by giving me credits, I only realised while in RPL that my experience is valuable.*

In addition, from the responses it also seems as if RPL positively contributes towards the self-esteem of those who gained entry to university through RPL. Respondent 4 feels that RPL will enable them in the long run to become *qualified teachers and gain integrity.* This appears important for according to the respondent they are *in most cases taken for granted.*

Similarly, Respondent 2 felt that the feedback that he or she gets from RPL is something that he or she *can be proud of and share with their colleagues and their children.* Respondent 2 indicated furthermore that he or she is also confident and enthusiastic towards his or her work and that he or she applies the new and different methods learned throughout the programme. It appears as if the participants feel that RPL contributed variously to their development. Respondent 1 stated that RPL contributes a lot towards their education, it is helpful and it opened *opportunities that [they] did not have in the past.*

Respondent 2 indicated that RPL contributed to his or her education, because through RPL he or she *have learned that what [he or she] learned through experience is rich and valuable and that [his or her] experience would earn credits.*

Respondent 3 indicated that RPL has made [his or her] aware that experience [she or he] have as a teacher is valuable.

Respondent 2 also indicated that through RPL he or she *learned to develop teaching aids on [his or her] own to be able to help the slow learners and the other teachers.*

Respondent 3 suggested that RPL had enabled him or her to change his or her teaching methods and to know why and when to use a certain method, and that his or her approach to the learners has also improved to the extent that he or she now *knows how to approach learners with different problems*. The result of this according to Respondent 3 was that the *[learner's] performance has improved ... [and that] the Principal uses [him or her] for certain problems since he sees change*.

Respondent 5 also indicated that he or she *also learned to love research* and that he or she now has new skills and can-do things on [his or her] own. The things that Respondent 5 can now do include *developing learners' activities for slow learners, identifying learners with learning difficulties and then find ways to help them*. He or she also suggested that the *type of teaching aids that I develop help my learners, and the other teachers now come for help and to get assistance from me and they learn a new approach*.

RPL also seems to have motivated the participants to work harder and to do their best in the teaching profession. For Respondent 4 RPL is very important, because as a teacher he or she now works hard and produce their best results because *[he or she] is being motivated by the fact that [he or she] had access to the University through RPL and will now become a qualified teacher*.

Respondent 5: also indicated that RPL is *helpful, [and] has motivated [him or her] at [his or her] workplace as a teacher to study and to become qualified teachers*. Respondent 4 confirms that *if it wasn't for RPL it would have been difficult to have access to university [and to study]*. Furthermore, Respondent 4: said, *every teacher needs to be a qualified teacher and through RPL we would succeed in becoming qualified*.

Respondents 1, 2 and 3 in various ways indicated that they value RPL since the experience of many years was credited and had given them access to higher education.

In addition, for Respondent 4 RPL also ensured that he or she could retain his or her job as a teacher; *I am going to continue studying, Without RPL I was in danger of losing my job, while qualified teachers were finishing. RPL protected my job*.

It appeared from the respondents that RPL was valued for its ability to give access to higher education and to enable the respondents to become teachers, which in the end, meant that they could have acceptable qualifications. Through RPL, the respondents realised that their experience counted and that they had knowledge that was valued and that meant something. In addition, RPL was also valued because it empowered the respondents, restored their dignity and enhanced their self-esteem and their confidence.

4.11.3.2 Understanding the core values in forming RPL

a) Access to education

For Respondent 1 the concept *access to education* meant that *all South Africans, Basotho and everyone else must get an education that they need and the opportunity to be accepted at the university.*

For Respondent 2 *access to education meant an opportunity to be accepted in higher education that was not available before.*

Respondent 3 indicated that *access opens doors to all South Africans and Basotho to get an education.*

Respondent 4 understands *access* to mean the *opportunity for higher education which [they] needed so much and could not get it in the past.*

In a similar way, Respondent 5 regards *access to education as the opportunity to go to University that was not possible in the past, after a long-time of wanting to get into the University, the doors have now been opened.* Respondent 5 acknowledged that *if it wasn't for RPL, [he or she] wouldn't have gained access to education at the university.* Access, through RPL also seemed to have created new opportunities for the respondent.

Respondent 2 indicated that RPL *opened doors for acceptance through experience and I will be free from now on to continue.*

For Respondent 3 RPL has *opened doors for [them] to be accepted in university through experience* as he or she did not qualify [previously] but *through experience [he or she] got access.*

Respondent 1 opined that his or her *Cambridge results were not so good, but with the experience of teaching, [he or she] got access to being accepted to enrol at the university.*

It seemed that the respondents shared a common understanding of the concept *access to education*. In general, the respondent's understanding of *access to education* centred around the opportunity that they got to be accepted into higher education institutions - something which had not been possible in the past, because they did not meet the academic criteria set by the South African universities.

For them, *access to education* thus meant getting access to university and being accepted, based on the experience that they had gained over their many years of teaching. Through access, doors which had been closed in the past, were opened. Implied in the previous sentence is of course, the value of redress, which is what RPL also wants to achieve.

b) Redress

For Respondent 1 redress allows a *Black person to have education that he (sic) was denied in the past and [an] opportunity to go to the university of their choice. There was discrimination in terms of education, one wouldn't just go to any university.*

Respondent 2 associates redress with the *opportunity to go to the university of [their] choice - something that was not possible in the past*. Respondent 3 similarly regarded redress as having *access to higher education which was denied in the past*.

For Respondent 4 redress *has given [them] back what was long being denied ... which is education which [he or she] never thought [he or she] would have*. In a similar way Respondent 5 indicated that redress *allowed [him or her] education that had been denied in the past*.

The responses above suggested that redress is about correcting discrimination, particularly against Black people, and other wrongs of the past that were perpetrated in education. Redress also afforded the participants the opportunity and the right to choose which university to attend, as this opportunity and right had been denied to them in the past.

c) Transformation

For the respondents, RPL represented transformation in HE.

For Respondent 1 *RPL brought transformation as it gave access to higher learning and to redress past injustices, especially on Black people, who did not get a better education [but rather] received Bantu education.*

Respondent 4 also indicated that *RPL transformed SA education* because it allowed people who *did not qualify for entrance into HEI to get access by virtue of their experience.* Respondent 4 also felt that *RPL has uplifted the education sector in SA since most teachers now teach with the correct skills and methods and they approach teaching the right way, now that they have access to the University.*

For Respondent 5, *RPL brought transformation and equality across nations.*

Respondents 2 and 3 shared the view that RPL gave them *the opportunity to become qualified teachers and to do away with discrimination.*

From the above responses it seems that the respondents felt that RPL had brought transformation in South Africa, and to South African education by promoting equality. Moreover, RPL also seemed to have transformed their lives as they were then qualified teachers.

d) Lifelong learning

From the responses of the participants it seemed as if they regarded RPL as important for their continued learning.

This was confirmed by Respondent 1: who stated that: *even after the NPDE I am going to continue studying, I am very motivated now that I obtained admission and I am about to complete my Diploma.*

While Respondent 5 believed that *the information [his or her] learnt while studying would be useful as [he or she] continues studying further* respondent 4 had the view that, RPL allowed them to *study while working and to continue to use the experience throughout [his or her] studies.*

For Respondent 3 *RPL is linked to lifelong learning as the experience [he or she] have gained through RPL will continue to be used as [he or she] continues with [his or her] studies throughout.*

4.11.3.3 RPL and its contribution towards fairness and justice in education

Respondents were asked about the value of RPL in achieving fairness and justice.

Respondent 1 said that RPL has promoted *gender equality, fairness to all to access the same education. I think there is justice if there is equality, same treatment to all other people.*

Respondent 3 was of the view that since RPL had redressed past apartheid injustices, especially among Black people, it *brought justice to all since it opens doors, its redressing discrimination and giving access to HE as a result social justice is applied.*

Respondent 4 pointed out that, *RPL has brought justice to the education sector in SA and that past injustices have been redressed with them being able to get access to HE at any university of their choice.* For respondent 4, RPL has done justice and has brought fairness to all of them who had teaching experience of more than ten (10) years.

From the responses it seemed that the participants all agreed that RPL corrected past injustices and brought about fairness in the education sector of SA. Thus, RPL had promoted justice by opening educational doors that had been closed before in the past. It had furthermore promoted justice in education, by enabling people to access the same education, which had not been possible in the past, and by recognising the educational experiences that respondents had gained over the years.

A link between RPL and social justice was established since RPL promoted the values of justice, by not discriminating against people. By opening doors which had been closed under the previous apartheid government RPL promoted fairness for all to access education.

Some of the respondents shared the view that RPL promoted gender equality as women were mostly affected by discrimination and thus, they were refused the opportunity to get a decent education and training.

4.11.3.4 Access through RPL

For many participants, RPL gave them the opportunity to access HE.

Respondent 1 acknowledged that it wouldn't have been possible to get access to HE if it wasn't for RPL as he or she *had tried many times in vain*.

Respondent 2 had the feeling that without RPL it would have been a struggle to get access. *I wouldn't have got access to HE without RPL. I tried many times before, but I could not get admission since I did not qualify.*

For Respondent 4 said that without RPL *I wouldn't have got access without RPL to HE. I had tried before but could not get the opportunity. Through RPL and experience as a teacher I got admission into university.*

The participants expressed their disappointment in the fact that the NPDE programme which enabled access to HE through RPL would be terminated.

Respondent 1 indicated that he or she was aware of the *end of RPL* and that *[he or she] is very disappointed and would like RPL to continue since it's valuable and it brought justice for all by allowing [them] access to higher education. [he or she] also expressed that he or she knew many unqualified teachers, in her school and in neighbouring schools who still needed to go through an RPL programme.*

Respondent 2: also indicated that *[he or she] knows about many unqualified teachers from neighbouring schools who need RPL [to get access], and he or she expressed the wish that it must continue.*

In the same vein, Respondent 3 asked the question: *what will happen with a lot of the teachers who still need RPL [to get access]?*

Respondent 4 also suggested that he or she was *disappointed [with] the termination of RPL* and would like RPL to continue since *it is valuable and many still need it.*

The respondents indicated that they would not have got access to HE if it was not for RPL and as a result it was valuable to them. The respondents indicated that there were teachers who still needed access through RPL, as they were underqualified or unqualified. They also indicated that some of the teachers who needed RPL were those who worked with or were in neighbouring schools and communities.

The respondents also indicated that they were aware of the termination of the programmes such as the NPDE which, through the application of RPL, gave

unqualified teachers access to HE. The respondents expressed the view that the programmes that were applied by RPL to ensure unqualified teachers had access to HE and enabled them to improve their qualifications needed to continue since many underqualified or unqualified teachers still needed access to HE through RPL.

4.11.3.5 The experiences and the challenges with RPL

The respondents seemed to have had various experiences and challenges during their involvement with RPL.

Respondent 1 said, *we had financial challenges, travelling costs were high, tuition fees were also very high, and paying fees was a big struggle*. Respondent 1 subsequently drop out for a year to accumulate money for fees as it was a struggle, due to the low salary he or she is getting.

Respondent 2 also experienced *challenges with regard to registration fees and transport to centres with the main challenge being tuition fees and money for transport*. Respondent 2 experienced that *the tutors also had a problem to explain what they had to do*. As a solution to his or her financial challenges Respondent 2 *had to join societies to be able to pay his or her tuition fees and had to break for a year to accumulate money*. Respondent 3 feared that *after such a long time without studying [he or she] may not cope*. [he or she] also experienced tuition and transport challenges. For Respondent 4 *the tuition is very high and he or she had to be in debt all the time to pay for his or her fees either through the bank, societies or otherwise he or she*. Respondent 4 indicated that the centres are far [and that] transport was a challenge. *I got little salary as I was unqualified and having to pay for myself is the biggest challenge and [he or she], now owe banks and community societies*.

Respondent 5 also experienced challenges with money for transport and for tuition fees. When these teachers finally decided to improve their education and to study while working, they were faced with challenges such as the lack of financial aid which they couldn't cope with, due to the low salary that they earned as underqualified teachers. This is not in line with the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* as indicated in Chapter 3 (cf.3.5.2) which states that there should be no barriers prohibiting the process of RPL.

From the participant's responses it seemed as if the biggest challenges that they had experienced centred around finances for tuition fees and for transport to the centres where classes were conducted. This resulted in some of them having to apply for loans from banks and or from societies.

4.11.4 The experience with RPL portfolio

The portfolio of evidence was part of the module that the students had to compile from their second year of study. The portfolio was an integral part of the NPDE programme that they had enrolled for, but it also served as evidence of their experience and therefore it was a requirement for RPL. Regarding the portfolio, Respondent 1 said: *I had to submit a portfolio. It gave me a tough time but tutors at my centre and the UFS coordinator assisted a lot till I was competent. The compilation of the portfolio equipped me with a number of things. It was important to submit a portfolio of evidence, because it was worth half of the credits for the diploma.* Respondent 1 also suggested that *the assessment of the portfolio was fair and transparent because [they] were shown how [they] were going to be marked and each section [was] clearly indicated as to how it had to be done.*

For Respondent 2 *it was tough to compile but important since [his or her] knowledge was tested through building the portfolio.* Respondent 2 regarded the tutors at the centres as helpful and the coordinator from South Campus went around the centres, to offer support which made the work easier. Respondent 2 was also *given an opportunity to make corrections and to send [his or her] file back till it was done well.* The portfolio was part of the assessment and it provided a clear skeleton on how to compile a portfolio and it showed how it would be assessed. All of which was handed to the respondents. There is support from the literature on what the respondents have said as section, (cf. 2.5.2) indicated that compiling a portfolio seemed to give the teachers a challenge, as they were unable to manage the amount of time that it needed along with their ongoing work demands. Most teachers regard the compilation of the portfolio as challenging and yet so fulfilling once it was completed. Added information from these responses reflects that the teachers had challenges in the submission of the portfolio, but they loved the impression it created for them and the application of the skills they had learnt.

4.11.5 RPL at the UFS

With regards to their experience of RPL at the UFS, Respondent 1 indicated that, the requirements of RPL were noted in the student guide, the appeal process was outlined, and assessment guidelines were clearly indicated. *Our tutors were good, but it looked as if they had little training, but they were guided by the coordinator at the South Campus. She was a real help.* Respondent 2 opined that *guidelines were given to [them], and [they] were guided on what [they] had to do and how [they] were to be assessed on RPL.* Although Respondent 3 suggested that the tutors at the centres had training and [that] they were trying their best he or she indicated that the tutors *were lacking somewhere.* However, according to Respondent 3 the gap created by the lack of training on the side of the tutors were *closed by the Coordinator who worked hard to make sure that things go the right way at the centres.* According to Respondent 4 the student guide contained *rules and guidelines* pertaining to RPL. Respondent 5 confirmed that *some of our tutors had information [were knowledgeable] but some not fully so [he or she] had to ask previous students.*

From the responses it seemed that the respondents had a positive experience of RPL at the UFS, and that the tutors whom they engaged with during the implementation of RPL assisted them in various ways. However, the respondents indicated that not all the tutors were always knowledgeable about RPL process. All the respondents held the view that the experience that they had with RPL at the UFS was good and that the UFS staff workers helped, when they came to the centres to register; which was something that helped to reduce their financial expenses. The respondents also confirmed that the process of registration was fair and transparent, as the rules and the guidelines were given, and the appeal process was also made clear for them. The UFS staff who worked with RPL were trained, although they needed guidance from the coordinator on some parts, who was always available for support.

4.12 LINKING QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

I used variety of research methods, e.g. qualitative method whereby structured interviews were used and quantitative method employing the use of questionnaires. This method was designed to answer questions that neither a purely qualitative, nor a purely quantitative approach could have answered on their own.

This method proved to be appropriate for the research problem of this study which wanted: **To explore the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher**

education in South Africa, precisely because the implementation of RPL in the NPDE gave unqualified and under-qualified teachers access to HE. This became evident during interviews as the students elaborated (from question 17 and 18 Appendix 5B) that RPL in NPDE gave them access to HE, an opportunity that they couldn't have had had it not been for RPL. Students further explained that they had tried many times before to get access to HE institutions, but this was in vain. Furthermore, students indicated that there are more under-qualified and unqualified teachers who could not complete their studies (NPDE) due to financial constraints (c.f. 4.11.3.4).

The same question from the questionnaire (question 6 and 7 Appendix 5 A) could not give this meaning and understanding, a follow-up on qualitative approach was important to extract meaning of the response. Interviews with five (5) respondents continued to reveal that access to HE where students had the opportunity of a choice of University brought redress, fairness and justice especially to the Black teachers who were denied access for years in the apartheid regime (c.f. 4.11.3.3). This variety of research methods helped me with meaningful and comprehensive data. This combination of approaches not only minimized the possibility of error but confirmed the validity of the findings of this study.

4.13 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an analysis of the questionnaire and that of the interviews of the participants were done (see Appendix 5A and 5B). The evidence from the quantitative aspect indicated that RPL had value in allowing access to HE and bringing about transformation by redressing past injustices. The participants mentioned that RPL opened doors for them to access HE, through the teaching experience that they already had. As for the qualitative part, the evidence indicated that the participants valued the access that they got through RPL and the redress of past injustices in the teaching sector that brought about transformation. The following chapter summarises the findings, it provides recommendations and it draws conclusions from the research questions.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter four (4), I dealt with the research methodology and the data analysis and the interpretation. In this final chapter, I discuss the findings of the study. Based on these findings certain recommendations will be made.

5.2 SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY, THE AIMS AND THE OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to *explore the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education in South Africa.*

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is integral to the assessment and to the development policy landscape of various countries, including SA. It gained currency within the new democratic SA with its vision focused on social justice and transformation.

This vision also impacted teacher education and training in that people witnessed the adoption of a policy and legislative framework that would redress the injustices of the past and pave the way for the transformation of SA education in an equitable, just and high-quality system.

Against this background, it became necessary that South African schools and students should be served by appropriately qualified teachers. However, it was important that the practicing teachers who for various reasons had not been able in the past, to get access to institutions of higher learning and who consequently were forced to teach as unqualified and/or underqualified teachers, would be granted an opportunity to improve their qualifications.

In affording unqualified and or underqualified practicing teachers the opportunity to improve their qualification, RPL was introduced. RPL served as an alternative route to give under or unqualified teachers access to HE, in order for them to improve their qualifications. As such, RPL acknowledged and credited the various learning and life experiences of an individual. In this way, RPL became a national imperative that not

only ensured access to education, but it also ensured the redress of previous injustices.

It was against this background and with this aim in mind that I pursued the following objectives:

- To establish the nature of RPL in general and particularly in SA;
- To explore the nature of and policy context of RPL in SA teacher education;
- To determine the perceptions and the experiences of the teachers, regarding the value of RPL in access and redress; and
- To make recommendations to enhance the value of RPL in access to and redressing past discrimination and imbalances in teacher education.

These objectives guided the study and they formed an important part of the conclusion to the study. This study was primarily geared towards understanding the value of RPL in ensuring that practising teachers gained access to further education. However, it was also aimed at understanding the extent to which RPL ensured that past injustices were addressed and corrected, hence the focus on access and redress.

This was particularly important as statistics (cf. 1.2) suggest that there might be many underqualified and or unqualified teachers who need to upgrade their qualifications. The literature review on the nature of RPL (Chapter 2) revealed that RPL focuses on the validation of non-formal and casual gaining of knowledge and prior learning assessment, as well as on experiential learning and skills development that takes place in the place of work, either formally, non-formally or informally (cf. 2.2).

More so, RPL is also associated with transformation in the sense that it results in human growth, ultimate peace of mind, and self-actualisation, and with lifelong learning. In countries where RPL is applied (USA, Canada, Australia) RPL is performed with the intension of ensuring access to higher education and with a focus on social justice (cf. 2.3).

In countries such as Namibia and Mauritius, RPL is implemented to reskill workers and to fill shortages in the workplace (cf. 2.3; 2.4.1). In SA, RPL is considered as the fundamental key to an inclusive, democratic education and training system, and it is essential to the transformation of the country's education as well as the training system (cf. 2.7).

The policy analysis that was done in Chapter 3 stated its objectives are as follows:

To explore the nature of and the policy context of RPL in SA teacher education, thus revealing an existing policy framework, which either informs or draws from the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)*. This policy document serves as the backbone for the implementation of RPL in SA and in SA HEI's.

In this policy analysis, the context and the content of the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)*, was analysed (cf. 3.4; 3.5). The context analysis revealed various political, social and economic factors that are unique to the South African context, which in various ways influenced the development of the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* (cf. 3.4.2; 3.4.3).

The content analysis was done to ascertain myself about specific pronouncements made in the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)*, and other related policy documents.

As such, I explored the values (cf. 3.5.2), the principles (cf. 3.5.3), the objectives (cf. 3.5.4), the assessment (cf. 3.5.5); the resourcing (cf. 3.5.6) and the responsibilities of different stakeholders (cf. 3.5.7) in realising RPL.

It was assumed that the content analysis would highlight that which needed to be done, not only to ensure the successful implementation of the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)*, but also the successful implementation of RPL and to ensure access and redress.

Following the literature review and the policy analysis I set out to determine the perceptions and the experiences of the teachers regarding the value of RPL in access and in redress. This objective was achieved in Chapter 4. In order to realise this objective, I involved various teachers who were subjected to a process of RPL, at the UFS.

I gave these teachers a questionnaire (see Appendix 5A) to complete and also involved five (5) of them in interviews (see Appendix 5B). The responses to the questionnaires are presented in (cf. 4.6) and that of the interviews in (cf. 4.11).

5.3 THE PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE RELATED CHAPTERS

Table 5.1: Secondary research questions and the related chapters

Secondary Research Questions	Chapter Answered in
What is the nature of RPL in general and in particular SA education?	Chapter 2
What is the nature of and the policy context within which RPL in SA teacher education is couched?	Chapter 3
What are the perceptions and the experiences of the teachers about the value of RPL on redress and access in teacher education?	Chapter 4
What recommendations could be made regarding the value of RPL in enhancing access to and redressing discrimination and past imbalances in teacher education?	Chapter 5

The following provides an overview of the main findings of this study, against the background of both the literature review as well as the policy analysis.

5.4 SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

a) The value of RPL

The literature study revealed that RPL is a valuable tool to achieve redress (cf. 2.5) and to ensure access (cf. 2.5.1). In accordance with this, the policy analysis revealed that RPL is valued by the government of SA in order to redress past imbalances (cf. 3.5.1; 3.5.2). However, from the questionnaires it appeared that the respondents did not regard RPL as being of any value to redress past imbalances (cf. 4.8.1). Rather the questionnaires suggest that the respondents regard access to education as having a greater value for redress (cf. 4.8.1).

Contrasting with the findings of the questionnaire, the findings from the interviews suggested that the participants valued RPL as a gateway to HE access (cf. 4.11.3.2). The participants indicated that without RPL they would not have gained access to HE (cf. 4.11.3.2). Some also indicated that RPL added value to their lives (cf. 4.11.3.2).

The value of RPL is also demonstrated in its ability to motivate and to encourage students to continue studying (cf. 2.5; 2.5.1). In this regard, the participants perceptions and views with regarding RPL are supported in the literature which

indicated that the learners become motivated after gaining entry to higher education and they value their own performance as they gain credits (cf. 2.; 2.5.1). Students acquire self-confidence and motivation from being part of RPL, which also propels their decisions to continue studying (cf. 2.5; 2.5.1). The policy analysis also promoted access, redress and lifelong learning (cf. 3.5.2) as values that should inform and guide RPL processes.

The respondents' positive attitude towards their own learning and the prospects that they expressed with regard to continuing their education (lifelong learning) (cf. 3.5.2) is confirmed by the literature which suggests that RPL contributes to lifelong learning and it allows adults and the working class to enhance their knowledge, their qualifications and their skills (Frick & Albertyn, 2011).

This finding suggested that the opportunities created through RPL motivates and encourages the teachers to continue studying. The importance of lifelong learning is also emphasised in the national policy of RPL as one of its objectives when it says: RPL has been aligned with the main elements of South African national policy discourse since 1994, which not only includes transformation, access and redress but also lifelong learning (DoE, 2013: Section 29).

b) Teachers perceptions towards RPL

In the literature, RPL is described as a process whereby uncertified teachers are given academic recognition derived from their experience, their knowledge, their skills and the competencies that they have gained in the workplace and in non-formal learning situations, over the years (cf. 2.2). It is also the key to human resource development, and it encourages transformation and lifelong learning (cf. 2.2).

The policy analysis also revealed that RPL is a process where non-formal and formal learning are measured, recognised and certified against credit requirements (cf. 3.5.1). In addition, the national RPL policy distinguishes between RPL for access and RPL for redress while RPL could also be used in the workplace for those seeking entry (cf. 3.5.1). The questionnaires revealed that the participants (teachers) largely perceive RPL as valuable in that it has transformed their lives and has motivated them (cf. 4.7.3). The interviews revealed that the participants regard RPL as a mechanism that validates and appreciates their prior knowledge (cf. 4.11.3.1). It also appears that

RPL enhanced the self-confidence and the motivation of the participants by motivating them to continue studying (cf. 2.5; 2.5.1).

c) RPL's contribution towards fairness and justice in education

The literature revealed that, when the wellbeing and freedom of the individuals is encouraged, individuals become motivated and act towards achieving their highest potential, leading to social justice (cf. 2.7.3). Furthermore, the policy analysis confirmed that improving the lives of people and pursuing social justice is key to re-addressing past injustices (cf. 3.4.3).

From the questionnaires, it appeared as if the respondents do not regard justice, fairness and redress as highly as they regard access (cf. 4.7.3). Nevertheless, during the interviews it was very clear that RPL enhances fairness and social justice (cf. 4.11.3.3). The value of RPL for enhancing social justice was also reflected in one respondent's association of RPL with gender equality (cf. 4.11.3.3). One of the objectives of RPL is to ensure access to learning (cf. 2.6; 2.7). The literature review indicated that in South Africa, access to education has always been a problem and that the removal of barriers to learning was essential to redress the imbalances of the past (cf. 2.7.3).

The literature also suggested that the students who are involved in RPL struggle with funding (cf. 2.3). From the questionnaires, it appeared that the respondents experienced various financial difficulties during their studies and that they subsequently found it difficult to fund their studies (cf. 4.7.2; 4.11.3.5). This was confirmed in the interviews, where the respondents indicated that they had to take out loans from banks and that they had to join societies to fund their studies (cf. 4.11.3.5).

Some of the participants also indicated that they were forced to take study breaks, in order to accumulate money to fund their studies (cf. 4.11.3.5). These study breaks resulted in them not finishing their studies in the given minimum prescribed time. To ensure access and redress, barriers that could possibly prevent access and redress needs to be removed. A lack of funding could be a potential barrier. RPL is supposed to break down traditional barriers to education (cf. 2.8). *The National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* also indicates that the

charges for the administration and for the evaluation of RPL services ought not create limitations for the candidate (cf. 3.5.2(a)).

d) Teachers self-esteem and RPL

Based on the literature, it seems that RPL is beneficial to workers as it boosts both workers' self-esteem as well as motivating them to perform at their best (cf. 2.5.1; 2.8). More importantly, RPL also seemed to have promoted the enthusiasm needed for the teachers to love their work (cf. 4.11.3.1). A motivated educator puts more effort into his or her work and produces better results which, in turn, promotes learners who love their work who then enter society with more purpose.

The *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* revealed that RPL promotes citizens who can stand and argue on important issues facing the country (cf. 3.5.2 (c)). The questionnaire revealed that more than seventy percent (70%) of the respondents believed that RPL had boosted their self-esteem (cf. 4.7.3). During the interviews, the participants also indicated that RPL had motivated and boosted their self-esteem (cf. 4.11.3.4). One participant indicated that *RPL [enabled] them in the long run to become qualified teachers and gain integrity* (cf. 4.11.3.1).

Based on the above discussion, it appeared that RPL serves as a catalyst that boosts the self-esteem of the participants and motivates them to perform better as teachers and in their personal capacity. The self-confidence the teachers gained as a result of being admitted to university and into the NPDE through RPL resulted in some of them being acknowledged by the principal of the school as someone with knowledge (cf. 4.11.3.1).

e) The experiences and the challenges with RPL

The literature review revealed various challenges that are associated with RPL, which could potentially hamper the extent to which it could enhance access and redress. For example, it seemed that in certain contexts, RPL is regarded as an inferior learning experience (cf. 2.5; 2.7.3). In SA, the effective implementation of RPL also seemed to suffer from conceptual uncertainty (cf. 2.5.2). Nel (2010) identified the lack of trained assessors who share a common understanding of competence in their subject matter, such that candidates can be assessed in the same way, as one of the great challenges

facing RPL. Students also found the portfolio of evidence very difficult to compile and they said that it required a lot of time and training. (cf. 2.5.2). The policy analysis on the other hand, indicated that all possible obstacles that could hinder progress towards RPL needed to be removed and addressed, in order to reach the main objectives of RPL (cf. 3.5.2; 3.5.3).

In order to eradicate possible challenges and to give students a pleasant RPL experience so as to enhance access and redress, the national RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 52(e)) placed a responsibility on educational institutions to ensure that they have the necessary staff capacity to deliver quality RPL services and programmes. In addition, it is also expected of the educational institutions to grant equitable access to RPL programmes and services in a manner that goes along with the government's dedication to redress imbalances (DoE, 2013: Section 46(b)). This assumed, that RPL programmes should be given the required financial investment to develop both infrastructure and human capital.

The *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* placed a responsibility on the SAQA to identify government and other forms of subsidisation, to make sure that the provision of RPL programmes and services, for the improvement of the context-specific RPL instruments, and for bursaries to aid RPL candidates (cf. 2.5). However, concerning the latter, it has already been indicated that the respondents and the participants variously indicated that funding their studies was one of the biggest challenges that they had experienced. In essence, the participants indicated that they experienced challenges with the tutors at the different centres, who at times, seemed unable to communicate the expectations of the programme and the portfolio effectively (cf. 4.11.3.5). One participant also indicated that he or she got the impression that the tutors lacked knowledge (cf. 4.11.3.7). If not addressed, these challenges could have a bad impact on the implementation of RPL and the realisation of access and redress in teacher education. I therefore recommend to the department of education that RPL be a means to secure access to HE be given another chance.

f) Experience with the portfolio

A portfolio gives a candidate the opportunity to showcase their abilities, their knowledge, skills, their competencies or their performance gained over the years or

during their period of study. The portfolios of evidence seem to be used in various countries as part of a student's assessment in RPL (cf. 2.3.; 2.7.2).

In SA, students are also required to submit a portfolio of evidence when applying for RPL (cf.3.5.4.1). For example, for admission into the NPDE programme (which was the focus of this study), students are required to submit a portfolio of evidence worth a hundred twenty (120) credits (cf. 4.11.3.6). However, the literature also revealed that the compilation of the portfolio seems to be a big problem for most students as the tutors and the assessors needed more training (cf. 2.5.2).

The policy analysis indicated the importance of a portfolio for assessment (cf. 3.5.5). Participants in the interviews indicated that the portfolio was challenging but worth doing, as it revealed evidence of their prior knowledge (cf. 4.11.3.1). The participants also mentioned the fact that all relevant information pertaining to the compilation of the portfolio was given to them beforehand and included in the study guide (cf. 4.11.3.6).

One respondent observed that the assessment of the portfolio was fair and transparent as they were shown how it would be assessed. Scholten and Teuwsen (2001) observed that in the USA, the assessment of RPL is institutionally developed, and that non-formal examinations, as well as individual assessment through examining a portfolio of evidence or oral interviews, are done.

For Nel (2010) RPL depends on the validity, the reliability, and the fairness of assessment processes. In order to enhance access and redress, it becomes important that the portfolio of evidence be subjected to a transparent and just assessment process. The portfolio gave teachers a good reflection and an opportunity to apply and to give evidence of the skills that they had acquired.

RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 31) regarded and promoted assessment as an integral feature of RPL process. Therefore, assessment in RPL does not exist in a vacuum separated from other strategies, so this allows for several sources of knowledge and forms of learning to be compared and assessed. In addition, RPL policy (DoE, 2013: Section 32) also makes provision for RPL to be conducted through a combination of assessment approaches, and the assessment serves as a mechanism to make prior learning explicit (DoE, 2013: Section 35(c)). It is my understanding that these

provisions are meant to create a context for RPL to enhance access and redress in teacher education.

5.5 CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

The question of this study was: **What is the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education?** In answering this question, I focused on the most important findings that speak directly to the focus of the study, namely access and redress.

I found that the participants regarded RPL as the primary and the sole reason why they could enter the HE institution where they were enrolled for the NPDE and which enabled them to upgrade their qualifications. The participants variously alluded to the fact that they had not been able to get access to HE institutions previously and that they could not consequently improve their teacher qualifications. One participant indicated that he or she had tried numerous times to get access to an institution of higher learning, but he or she was prevented access because he or she did not meet the minimum entry requirements. They hailed RPL for creating an opportunity for them to access a university where they could improve not only their qualifications, but also their lives.

Subsequently, I found that the participants in this study held a very positive view of RPL in general and of its administration at the institution where they were enrolled for the NPDE. They held the programme in high esteem and regarded it as very valuable for various reasons – most notably for the impact it had on their professional development, on their empowerment as teachers and on their personal development (improved self-esteem and dignity). In this regard, RPL holds a particularly high value. From this, I conclude that RPL is perceived by most of the participants as a tool that propels their motivation to study and to do their work with zeal. The participants believe that RPL is life changing and transforming. It is therefore recommended that the Department of Higher Education considers extending the period for the implementation of RPL, as a way of redressing past imbalances and ensuring access to education.

In relation to SA's vision and aspiration of a transformed and socially just education system, that redresses past imbalances, I found that RPL is not only linked to social

justice and transformation, but that the participants found it to represent a transformed and a socially just way of ensuring both access to institutions of higher learning and redress of past imbalances. These institutions are places that they previously could not access, either for political reasons, or that they could not enter because they did not meet the basic admission requirements.

My analysis of this in general, is that, if administered effectively, RPL holds the potential and indeed addresses past imbalances and that it creates an opportunity for previously disadvantaged students to gain access to institutions of higher learning. By enhancing access, RPL ensures that previous injustices are redressed. By redressing that which is wrong, RPL therefore also holds the potential to contribute to the transformation of the SA HE sectors, and to the transformation of teacher training. It thus contributes to fairness and justice in the South African education system. For that reason, I recommend that government institute an alternative qualification that would ensure access and redress for the many unqualified and under qualified teachers still in the system. Despite the value and the contribution that RPL seems to make towards access and redress, it appears that the same noble ideals of the policy are hampered and severely threatened primarily by two important issues – namely, funding and tutor competence.

I am of the opinion that the ideals of transforming teacher education in SA into a just and equitable system where opportunity for access and redress are created through something as noble as RPL, are meaningless if potential barriers such as funding and tutor competence are not addressed. Those who participated in this study were indeed excited about the value of and the opportunities created by RPL. However, they appeared to have been equally troubled about the lack of funding and the perceived incompetence of some tutors.

It became very clear from the data, that there were financial challenges that the participants were faced with during the course of their studies, and how they had to terminate their studies to accumulate money to continue and to complete their studies was problematic. Both the lack of funding and the incompetent tutors could serve as barriers to learning and this could therefore jeopardise access and redress – two issues that both the literature and RPL policy clearly addresses and warns against.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the information above, these recommendations are made:

There appears to be several underqualified teachers who are still in the SA education system who are serving as teachers. This study has revealed that RPL and the subsequent NPDE qualification were key to transformation in South African education and that it provided an important way for previously disadvantaged teachers to have access to higher education and to eradicate and redress inequalities that were brought about by barriers to access and to redress during the previous political dispensation. My recommendation is that the Department of Higher may introduce a similar diploma that would allow underqualified teachers accessing HE through RPL. Considering the value of the current programme and the implementation of RPL in that programme, there seems to be a need for a similar process and programme to be created.

In line with international literature, the respondents indicated that they experienced several financial challenges, to such an extent that some even had to terminate their studies for a year or so to accumulate enough money to fund their studies. These challenges hold nothing positive or good for the implementation of RPL and the realisation of the aims and the objectives of the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)* which aims to give access to and redress past imbalances in education.

I therefore recommend that the institutions and the Department of Education should find ways of subsidising the tuition fees of students enrolled in RPL programmes. In the light of the termination of the NPDE as a way of gaining access to HE through RPL, it might be necessary for the Department of Education to conduct an investigation to establish how many students across the country could not, because of financial reasons complete their studies in time. Based on that information they should consider the extension of the termination date of the NPDE.

The study raised some concerns about the perceived competence of the tutors. I am of the opinion that quality teaching and learning cannot be offered by incompetent tutors. Moreover, I also believe that quality education and training are integral to access and redress. Quality is one of the values of the national RPL policy. My view is that access to poor quality education and training, particularly within the SA context,

does not serve to address or redress any imbalances of the past. Thus, my pine is that poor quality education and training could potentially jeopardise the ideals of lifelong learning. It is against this background that I also recommend that institutions of HE should pay attention to the tutors and to the practitioners responsible for the administration of RPL at their respective centres.

5.7 CHALLENGES DURING THE COURSE OF THE STUDY

Although I enjoyed this study, i experienced the following challenges:

- 1) During data collection, the students were in different areas and I had to pay for the transport of some of them (cf. page 73) to get them to the venue that was agreed on for the interviews as well as for the questionnaires. The process became very expensive; particularly when I had to repeat the interviews to get more information.
- 2) I had to call all the respondents and the participants; for some I had to call more than once as they were not available.
- 3) Most of the participants spoke in Sesotho, so it was not easy to find the exact translation into English.
- 4) Lastly, I was faced with a challenge to find the necessary funds required for editing.

5.8 THE AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the course of this study, I saw several potential research avenues namely:

- Firstly, as teachers expressed their views and their experiences with RPL it was clear that they learned new skills and methods of teaching in institutions of higher learning. There may be a need to investigate the depth of the damage caused to learners in SA by underqualified and/or unqualified teachers.
- Secondly, the impacts that RPL had on the teachers and how it reflected on the performance of learners could be investigated.
- Lastly, the great potential for RPL to advance individual growth and hence busting the economy of the country is clear.

5.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is evidence arising from this study that suggests that RPL is valued and appreciated. Its value is found in allowing access for these teachers to acquire higher education. The value of RPL can also be seen in its capacity to redress past injustices and inequality in teacher education. In this way RPL becomes instrumental in the transformation of teacher education and training and in creating a just and equitable HE sectors. However, there are indications that challenges regarding funding and tutor competence could potentially threaten the vision of RPL to enhance access and redress and thus to contribute towards transformation. From this study, certain recommendations were made to enhance access and to redress teacher education and training through RPL.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance



Faculty of Education

22-Nov-2018

Dear Mrs Makabelo Makhatsane

Ethics Clearance: The value of the Recognition of Prior Learning in enhancing access and redress in teacher education

Principal Investigator: Mrs Makabelo Makhatsane

Department: School of Higher Education Studies Department (Bloemfontein Campus)

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2018/1446**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

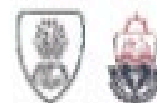
Education Ethics Committee

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Appendix 2: Department of Education Bloemfontein's Approval

Enquiries: BM Kitching
Ref: Research Permission: MI Makhatsane
Tel. 051 404 9283 / 9221 / 082 454 1519
Email: berthakitching@gmail.com and B.Kitching@edu.fs.gov.za



MI Makhatsane
A320, South Campus
University of the Free State
BLOEMFONTEIN

072 348 8573

Dear Ms Makhatsane

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. This letter serves as an acknowledgement of receipt of your request to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education.

Research Topic: The value of the recognition of prior learning in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

Schools: Unicom Primary School, Motheo District and Sasolburg High School, Fezile Dabi District.

Target Population: 100 teachers studying NPDE with the University of the Free State.

2. **Period of research:** From the second week of January 2019 until 30 September 2019. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours.
3. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document or a CD, should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 319, 3rd Floor, Old CNA Building, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely


DR JEM SEKOANYANE
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE: 02/11/2018

RESEARCH APPLICATION MAKHATSANE MI PERMISSION EDITED 30 OCT 2018

Strategic Planning, Policy & Research Directorate

Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Room 318, Old CNA Building, 3rd Floor, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein

Tel: (051) 404 9283 / 9221 Fax: (086) 6678 678

Appendix 3: South Campus Principal

P.O. Box 339
Admin. Building: A320
South Campus: University of the Free State
Bloemfontein

26th October, 2018

The Principal; South Campus; Prof. Daniella Coetzee
The Vice-Rector: Research; Prof. Corli Witthuhn
P.O. Box 339
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein

RE – REQUEST TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH USING SOUTH CAMPUS STUDENTS

I hereby request to be granted permission to distribute questionnaires to student teachers registered with the University of the Free State at the South Campus in different centers doing National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) and to also interview five (5) students in different centers.

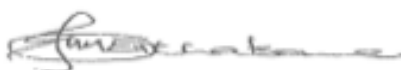
The topic of the research is: **Registered title: “The value of the recognition of prior learning in enhancing access and redress in teacher education”**. The overall objective of this research is to establish the impact of the RPL policy on the transformation of the education sector into an equitable and fair system. Information gathered will help to elicit recommendations to the Department of Higher Education and all stakeholders. I am convinced that this research will contribute positively to teacher education and the departments concerned. The information will also be used for completion of Masters in higher education by the researcher.

The students will be randomly selected from centers where 100 students registered NPDE will be expected to part-take. Five will be interviewed. No harm is expected from participating in this survey, only that their names and student’s numbers will not be revealed/shown.

The research is done to find the value of the recognition of prior learning in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

Given a go ahead, I hope to load this request online (RIMS).
I hope my request will be considered.

Yours Faithfully



Makabelo Iketleng Makhatsane.



The Principal; South Campus; Prof. Daniella Coetzee

Appendix 4: Informed Consent

M.I. Makhatsane (Researcher)
South Campus
University of the Free State
Cell: 072 348 8573

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Student,

I am currently enrolled for a master's degree in Education at the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, and it is expected from me to do empirical research. I would therefore like to invite you to take part in the following research project which aims to explore:

The value of the recognition of prior learning in enhancing access and redress in teacher education

The overall objective of this research is to establish the impact of RPL policy on the transformation of the education sector into an equitable and a fair system. Information gathered will help to elicit recommendations to the Department of Higher Education and all stakeholders on the value of RPL in enhancing equity and fairness with regards to access to education. You have been chosen to take part in this research because you are likely to give valuable information that could enable me to realise the aim and objectives of this study. I am convinced that this research will contribute positively to teacher education and development in the Free State.

You will be expected to complete a questionnaire on items related to RPL and to your study. There are no possible risks in taking part in this research. I want to assure you that identity will be protected and that no one will be able to link you in whatever way to this study.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and free to withdraw from participating at any stage of this study or during the interviews or questionnaires. You will not be asked to give reasons for your withdrawal. Should any personal issues arise during the course of this research, please do not hesitate to inform me so that we can address the problem. Should you decide to participate, please complete the section below and send it to me and keep this letter for reference purposes.

Yours faithfully



Makabelo I Makhatsane

Please cut here



PATICIPANTS CONSENT FORM

I hereby give my consent to take part in the questionnaire that evaluates the implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning in education. I am fully aware that by completing the questionnaires and taking part in the interview, that data will be collected and used. I also confirm that Mrs. M.I. Makhatsane explained the purpose of the research and my right to withdraw at any time, should I wish to do so. She also guaranteed that all data is highly confidential, and no reference to names or to student numbers will be made. I therefore agree to participate voluntarily.

Participant's Signature

Date

Appendix 5A: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

You are invited to take part in a survey on students, **Registered title: *The value of the recognition of prior learning in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.***

The study is aimed at finding students' perceptions on the establishment and extent at which RPL policy contributed towards the transformation of the education sector into an equitable and fair system, by ensuring access and redress of previous imbalances in education.

This will provide a basis for informed decision making and setting proactive measures to identify and to overcome possible barriers that our clients might encounter with ending the NPDE Programme with RPL.

You are thus requested to respond to the items on this questionnaire. Participation is voluntary, and should you feel uncomfortable to respond, please do not feel pressurised.

Please respond to the questions or statements by making a cross (X) over the number that best represent your view.

RPL: Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What is your age in completed years?

20 years or younger	1
21 to 30	2
31 to 40	3
41 to 50	4
51 to 60	5
61 and older	6

2. What is your gender?

Male	1
Female	2

SECTION B: QUESTIONNAIRE

3. To what extend do you know about RPL?

I did RPL	1
I know it from the colleague who did it	2
I did RPL in the NPDE but could not finish	3
I am in the Programme of RPL	4
I don't know anything about it	5
I know about RPL (Portfolio) in the NPDE	6
Other (Please specify)	

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. I know the importance of doing RPL for my qualification	1	2	3	4	5
5. I also know the value of doing RPL in the NPDE	1	2	3	4	5
6. RPL in the NPDE created a bridge for me to study at the university level	1	2	3	4	5
7. My experience of many years of teaching was recognised through RPL	1	2	3	4	5
8. I could not get admission into any university in the past, before the NPDE	1	2	3	4	5
9. It is not easy to complete the Diploma; I have to break years to compile money to pay.	1	2	3	4	5
10. RPL has contributed in making me become a good teacher	1	2	3	4	5
11. The NPDE is a good Diploma for underqualified/unqualified teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel highly motivated to do my work now that I do/did the NPDE	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you agree with the following statements					
Policy					
13. I know about the SA RPL policy	1	2	3	4	5
14. We have RPL policy at my school	1	2	3	4	5
15. I also know that RPL policy has given access to admission into universities with my teaching experience	1	2	3	4	5
16. I would love RPL to continue	1	2	3	4	5
17. The experience I have of many years was awarded credits through RPL (Portfolio of evidence)	1	2	3	4	5
18. I realize redress of past injustices now that I have access to university through RPL	1	2	3	4	5
19. I know some of the teachers in my school who still need RPL to get their qualification	1	2	3	4	5

To what extent do you agree with the following statements					
20. The salary I get contributed to the number of years I took to finish my studies	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you agree with the following statements in terms of how your experience is with RPL					
21. My interest in learning has increased	1	2	3	4	5
22. To study while working is good for me	1	2	3	4	5
23. I am enthusiastic in the class with my student	1	2	3	4	5
24. RPL brought motivation for me to study and to my life as a whole	1	2	3	4	5
25. It has been very difficult to pay for my studies because I earn very little.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I had to break years of study to accumulate money	1	2	3	4	5
27. Sometimes I had to take a loan to pay for my studies since we had no funding.	1	2	3	4	5
END OF RPL					
28. I know that RPL has come to an end. I am disappointed that the programme has been terminated, (come to an end)	1	2	3	4	5
29. A similar diploma that recognizes the teachers experience (RPL) must be introduced	1	2	3	4	5
30. I know so many teachers who still need to do RPL	1	2	3	4	5
31. I know of those who could not complete their studies	1	2	3	4	5
32. RPL must be reinstated	1	2	3	4	5
33. RPL has changed the lives of thousands of teachers in SA by allowing us access to higher education	1	2	3	4	5
34. The country now has more qualified teachers	1	2	3	4	5
35. I am very unhappy that RPL and the programme (NPDE) has come to an end	1	2	3	4	5
36. A similar diploma that credits experience through RPL must be introduced.	1	2	3	4	5

37. Please tell me how you feel about the fact that RPL has been terminated with the end of the NPDE?

Appendix 5B: Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research topic: The value of the recognition of prior learning in enhancing access and redress in teacher education

The aims of the interviews: The interviews questions and answer method will enable me to have a more holistic and a two-way talk to find the views and perceptions on the value of RPL in enhancing access and redress in teacher education.

Interview Questions:

- 1) What, according to you is the value, of RPL?
- 2) What is your view of RPL?
- 3) Do you think that RPL represents a transformation of Higher education?
- 4) What positive impact will RPL have on your life?
- 5) Do you think that RPL does contribute towards the transformation of the SA education sector?
- 6) What positive impact will RPL have on your life?
- 7) To what extend did RPL contribute to your self-esteem? Please explain.
- 8) Has RPL in any way contributed in motivating you to study and to continue with your education?
- 9) To what extend did RPL contribute towards your success as a teacher? Please explain
- 10) To what extend does your employer support your studies and RPL? Do you think that your employer values the fact that you have access to HE through RPL? Why do you say so?
- 11) Did you have to submit a portfolio for RPL? How did you experience the process of submitting a portfolio? Do you think that it is important to submit the portfolio? Why?
- 12) To what extend were you supported during the compilation of your portfolio of evidence?
- 13) Do you think that the submission of your portfolio served any purpose?

- 14) Were you part of the assessment process of your portfolio? Please explain.
- 15) Do you think that the assessment of your portfolio was fair and transparent? Explain.
- 16) To what extent is RPL linked to lifelong learning?
- 17) What is your understanding of the concepts access to education?
- 18) To what extent did RPL enabled access to HE?
- 19) To what extent would you have applied to access HE if it was not for RPL? (If it was not for RPL, would you have applied for access to HE? Why/why not?)
- 20) Do you think all the people had equitable opportunity to apply for RPL to get access to HE?
- 21) Do you think that there is a link between RPL and social justice?
- 22) What do you think of the extent that the PRL enabled redress?
- 23) What is your view on the ability of RPL to contribute towards fairness and justice in education?
- 24) What challenges did you experienced in entering the university through RPL?
- 25) What are the challenges that you have experienced during your studies? What caused these challenges?
- 26) Do you think that RPLs process for university is fair, transparent, reliable? Why do you say so?
- 27) Were you made aware of the rules, guidelines and policy of the UFS with regards to RPL and to the process? What can you remember about the process as it was explained to you?
- 28) Do you think the staff who worked with or who informed you about RPL were sufficiently trained or they knew what they were doing?
- 29) Are you aware of any quality assurance policies at the UFS?
- 30) Are you aware of any processes at the UFS that you could follow if you want to appeal the outcome of a decision in terms of RPL?
- 31) Do you think that there are teachers who still need RPL to continue with their education?
- 32) Do you know about the end of RPL in teacher education? What is your view about it?